

The German original of “Spirit of the Homoeopathic Doctrine of medicine” was first published in 1813 and again in 1833, in the revised second edition of the *Materia Medica Pura*. The English version presented here was translated and edited by R. E. Dudgeon, New York; it was published 1852 in *The Lesser Writings of S. Hahnemann* by William Radde: pp.617-631. The following extracts are especially relevant to the debate concerning the fundamentals of homeopathy and give an impression of Hahnemann’s thoughts on this topic.

Just as life cannot be explained a priori or by metaphysical speculations, but can only be experienced empirically, thus the inner nature of disease as well as that of the remedy is also not appreciable. Disease is only a dynamic derangement of the vital force, and the remedy only acts in a dynamic and spiritual manner when healing, namely with the same force, with which it produces symptoms during the proving in the healthy person. It is absurd and detrimental to conduct treatment by pursuing empty assumptions concerning the nature of disease and the nature of remedies. „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.“

Samuel Hahnemann

SPIRIT OF THE HOMOEOPATHIC DOCTRINE OF MEDICINE

It is impossible to divine the internal essential nature of diseases and the changes they effect in the hidden parts of the body, and it is absurd to frame a system of treatment on such hypothetical surmises and assumptions : it is impossible to divine the medicinal properties of remedies from any chemical theories or from their smell, colour or taste, and it is absurd to attempt, from such hypothetical surmises and assumptions, to apply to the treatment of diseases these substances, which are so hurtful when wrongly administered. And even were such practice ever so customary and ever so generally in use, were it even the only one in vogue for thousands of years, it would nevertheless continue to be a senseless and pernicious practice to found on empty surmises an idea of the morbid condition of the interior, and to attempt to combat this with equally imaginary properties of medicines.

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What life is can only be known empirically from its phenomena and manifestations, but no conception of it can be formed by any metaphysical speculations *a priori*; what life is, in its actual essential nature, can never be ascertained nor even guessed at, by mortals.

To the explanation of human life, as also its two-fold conditions health and disease, the principles by which we explain other phenomena are quite inapplicable. With nought in the world can we compare it save with itself alone ; neither with a piece of clockwork nor with an hydraulic machine, nor with chemical processes, nor with decompositions and recompositions of gases, nor yet with a galvanic battery, in short with nothing destitute of life. Human life is *in no respect* regulated by purely physical laws, which only obtain among inorganic substances. The material substances of which the human organism is composed no longer

follow, in this vital combination the laws to which material substances in the inanimate condition are subject ; they are regulated by the laws peculiar to vitality alone, they are themselves animated just as the whole; system is animated. Here a nameless fundamental power reigns omnipotent, which suspends all the tendency of the component parts of the body to obey the laws of gravitation, of momentum, of the *vis inertiae*, of fermentation of putrefaction, &c., and brings them under the wonderful laws of life alone, - in other words, maintains them in the condition of *sensibility* and *activity* necessary to the preservation of the living whole, a condition almost spiritually dynamic.

Now as the condition of the organism and its healthy state depend solely on the state of the life which animates it, in like manner it follows that the altered state, which we term disease, consists in a condition altered originally only in its vital sensibilities and functions, irrespective of all chemical or mechanical principles ; in short it must consist in an altered dynamical condition, a changed mode of being, whereby a change in the properties of the material component parts of the body is afterwards effected, ...

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The exciting causes of disease rather act by means of their special properties on the state of our life (on our health), only in a dynamic manner, very similar to a spiritual manner,....

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Hence it is obvious that the diseases excited by the dynamic and special influence of morbid injurious agents can be originally only dynamical (caused almost solely by a spiritual process) derangements of the vital character of our organism.

We readily perceive that these dynamic derangements of the vital character of our organism which we term diseases, since they are nothing else than altered sensations and functions can also express themselves by nothing but by an aggregate of symptoms, and only as such, are they cognizable to our observing powers.

Now as in a profession of such importance to human life as medicine is, nothing but the state of the diseased body plainly cognizable by our perceptive faculties can be recognized as the object to be cured, and ought to guide our steps (to chose conjectures and undemonstrable hypotheses as our guide would be dangerous folly, nay, crime and treason against humanity), it follows, that since diseases, as dynamic derangements of the vital character, express themselves *solely* by alterations of the sensations and functions of our or organism that is, *solely* by an aggregate of cognizable symptoms, this alone can be the object of treatment in every case of disease. *For on the removal of all morbid symptoms nothing remains but health.*

Now because diseases are only dynamic derangements of our health and vital character, they cannot be removed by man otherwise than by means of agents and powers which also are capable of producing dynamical derangements of the human health, that is to say, diseases are cured virtually and dynamically by medicines.

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These active substances and powers (medicines) which we have at our service, effect the cure of diseases by means of the same dynamic power of altering the actual state of health, by means of the same power of deranging the vital character of our organism in respect of its sensations and functions, by which they are able to effect also the healthy individual, to produce in him dynamic changes and certain morbid symptoms, the knowledge of which, as we shall see, affords us the most trustworthy information concerning the morbid states that can be most certainly cured by each particular medicine.

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For if we only have before us a register of the peculiar (artificial) morbid symptoms produced by the various medicines on healthy individuals, we only require a series of pure experiments to decide what medicinal symptoms will always rapidly and permanently cure and remove certain symptoms of disease, in order to know, in every case beforehand, which of all the different medicines known and thoroughly tested as to their peculiar symptoms must be the most certain remedy in every case of disease.

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