

# Homœopathy—A clinical science

JESSE A. STOFF, MD

In these misguided days of testing a specific homœopathic remedy against a specific allopathic drug, it is important to take a step back and look at the question in its entirety. In order to gain an insight into homœopathy it is necessary to begin with a holistic image of the being of man. Such an image demands that we reevaluate our conception of the process of scientific inquiry and suspend the reductionistic dogma of western biological science. It further demands that we expand our frame of reference to include a carefully guided intuition. The noted physician and philosopher M. Polanyi has spoken at great length about the scientific nature of intuition (tacit knowledge).<sup>1</sup> He maintains that intuition is a personal cognitive capacity to integrate ideas into a unified cohesive entity. Einstein exhibited such personal intellectual skill in the development of the theory of relativity. Newton unified celestial and terrestrial mechanics and Copernicus toppled Ptolemaic theory, not by pointing to new facts but by creating new visions of reality which altered the significance of the available empirical data\*. In the case of biological science this method of scientific inquiry leads to an understanding of a dynamic physiology. The point is that the research biologist needs to kindle his own integrative or intuitive abilities before holistic medicine will make any sense to him.

The reductionistic approach taken by western medicine leads to a superficial description of the chemo-mechanical workings of cells, organs and body. Operating under purely chemo-mechanical assumptions has proven self-limiting because its own standard of research methods show that living physiological systems are not in chemical equilibrium but are maintained, while alive, in a steady-state non-equilibrium metabolism. Western science fails to describe the mechanism whereby these living systems are maintained. For example, knowing that there are differences between the intracellular and plasma concentrations of iron and copper, and that these levels change rhythmically during the course of a day, gives little insight into the fact that life does not appear to carry material substances on to a stronger manifestation of their own inclination. On the contrary, life subdues and metamorphosizes the inherent physical laws of biochemicals. In reality these changing levels cannot be understood from the point of view of pure biochemistry

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\*Einstein's relativity theory was based upon observations available to physicists for 50 years. Copernicus had little more empirical data than Ptolemy, and Newton availed himself of observations known to his contemporaries. Scientific discovery does not exclusively proceed by finding new facts but by creating new conceptions which make sense of what lies before us and what we should seek in the future.

in that they more accurately reflect the rhythmical changes in consciousness that occur over the period of a day rather than any known biochemical process. It is interesting to note that changes of consciousness which occur with disease and meditation are also reflected in these levels.<sup>2</sup>

Modern science has considered biological organisms as living machines. According to the machine analogy, a living organism can be understood by taking it apart (kill it and analyse it) and then from the knowledge of its parts attempt to reassemble it into its original form. This approach, indeed, still constitutes the backbone of most of contemporary biological thought and is doomed to failure, since once the organism is dead, its essence can no longer be described. The biological organism is the comprehensive entity whose purpose (essence) exerts an influence on the operation of all or its various organs. The whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts!

“No physical or chemical analysis of the body can ascertain *by itself* any of the operational principles, since the conceptions of purpose and of the successful functioning of the organs cannot be expressed in terms of physics or chemistry. A complete physio-chemical topography of an organism would in fact be quite meaningless.” (my italics-JAS)<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in the analysis of a given organism's health, the physical and chemical information derived must be interpreted in accordance with what 'should be' (ie. pathological processes are merely displaced physiological functions). The biotic sciences must, in other words, assess the state of the organism against a *concept* of the healthful operation of all of its functions, the body's operational principles. From a holistic perspective the major operational principle of life may be characterized as that creative energy which orders the entropic patterns of matter in accordance with its own rhythmic processes.

Let us build our understanding of this operational principle of life by reflecting upon a very basic observation: biological organisms are alive. Every organ serves (or has served) some function in the maintenance of the healthy operation of all activities in the organism. Every cell and every molecule has been permeated with the unified aims of the whole biological being. The most basic molecule of water in a living organism may be chemically indistinguishable from one in a drop of rain, yet the former is filled with the dynamic energy of life, while the later remains inanimate. Even in its smallest elements the dynamic energy of the whole organism is enmeshed.

Working with man in a holistic way, we endeavour to understand the unfolding, circulation and balance of this creative energy within the microcosm that is each of us. An imbalance in the creative functional level<sup>4</sup> (Hahnemann's 'vital force') of man causes a skewing of the normal interrelationships and results in a state of disease. While this idea seems basic it is a concept of paramount importance, for now *we* have a way to account for illness. Illness once recognized and accounted for correctly, leads on to appropriate therapeutic measures. In the prevailing 'orthodox' way of studying biological science, the mechanistic approach leaves no room for illness other than mechanical illness... trauma (How can an enzyme be made or react differently than it does?). In terms of medical illnesses talking of gene and chromosome switches quickly becomes a meaningless circular argument. Invading bacteria (alleged germ theory) or

environmental stresses do not account for why the husband, wife or doctor did not become ill. Surely 'psychological stresses' cannot be a factor in a purely mechanical system that obviously does not allow for a psyche; a basic and most perplexing, albeit ignored, problem for the 'orthodox' physician.

Holistic physicians have realized that symptoms are merely the body's best attempt at demonstrating and correcting a supersensible imbalance. Unless the imbalance is worked with on the plane from which it originates, and not just suppressed on the physical level with drugs (drugs may be life saving but are rarely curative), a deeper, more severe illness will result. One can say that 'modern medicine' only acknowledges man's higher energies and source of health tacitly. When one is given aspirin for a headache, the drug works to decrease our awareness of the pain in the hope that whatever caused the headache would soon be righted by the body's own innate wisdom. Drugs, in a certain way, by separating us from the workings of our body, often act to dull our consciousness. The danger, in this approach to medicine, is that by decreasing our awareness of disease and by not treating the underlying imbalance, illness can often progress without our sensing it. Hence the symptoms of sinusitis, tonsillitis, bronchitis and finally pneumonia may come and go, and by separating us from the realization of disease, by treating the symptoms with drugs, and by not dealing with the underlying imbalance, we lose the sense that these progressive changes are all manifestations of the same imbalanced process.

The homœopathic remedy thus being a rarefied therapeuticum, correctly applied, relates to the creative functional level of man and therefore has the potential to root out the cause and right the imbalance. This then raises the question of how to correctly apply the medicament. Culpeper, a 17th century astrologer-physician, echoing earlier masters, stated when referring to the herb alehoof: "It is an herb of Venus, and therefore cures the diseases she causes by sympathy, and those of Mars by antipathy."<sup>5</sup> Hahnemann, a master of later vintage, proclaimed "*Similia similibus curentur*" and then proceeded to outline a system of therapeutics based on this law of healing. More recently, Steiner detailed a hierarchy of the energies of man including their origins and actions. Through his comprehensive philosophy we can now begin to explain more accurately how potentized medicines act on the metaphysical energy system of man.

Later homœopaths have described many different ways to apply the similia idea. A recent text on this point listed over 20 such ways<sup>6</sup> for applying the law of similars and thus building a 'three-legged stool', and that list is not complete. All of these homœopathic approaches bear merit depending on what the outstanding and changed features of the case are (based mostly on the history), and depending on the ability of the physician to perceive and understand his patient (tacitly) and finally to form a concept and draw a logical and thus reproducible conclusion.

As homœopathy is a clinical science, each problem that a patient presents with must be looked at in the context of the individual affected. Patients being treated homœopathically must be managed. Homœopathy is more than any remedy, it is an approach. Any well-designed research project must test within the sphere of that which is being tested. In the case of homœopathy that means following

patients over a period of time while they are appropriately treated and managed by the (homœopathic) physician. The length of time necessary for follow-up would depend upon the type of illness and the remedies involved, as some are said to take longer than others to begin to work. Who can say that a patient's good response to a second remedy given was not because the first remedy, although possibly showing 'little' physical evidence of a response, actually prepared the patient for the improvement (one must obviously take into account the length of time a remedy is said to work for, once it is no longer given). Such problems as 'proper clinical trials' are not new to homœopathy; those who do not study the past are doomed to repeat its failures, as this quotation from 1852 points out:

"Why will not Allopathists remember, that when the line of direction (by way of potentization) of a drug is changed, all the circumstances of the case are so altered, that reasoning by analogy becomes palpably illogical? Their comparison of the drugs in question, reminds me of the silly formulæ made by little school boys, just commencing the Rule of Three . . . such as, if a pound of soap costs a dime, what will a bushel of corn come to? In which there is no natural relation between the elements of the problem. When we begin to apply a remedy homœopathically, we enter on a new field of observation, in which all previous experience with drugs is comparatively valueless. It becomes our obvious duty to record the facts and to practice upon them."<sup>7</sup>

It is a highly questionable scientific practice to dismiss a body of significant imperical evidence (such as homœopathy) simply because the underlying philosophy, which rationally interprets such results, assumes premises foreign to those currently accepted.

#### REFERENCES

- 1a Polanyi M. *Personal Knowledge*. University of Chicago Press, 1962. Chap. 5.
- 1b Kane J. Doctoral thesis, New York University, 6/82.
- 2 Wolff O. Conference on the Seven Metals. Wilton, N. H., 6/80.
- 3 Polanyi M. *Study of Man*. University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 54.
- 4 Those interested in a detailed discussion of the causes of these imbalances should begin with *Lectures to Young Doctors*, by R. Steiner, Jan. 1924, obtainable from Dr M. Evans, Park Attwood Therapeutic Centre, Trimpey, Bewdley, Worcs. DY12 1RE.
- 5 Culpeper N. *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*. 1640, p. 12.
- 6 Mathur K.N. *Principles of Prescribing*. Bombay: Jain Pub. Co., 1981.
- 7 Holcombe W. *The Scientific Basis of Homœopathy*. Cincinnati: H. W. Derby, 1852, p. 183.

## International Homœopathic Congress

### Vienna 1983

When we flew into Vienna I was surprised to see that the city covered such a large area. It lay on either side of the Danube, which unfortunately at that time was grey, not the expected blue. Although the winter had been mild, there was no