

Defining a Different Tradition for Homoeopathy

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In modern times we are used to seeing homoeopathy as a science, and try to make it appear as such in public. Being ‚scientific‘ seems to be regarded as a sign of quality. Yet Hahnemann himself saw homoeopathy as an Art, which makes a big difference. – This is not only a question of history, theory or terminology, but all discussions with allopaths, politicians, scientists and the media depend as much on these definitions as our own self-understanding as practitioners of a healing art.

The point I want to make in this article is this: though there are some characteristics of homoeopathy that look scientific at first, homoeopathy really rests on a totally different tradition, which can only explain our art of healing and put it into a context that makes sense. This tradition is hermeticism, which puts homoeopathy in the same line as shamanism and alchemy.

We shall see that this approach has two major advantages. First it makes it possible, and quite easily so, to explain homoeopathy – to explain why and how it works, to put our method on to a solid basis (which Hahnemann did not do thoroughly, for a principle [like the law of similars] that is not grounded in some comprehensive theory is nothing but an isolated assumption). And secondly it may give us a totally new standpoint in respect to politics and public acknowledgement, about which I shall explain more later.

A methodology needs a general theory as a background, to give meaning to its assumptions and hypothesis. Homoeopathy doesn't have any up to now. No-one has shown how homoeopathic laws fit into a general theory of how the world is functioning as a whole. And we can't seriously expect the public to assume that homoeopathy is working *apart from* the general functioning of the world. So what is the world view which is based on the assumptions of a life force, of similars and of the dematerialisation of substances to make their spirit work?

There are three major pillars of homoeopathy: the law of similars, the potentisation of remedies, the working of the life force or *dynamis*.

All three of them find no basis in any known scientific theory. All the talk about ‚energies‘, ‚resonances‘, ‚vibrations‘ etc is not scientific at all (in the sense of modern mechanistic science, since it is not possible to define these words as scientific terms) and is meaningless for any serious discussion.

But all three pillars are well known and obvious in the hermetic tradition of old, also called the eternal philosophy, *philosophia perennis*. This has been and is the basic philosophy of all people in the world outside the current, short-lived scientific belief system. In the West it is the explicit basis of, for example, esotericism, kabala, alchemy, theosophy, anthroposophy, astrology, Jungian psychology.

This approach of putting homoeopathy into the hermetic context (and outside the scientific) is not just an intuitive idea, but a theoretical concept that can be proven and affirmed in detail, historically as well as philosophically. Since this is too much for an article, I will just state the main points as a thesis for further discussion.

The principles of the hermetic world view are the following:

- 1) principle of analogies
- 2) principle of polarity
- 3) principle of levels/layers of existence
- 4) principle of structured wholeness / symmetrical divisions
- 5) principle of unity

And as applied to homoeopathy:

- 1) *analogy*: as above so below – the law of correspondence and resonance in micro- and macrocosm
 - in homoeopathy the law of similars
- 2) *polarity*: in all the manifested world there is duality; nothing exists without the simultaneous operation of its opposite
 - in homoeopathy the law of first and secondary reaction
- 3) *levels of existence*: beside the physical level there is the level of the life force, the level of the psyche, of the rational mind and the level of the spirit – to name the gross ones; and these levels exist in micro- as well as in macrocosm
 - in homoeopathy the law of the working of the dynamis apart from the physical body, which is called an instrument of the spirit, dwelling in it
 - the possibility of potencies is based on the possibility of separating these levels from each other, i.e. to separate the spirit or entity of a remedy from its physical form (this has been shown by alchemy many times)
- 4) *structured wholeness*: the law of each wholeness (*holon*) being in itself symmetrically structured (in the East called mandala)
 - in homoeopathy until now no correspondence. Here I see a great need of research and discussion – Misha Norland (mappa mundi), Jan Scholten (periodic table), Frans Maan (reflexive universe), Rajan Sankaran and Chaim Rosenthal (structure of the kingdoms) and others, such as Jeremy Sherr and Josef Reeves, have started working on this.
- 5) *unity*: everything in the world is one on the ultimate level of existence, everything is one and connected and related; and to achieve that unity and relatedness is the higher purpose of our existence, as seen by all mystics and religions.
 - in homoeopathy „the higher purpose of our existence“.

Alchemy

In the perspective of the development of European philosophical traditions, homoeopathy is an heir of alchemy; though Hahnemann didn't mention this and even tried to exclude this perspective, since in his time it was not proper to discuss alchemy in decent circles.

- The idea of potentiation is clearly alchemical as a means of spiritualising matter – Hahnemann states this clearly enough. And nowhere else but in alchemy do we find this idea.
- The idea that there is a force inside matter that can be isolated and influenced and that this force is the important part of any material entity given.
- The whole background of thinking is the same as in alchemy, as shown above.
- Paracelsus is seen as an important forerunner of Hahnemann by most historians.
- Kent's idea of simple substance is what alchemy called prima materia – the substance before matter which has no specification but is linked to the working of the life force before it manifests. Kent picked this up from Swedenborg, a visionary whose picture of the world reflects all the characteristics of an hermetic ‚weltanschauung‘, as shown above. Kent's system of potencies (30, 200, M, 10M) is also derived from Swedenborg's esoteric system of numbers.

Shamanism

There are several main points linking the homoeopathic way of healing to what we are now used to calling shamanism.

- the personal way of selecting remedies, which work best the better you know them - which is much the same as a shaman having to know his spirits. This connection would account for the existence of ‚polychrests‘, which vary between different schools and practitioners and which have no real basis in homoeopathic theory otherwise.
- healing by participation: the homoeopath has to become involved (somehow ‚similar‘); the shaman has to travel into the underworld with the diseased

- knowing spirits/ remedies mainly by our own personal experience
- the two types of illness: by outer influence/ `causa´ or by loss of the soul/ disharmony of the dynamis
- antidotes and taboos around taking the remedies/ using the spirits
- „remedies should be our friends“ (Phatak) / „spiritus familiaris“ of the shamans
- initiation and proving
- healing in the context of community, group consciousness
- homoeopathy and shamanism individualise the disease, while keeping the patient in community, whereas allopathy isolates the patient and generalises the disease.
- practically breaking the rules of materialism in application of remedies by using ‚paper-remedies‘ (i.e. name of remedy just written on a piece of paper).
- group-effects in provings
- a spirit loses its power if you know its name and do the proper ritual / an illness is cured by naming the remedy and giving its immaterial information (i.e. in potency higher than the number of Avogadro)

Science

Homoeopathy has been a forerunner of modern science as well, since Hahnemann and other early homoeopaths started to apply precise observation to medicine and to collect and compare structured experience. This was new to science in those days which was still much influenced by Christian authoritarian thinking, though it was not so new to the old folk traditions and alchemy which was used to exchanging real experiences and applying what worked. So part of the homoeopathic method can be seen as ‚scientific‘ in a very general sense, but the system as a whole and a major part of the method does not fit into what modern science as a system has developed into.

There are many scientific studies of homoeopathy of course. But they can only show, and they only *try* to show, *that* homoeopathy *does* work – which for us is no big news indeed! No scientific study has given us any hint of an explanation of our complex laws of healing. So obviously modern mechanistic science is not an approach that will take us any further in our own thinking or in practical work.

A new political (op)position

In order to achieve any public and political acknowledgement, homoeopathic and other holistic doctors and practitioners have tried to show how *scientific* their approach is and that the functioning of our arts can be *proven* by scientific standards. We have not achieved much by that – just kept our bare existence in most countries, not being supported in any official way.

I propose to do the opposite. Let us prove we are *not* scientific but base our art on a totally different view of the world, a different *weltanschauung*, which is not compatible with science.

The point in this is: As citizens of a free world we are allowed to believe in and to practise any kind of world view or religion that we are convinced of. And at least the Universal and the European Declarations of Human Rights guarantee this to us.

So consequently no government is entitled to judge over the wisdom or truth or correctness of our own world view or to prefer the scientific one against ours in their laws. This is what we can fight for.

Such a position seems more truthful to me, as it is historically and philosophically more correct, and it is a much better strategy than what we have tried up to now.

A provocative conclusion:

Let us be honest with what we do and claim our real tradition and ancestry. (You lose your power if you lose contact with your ancestors, as all indigenous people would say.)

Why not take other social minorities as A model? The gays became acknowledged only after they came out of hiding and trying to behave ‚normally‘ and said: Yes I’m gay, and I’m fine with that – or black, or lesbian, or feminist, or working-class or whatever. So let’s just say: „Yes, homoeopathy is as much witchcraft as you have ever suspected it to be. And we’re fine about that and, what’s more, we’re entitled to it! Maybe you haven’t heard yet, but there are international human rights, which allow us to live according to our own world view (and our patients too) and not be discriminated against for that, thank you so much.“ – Let’s have a homoeopathic Coming Out!

A few words regarding my article in the winter issue of Links – „Defining a new tradition“

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My article was meant to pro-voke a controversial discussion, and it did. I wish to add a few ideas, that became clearer to me during the discussions that followed.

Like so many other authors today my only concern and intention is to find the depth of homeopathic understanding and to develop its best qualities of healing. Obviously we have different ways of trying to do so and we see different roads to go. About these differing views we should talk, argue and dispute, yet always keeping in mind, that we have a common goal in this and that the intentions of all participants in the argument are the best possible.

Even though I may have the exactly opposite idea of where homeopathy should go as my colleague, I would still keep up my high estimation of them as a colleague giving the same amount of energy, discipline, love and work for their patients and our healing art as I try to do.

My worry and reason to write this article was that by trying to adapt to the scientific mindset we lose what is really the core of our art. By accepting the scientific mainstream (which actually is *scientistic* more often than not) as a measure for ourselves, we also accept the authority of the scientific establishment over us, which will - after my opinion - not do homeopathy any good. My wish is that homeopathy (and other forms of holistic healing) become acknowledged methods in their own right (and not by the mercy of any mechanistic scientist). This is the reason for me to say: We don’t strive to become like the establishment. We are different, and we are entitled to be. They do their thing, we do ours. – Of course this is not where the discussion will end. It’s a strategy.

There is not enough room to go into many details of the current theoretical discussions. Gabriella Serban (LINKS 2/02, p.99) has written the most brilliant and simple article on the roles of therapist and method in homeopathy (and healing), that I have ever read. In this issue Rainer Appell offers further explanation on this.

So I just wish to stress a few other points.

Shamanism

After an exchange of opinions with Julian Winston who said he was disturbed by my article I must say, that I now share his concern about how all this is being accepted by a general public.

To avoid possible misunderstanding, I want to stress a few things:

Many people today are totally missing the depth of shamanism. When I talk about shamanism I do NOT mean the quick-and-easy-one-weekend-seminar-neo-shamanism, where you become a shaman by finding a feather and buying a drum. Shamanism is NOT the quick and easy approach at all, but the one that takes the most of you as a therapist and as a person, your full logic, your senses, all your learning, and your intuition.

Shamanism for me is not a postmodern philosophy of "anything goes", but a mindset that many of us are using more or less unconsciously (at least this is my interpretation), when they do homeopathic work. Homeopathy like any other art and science demands of us that we master our instruments before we can do an improvisation. And my experience in homeopathy (and in life) is: There are no short-cuts.

So my comparison of homeopathy to shamanism doesn't point at any new branch of modern homeopathy, but is my interpretation of what homeopathy has always been grounded in.

Shamanism has nothing to do with speculation or theorizing. True shamanism is mainly a form of *experience* different from the one we're used to. A kind of experience that is based on what you can call trained and educated intuition, which can become as clear and sharp (in its different and specific way) as our five senses.

Eileen Nauman has explained this aspect thoroughly in her article (LINKS 2/02, p.103).

Science and/or Tradition?

If you want a scientific approach and to be acknowledged by the scientific establishment, then you can't always return to Hahnemann as a source. Quoting „Masters“ is sectarian and no scientist will take us for serious if we really believe that a book written 200 years ago is the measure for our thinking and practice. (See Jan Scholten, LINKS 1/02, p.15, who covers this in more detail). A scientific biologist will respect Darwin for what he has done, but he will not study his „original works“ anymore unless he is an historian of his science. It is a major characteristic of modern science that it is developing and that newer books take the place of older ones – replacing and not explaining them. A sentence like „water flows clearest at its source“ (like homeopaths often use to notify that the art of the masters was purer and more true than ours can be) is not scientific thinking at all, but its opposite.

As far as I can see we can take three different approaches towards our art and science of homoeopathy:

- a) as a scientific method like modern „science“ sees it. – Then we have to do studies to prove homeopathy against placebo, to find a good physical theory for its working and to work on statistics of our healing success. Then Hahnemann cannot be a „source“ of knowledge but is only an early exponent of a developing science which has to go much further than he could in his time. No need to read such an outdated book as the Organon.
- b) as a tradition which was given to mankind by revelation of a genius. – Then Hahnemann's understanding of homeopathy can never be surpassed, and his writings are the pure Source at the beginning of all things. Then it is our duty to keep the tradition and the knowledge pure and to concentrate on the correct and true understanding of the Organon. No need for creativity.
- c) as a method and art of healing that is based on the experience, thought and intuition of many generations of healers. – Then we are all part of an ongoing process to find the best way of healing for each individual patient and each individual therapist. Hahnemann is respected to have given a big push to this process and we can learn much from his writings. But our own experience and the exchange between colleagues is the measure for our work. No need to make ourselves double-blind, and no need for sectarianism.

Today we have many followers of all three attitudes, serious homeopaths and good colleagues all of them. But which of these roads you travel on determines many theoretical conclusions you necessarily come to and determines where you see the chances and the hazards of modern developments. It makes little sense for a „scientist“-homeopath to argue with a „traditionalist“ over details unless they first state which point of view they start from.

I have tried to make clear, that I am a follower of attitude c). This doesn't mean that I am against science. I just don't think that homeopathy is a scientific method in the modern mechanistic sense of the word. And any kind of „science of tomorrow“ is but a speculation, a dream and a hope for those who still expect science to solve all our problems one day. I would not have homeopathy to become a scientific or traditionalist sect, therefore I rather adhere to our experience with (the many forms of) reality than to masters, books or scientific dogmas.

So within this context I have to come to the conclusion, that science can be the judge over general questions for only those, who are followers of the ideology of scientism. Within a correct scientific understanding this cannot be the case, since by definition scientific methods can never be used to answer questions which are not part of the particular science that developed the method used. If we ask the question, whether a scientific or a non-scientific explanation of homeopathy is better to apply, we cannot – of course – use „scientific“ methods, but have to define a kind of meta-science to decide.

History

Regarding my statement that homeopathy has always been part of the hermetic (or occult if you will) tradition, I know well that there are other parts of the hermetic tradition which are not taken for serious by many modern people, like astrology and magic. The reason not to mention them was simply, that they didn't play a role in the development of homeopathy – as far as I know. Nevertheless Hahnemann did a lot of ceremonial magic himself since he was a freemason the major part of his life – and ceremonial magic is the core of freemasonry. Hahnemann didn't tell us about his experiences in this realm and so we do not know, how much his life, his thought and his work were influenced by it. But you don't do something the whole of your life, when it's not important to you.

In his days Hahnemann may have had his reasons not to talk about the hermetic tradition. And there may still be reasons today. And even if we were afraid, still honesty is a major value to me. Mechanistic science has not served us homeopaths well up to now and I'm sure it will not do so in future. And I can't see any reason, that we should serve a form of science that is alien to homeopathic thinking. (By the way, did we ever see Hahnemann struggling for a place in the mainstream of his time?)

Just one last word to avoid misunderstanding of terms: I interpret homeopathy as a part of the hermetic tradition of Europe, and I compare it to shamanism. Obviously homeopathy can *not* be part of any shamanic tradition, since there was none in Europe in Hahnemann's time. So homeopathy has an historical relation to hermeticism and a structural similarity to shamanism. Both hermeticism and shamanism share, what Eileen Nauman calls a „metaphysical“ (I prefer „holistic“) view of the world.

Whatever we believe as homeopaths to be our true tradition and history, I think we should leave this open to further discussion and have a fresh look at the facts. If my article was disturbing to some colleagues, then it has served its purpose well, since it was a bit of a provocation meant to pro-voke (to call forth) a new discussion on this subject and maybe to find new points of view.

I have tried to develop my own point of view much further than was possible in an article, which was merely an abstract of a book that is (for now) written only in german language. You can read most of it under my new website www.provings.info