

Preface

Concerning the present situation of homoeopathy

In recent decades we have seen homoeopathy spread on a wide scale - however, at the same time there has also been a considerable increase in "schools" in teachers and in attempts to develop homoeopathy. What is taught and practiced at different schools using the name of "homoeopathy" often does vary greatly with regard to content. Various trends have distanced themselves in different ways from Hahnemann's definitions and standards as they were explained in the Organon. The only thing they seem to have in common is that they all prescribe drugs which they refer to as being "homoeopathic".

There is a lack of orientation amongst many colleagues, if not confusion, when it comes to the right approach to homoeopathy.

One of the main questions is how certainty can be achieved in homoeopathic prescription. That is to say, which methods of attaining knowledge are scientific in homoeopathy and are able to stand the test of critical examination.

Hahnemann's starting point was prompted by his disappointment about the speculative methods of medicine in his time on which he turned his back. How to go about achieving *certainty* in the treatment of illness was what was at stake to him. In his day and age Hahnemann found a way to attain this *certainty* of cure by applying the method of *pure observation*, also referred to as *pure empiricism*. Of course, here it was a matter of certainty in the epistemological sense and not of certainty in the factual sense. In practice this meant that there was a good chance of setting a healing process in motion.

Achieving certainty in the treatment of disease was Hahnemann's lifelong first and foremost priority and yet, at the same time he had irreconcilable differences about going beyond the obvious, beyond that which was perceivable through our senses.

Disease consists only of perceptible signs and symptoms, known as phenomena and it is not the doctor's task to make statements about anything that lies "deeper" or "behind" the obvious phenomena. This is one of the key statements of the Organon and it goes through Hahnemann's entire works like a red line.

In "Spirit of the Homoeopathic Doctrine of Medicine" he demands: "Appreciable, distinctly appreciable to our senses must that be, which is to be removed in each disease in order to transform it into health, and right clearly must each remedy express what it can positively cure, if medical art shall cease to be a wanton game of hazard with human life, and shall commence to be the sure deliverer from diseases."

Pure observation, i.e. *pure empiricism* is the prerequisite so that we may set real against real when comparing the patient's symptoms with the drug symptoms, and not end up comparing constructs of the mind. It is only when we are comparing what is real with that which is real that we are standing on firm ground. Then and only then is there a high probability of achieving certainty of cure. It is only then that we may really have confidence in homoeopathy. Observation

in its pure sense is a main issue in homoeopathy; it either makes or breaks the whole procedure. As soon as we go and abandon pure observation and start comparing constructs with each other, everything gets fuzzy because then we just do not know whether or not these constructs can be taken for real.

The background of this documentation

Is homoeopathy a defined field of medicine or can anyone teach and practice methods under the name of "homoeopathy" that are quite different from one another?

In December 2000 Julian Winston, editor of the North American journal "Homeopathy Today", published critical comments on modern developments in homoeopathy. Points of discussion were Rajan Sankaran's concept of central delusion, Jan Scholten's theories and/or hypotheses on groups of chemical elements in the periodic table and some new provings of drugs by means of which one sought to discover the "central theme" of a drug using the doctrine of signatures, dream provings and other meditation provings. The doctrine of signatures was criticized as an instrument being used to acquire reliable knowledge about a drug.

In particular empathic thinking and anthropomorphic speculation were criticized, i.e. means as they are applied in the doctrine of signatures. Also exposed to criticism was the attempt to assign human qualities to animals based on the empathic observation of these and to subsequently draw conclusions about the "central themes" of drugs.

As a direct result, 21 internationally well-known colleagues (amongst others Roger Morrison, Rajan Sankaran, Jonathan Shore, Nancy Herrick, Harry van der Zee and Deborah Collins) wrote a letter to the editor entitled "Against Divisiveness", in which they urged Julian Winston to resign from his job as editor ("Perhaps Mr. Winston no longer feels able to represent the homeopathic community?")

André Saine reacted to this with an article entitled "Homeopathy versus Speculative Medicine", which was followed by a lively debate on the principles of homoeopathy in North American homoeopathic journals.

It was then that we heard about this debate from André Saine and felt that the tone and style of the criticism towards Julian Winston was unwarranted.

These important questions should be and need to be addressed by as many participating homoeopaths as possible on an international level.

This gave rise to a "declaration" drawn up on our part which served the purpose of calling the fundamental principles of homoeopathy back to mind.

From April 2002 on into the year 2003 we collected comments and statements from renowned homoeopaths worldwide, we addressed approx. 150 to 200 colleagues from different countries, including the managing committees of the German Association of Homoeopathic Physicians,

the German Hahnemann Association, the editors of the German journals "Zeitschrift für Klassische Homöopathie" and the "Allgemeine Homöopathische Zeitung", the members of the board and each individual president of the LIGA MEDICORUM HOMOEOPATHICA INTERNATIONALIS. We sent all of them documents of the discussion and made a request for comments or asked them alternatively to sign the "declaration". Our objective was to inform colleagues and to provide for the broadest international debate possible. This bilingual debate was published on the web site of "Grundlagen und Praxis" publishers (www.grundlagen-praxis.de). In total we have documented more than 100 statements, comments and articles from the past and present which are now available to you here.

Just for the record, we do not consider this documentation as the end but rather as the starting point of a broad debate relating to the methodology and scientific character of homoeopathy as well as to ways of establishing the validity of homoeopathy. We do not advocate dogmatic thinking. Statements which contradict the Organon are not necessarily false. We greatly regret that time and time again every school attempts to base their founding elements on choice quotes from the Organon. It would be more scientific to ascertain the differences and to found them methodically in each case. What also should be included in this debate are developments of the last 200 years with regard to scientific theory, epistemology and criticism of methodology. The question regarding the objectivity of observation is generally accepted and legitimate and it should give us the incentive to look for means of establishing the validity of homoeopathy. It should not instigate us to take up the cudgels en route to arbitrariness.

The articles read reveal a lot of very rational lines of thoughts and we learned a great deal from them. However, the naiveté of some articles and comments was frightful. Regrettably, we also had to take note of the passive attitude of some staff members of organizations we approached as well as that of the editorial staff of some journals. We hope this publication will set colleagues everywhere thinking independently about the fundamentals of homoeopathy. We are hopeful that our colleagues will be more critical when dealing with new ideas and speculations which often appear promising at the start, but unfortunately often do not lead to anymore certainty of cure in practice, simply because, from an epistemological point of view, they do not suit this purpose.

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