

Homeopathic Medicine: The Science of Pattern Recognition

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Abstract: This paper discusses the way in which the world view of homeopathy differs from that of current thought and explores the implications of this difference with regard to the processes of case taking and choice of remedy. Referencing aphorisms 5, 9 and 11 of *The Organon*, the author postulates that homeopathy, being a 'cause irrelevant,' system demands of the practitioner a completely different way of looking at the world than the one ingrained by contemporary education. This way requires not only a careful study of surrounding nature but also an inner study relating to the integration of thought and feeling. Indications are given as to the practices which might facilitate the perception of the totality of patient's story simply as a pattern without the need to have recourse to either physiological or psychological explanations.

Keywords: pattern recognition in homeopathy, case perception in homeopathy

What follows is a discussion on certain fundamental aspects of homeopathic science and the logical approach to the patient which arises from this world view. The argument is made that the world view of homeopathy¹ is fundamentally different from that of current thought and thus it is necessary to question deeply the degree to which current thought entraps our minds and blinds us to the logical consequences of the former. As the issue of science has been introduced it is necessary to clarify the original intent of this word and to see what it has come to mean in this day.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* has this to say: "Science: the state of knowing : knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding." The etymology places the origin in the fourteenth century: Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Latin *scientia*, from *scient-*, *sciens* having knowledge, from present participle of *scire* to know. Following this, we may say that if science is a state of knowing, then a scientist is one who knows or rather has the desire to know.

Science as a noun: "a body of facts learned by study or experience." A complementary view which expands on this a little comes from the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*: "Science (from the Latin *scientia*, meaning 'knowledge') refers in its broadest sense to any systematic knowledge-base or prescriptive practice that is

capable of resulting in a prediction or predictable type of outcome. In this sense, *science* may refer to a highly skilled technique or practice." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science#cite_note-0)

In its more restricted contemporary sense, science refers to a system of acquiring knowledge based on scientific method, and to the organized body of knowledge gained through such research. *Scientific method* refers to a body of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge. To be termed scientific, a method of inquiry must be based on gathering observable, empirical and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning.

Thus far there is nothing which would set the homeopathic method at odds with the definition of science. It is however in the details of the underlying assumptions that the problems arise. It turns out that the basis for this reasoning is the search for the reasons for the discovered beliefs, conclusions, actions, or feelings. It is just here that the fundamental divide is born; it is laid out at the very outset in the footnote to the first aphorism of Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine*:

"His [*the physician's*] mission is not, however, to construct so-called systems, by interweaving empty speculations and hypotheses concerning the internal essential nature of the vital processes and the mode in which diseases originate in the interior of the organism, (whereon so many physicians have hitherto ambitiously wasted their talents and their time); *nor is*

¹ The use of the word homeopathy is here restricted to the system expounded by Samuel Hahnemann and is not meant to include the wide variety of contemporary variants which are commonly grouped under this title.

it to attempt to give countless explanations regarding the phenomena in diseases and their proximate cause (which must ever remain concealed)" [emphasis mine]

Thus it is clear that Hahnemann insists that the search for the reason behind phenomena has no role in homeopathic thought. A little reflection will show that almost all diagnosis and consequent therapeutic intervention, whether it be allopathic or one of the practices now called CAM, be it Chinese, Herbal, Dietary, etc., is based upon a hypothesis as to the cause of the problem and what subsequent interventions are needed to remedy this cause. The question here is not of the right or wrong or better or worse duality, but rather the recognition of the unique position of homeopathy as a 'cause irrelevant' system. Neither do we wish this former dualistic thinking to obscure the discussion. Of course, homeopathy takes cause (or etiology) of disease into account in certain cases; it is, however, only an occasional adjunct and not the center of gravity or axis of the system. Cause is the servant of the process, not the master, not the main force.

Having left behind the world of causality, (this world which is so obvious to us that its reality is never brought into question) to what can one turn in order to establish a base, a foundation upon which something real may be built?

Hahnemann's thought indicates that this foundation may be found not in a world of fragmentation and separation but rather in the world of unity. We might say that this great world has as its representative in the human world what Hahnemann terms the 'Vital Force.'

This is introduced in Aphorism 9 of the *Organon* :

"In the healthy condition of man, the spiritual vital force (autocracy), the dynamis that animates the material body (organism), rules with unbounded sway, and retains all the parts of the organism in admirable, harmonious, vital operation, as regards both sensations and functions, so that our indwelling, reason-gifted mind can freely employ this living, healthy instrument for the higher purpose of our existence."

It is clear that his idea is that what we call the body is subject to, is completely controlled by, a higher energy, or to put it another way, by an intelligence of such magnitude that it can harmonize the unimaginable diversity of processes which constitute the everyday functioning of our lives. Thus while the now automatic inclination of the mind is to flow outward into ever more detail, into increasing diversity, this Vital Force as the representative of unity is in itself the agent of unification, the movement back towards simplicity and harmony. It is the intelligence of this Vital Force which must form the foundation of that which is to be trusted.

In Aphorism 11 Hahnemann reasons that, since this Vital Force is the supreme authority in the organism, disease can only arise from a disturbance of this very same force by an inimical energetic (dynamic) agent

acting on the same level of subtlety. He writes further, "As a power invisible in itself, and only cognizable by its effects on the organism, its morbid derangement only makes itself known by the manifestation of disease in the sensations and functions of those parts of the organism exposed to the senses of the observer and physician; that is, by morbid symptoms, and in no other way can it make itself known." In other words, he reasons that, as these disturbances occur at levels outside of the range of receptivity available to human beings, the only possible way to cognize this, to be aware of its existence, is through the senses - that the inner derangement is expressed through the sensations and outer motions of the patient and can only be perceived by the sense organs of the physician.

In this investigation of the Vital Force what is to be taken into account is laid out in Aphorism 5:

"In these investigations, the ascertainable physical constitution of the patient (especially when the disease is chronic), his moral and intellectual character, his occupation, mode of living and habits, his social and domestic relations, his age, sexual function, etc., are to be taken into consideration."

This line is further elaborated in Aphorism 6:

"The unprejudiced observer - well aware of the futility of transcendental speculations which can receive no confirmation from experience - be his powers of penetration ever so great, takes note of nothing in every individual disease except the changes in the health of the body and of the mind (morbid phenomena, accidents, symptoms) which can be perceived externally by means of the senses; that is to say, he notices only the deviations from the former healthy state of the now diseased individual, which are felt by the patient himself, remarked by those around him and observed by the physician. All these perceptible signs represent the disease in its whole extent; that is, together they form the true and only conceivable portrait of the disease."

What has been said up to this point places us squarely in front of the homeopathic demand to trust in an intelligence which lies outside of the ordinary mind and to use only such data as can be observed by the senses. A moment's reflection brings one to the realization that there is almost nothing in one's education, from one's parents, from medical school, or from homeopathic training that has prepared one for this task. This is what makes homeopathy so essentially different and why its true potential is barely understood, even by many who call themselves homeopaths. We are being asked to engage, to interface with a world which is unknown to us.

As a response to this demand for a completely different orientation to the therapeutic encounter I would like to introduce the reader to a story which is one of my favorite teaching stories, the response of Chen Man Ching, who was a great martial artist, to one of his stu-

dent's questions.

His student asked, "Why is it that none of your pupils approach you? All of them fall far below your level. What is the secret?"

The Master answered, "You are right. There is a secret, but it is so simple as to be unbelievable. Its nature insists that you believe, that you have faith; otherwise you will fail. The secret is simply this: you must simply relax - body and mind - totally. You must be prepared to accept defeat repeatedly and for a long period. You must invest in loss; otherwise, you will never succeed. I succeeded to my present state because I pushed pride aside and believed my Master's words. I relaxed my body and stilled my mind so that only chi, flowing at the command of my mind, remained. Initially, this brought many bruises and defeats. In fact, in some matches, I was pushed so hard I lost consciousness, but I persisted. I followed my teacher by listening to and heeding my chi. In crushing defeat, I forgot anxiety, pride, ego. Gradually my technique improved. My students either do not believe in this power, or if they do, they do not pursue it eagerly enough."

By contemporary civilization I mean this time in which we live, this "age of materialism" in which the heaviest, most dense part of life is considered to be the prime moving force, the origin of all things. Hahnemann is very clear on the fallacy of this viewpoint (Aphorism 10):

"The material organism, without the vital force, is capable of no sensation, no function, no self-preservation. It derives all sensation and performs all the functions of life solely by means of the immaterial being (the vital principle) which animates the material organism in health and in disease.

1) It is dead and only subject to the power of the external physical world; it decays, and is again resolved into its chemical constituents."

Thus Hahnemann's system, the one which gave birth to our science, is based on the supremacy of the Vital Force - on the idea that matter in itself is dead, has no power except that given it by the finer, lighter and imperceptible energies. Hahnemannian homeopaths are vitalists. The world around us, life in general as we know and live it, is based on the supremacy of matter; our culture is materialistic. That is to say, the thought patterns of our culture are materialistic; all mainstream thought, all the ways in which the world is conceived of, are based on the underlying assumptions of the supremacy of matter. Materialistic thought is divisive; it divides things into their components, into parts, into more and more detail. Vitalism sees things as wholes, as unities. Thus our everyday conceptions are quite different from the way in which Hahnemann ordered and structured his universe. It needs to be emphasized that under the rubric 'medical thought' are included al-

most all of the CAM disciplines, which, although they use techniques and therapeutic agents quite different from conventional medicine, are all based on the separation of the organism into diverse parts and functions considered to be independent agents needing somehow to be replaced, controlled or harmonized by external agents or adjustments.

The Form of Our Thought

How we see the world, or more exactly the manner in which we explain it to ourselves, is the primary influence conditioning our perceptions. Without entering into a lengthy justification let us agree that what we expect to find, what we are looking for, that is what we will find. That which we do not expect, which we do not believe exists, will never present itself to us as real. Not only are the thought patterns of our contemporary culture materialistic, they are also psychological. Our everyday conceptions and therefore our everyday interpretations of events are quite different from that of the pre-psychology era of Hahnemann and his contemporaries. Our brains are soaked in the thought of Sigmund Freud, of Carl Jung, of Adler, Klein and the innumerable branches of psychological theory to which they gave birth - so soaked and permeated that, when we talk to each other and to ourselves, we accept as completely self evident our reasoning on the causes of behavior and, thus, on the interventions required to correct or modify these causes. We accept this in the same way that we accept our interpretations of the causes of events in our materialistically conceived universe. What is being proposed here is this: in the same way that materialistic thought is an inadequate instrument for an understanding of Hahnemann's ideas, psychological thought, that is all psychological theories, interpretations and explanations, is a completely inadequate tool for understanding the patient, and thus the remedy, from a homeopathic point of view.²

This is not to say that we do not need a psychology. We undoubtedly must have such a study as was originally intended - psychology: Greek: *Ψυχολογία*, lit. "study of the mind", from *ψυχή*, "breath, spirit, soul"; and *-λογία*, "study of." [How the 'mind' is taken as synonymous with the breath, spirit and soul constitutes a whole other study. What is needed is here an appreciation for, and an understanding of, the psyche of substances, of the fact that matter in its different forms and degrees has a consciousness which is able to express itself through the medium of the human organism.] Thus, it may be said that if there were to be a homeopathic psychology, it would of necessity have to be an

² The issue here is not whether these psychological systems of thought have validity. It is simply that the mixing of homeopathic ideas and psychological ideas gives rise to more confusion than clarity from a purely homeopathic point of view.

organic psychology in which the patterns of thought and feeling are understood to be direct expressions of the nature of the remedy, natural *a priori* patterns. We do not have to make theories about this. We do not need special words or technical terms. These patterns just exist; they express and describe themselves.

What we do need is a careful study of these patterns to try as best we can to grasp their central or unifying thread. This thread is the essential expression of the nature of the substance, that which makes it what it is - its essence. Our explanations, our theories about this thread, this essence are just that, theories. Why it is like it is, what it means, how it fits in with everything else; these are aids to memorization, hooks to hang our thoughts on. They are not essential to the process and must not be confused with the facts, with the truth of the situation. "Do not mistake the finger which points to the moon for the moon itself."

Another way to look at this: At a certain level the expression of these patterns is a basic pre-verbal human experience. We do not need theories or even thought to distinguish a giraffe from a lion, a stone from a flower. There is a universe of direct experiential information available to us. This sounds so simplistic, childish in a way. The mind is cunning and arrogant. It tricks us into believing that all knowledge is contained in it. No other books are worth reading, no other libraries have any information; just this one somewhere near the front of our head. However, much valuable information is available to us through our bodies and our feelings, through our direct experience. On the other hand, we are verbal and most of our overt communication is through speech. Our books are full of words, words through which patients have attempted to communicate their experience. These words are themselves an expression of the pattern, of the natural substance.

But how to understand these words, what significance and importance to grant them, is one of the big questions we face today.

Returning to my earlier remarks: we live in a sea of psychological thought; it surrounds us and permeates our minds like an unseen light which colors everything one color, say blue, such that the whole world then looks blue to us and we never question this "blueness." It's just what is. In the same manner the psychic experiences of the remedies are filtered and expressed through this psychological medium, confused and overlaid by interpretation and fashionable buzz words which we accept without question because we ourselves live in this same intellectualized world.

So, the question we have come to is: What is needed from us to place these words, to grasp their living

meaning, to evaluate their true significance in the whole organic pattern of the patient's expression? The direction of this need is twofold - one pointing inwards towards knowledge of ourselves, the other outwards to knowledge of homeopathy and human manifestations. Of course, this classification is static and the relationship between the inner and outer in the movement of life is a dynamic one.

Considering the first or inwards direction

These requirements are not arranged in strict hierarchical order as no one is more critical than another. We can begin with *life experience*. This is of course impossible to teach and, finding no place in any system of education, is thus only valued by those who possess it. At the same time it is an absolutely essential ingredient in the evaluation of pathological behavior. In listening to the patient's story there must be a simultaneous background process of comparative confrontation formulated thus:

How would I behave in such a situation?

What is the extent (measure) of my pathology in this particular area?

To what degree does the patient's behavior coincide with or differ from mine?

Based on the above evaluation, the decision as to whether this is in fact a symptom and, if so, where does it fall on the scale of strange rare and peculiar?

Now, although this appears to be a lot of thinking, in an individual who has examined his life and reactions with a view to self knowledge, the whole process is over in a second or two. Which leads to the next topic which may be discussed under the heading of "*a quiet mind*." Now this quiet mind does not mean the absence of thought. What it does imply is that the rhythm of thought, the bursts of thought activity have spaces between them enough so that impressions of the patient as he is can enter and pass directly to the feeling or the body. In other words, the person in front of one can be experienced directly as a feeling or a physical sensation without passing through the distorting lens of intellectual interpretation. It goes without saying that this skill does not develop of its own without special training. Just as no medical education is complete without a careful study of the various techniques of touching the body that constitute the physical exam, so a homeopathic education is inadequate in the degree to which the student is untrained in the skills of quieting the mind which fall under the broad rubric of meditation.

Another area to be considered is *a concentrated activity of our sense organs*. This might also be expressed as an intense focus of attentiveness. A field of attentiveness enclosing both the practitioner and

patient must be established. No thought strays outside of the boundaries of this space; no movement taking place within it goes unnoticed and unremarked. If the patient moves a hand, the practitioner is aware of it. If a movement begins in the practitioner, it is halted until its potential effect on the energy between the two persons is considered. All impulses to speak are contained and released only as precise maneuver. No gesture is random. The foregoing efforts fall to a certain extent within the domain of the correct function of thought. A quite different arena, that of the feelings, must be introduced at this juncture. One could say that what is needed along with all the above is *an open heart*. Of all the above requirements this is the one which does not lend itself to any form of direct intervention. The mind, as powerful as it is, has no power over the heart, no authority. This openness takes place as a response to a certain quality of suffering, a suffering which has been lived in experience and thus can resonate to that same quality in another.

To summarize what has been written above: We need a more direct way, not a mental analytical approach which fits people into a theoretical construct, but a living experience of the situation; not interpretation, but rather a feeling for the basic impulses or needs of the organism - like a massage. One is searching for the knot, for the sore spot. When the spot is pressed, there is a reaction - the subject experiences it as quite different from the surrounding area, from the previous touch. The information coming from the patient must strike us in the same way, not so much by thinking about it, but feeling its impact upon our organisms. The strange, rare and peculiar must strike us in the feelings.

In this relationship, in this field of investigation, the directing intent may be expressed as three questions:

What is central to the functioning of this organism?

What are its basic needs?

How are these expressed?

It is just here that we turn to the outside for help. Help is given in the form of knowledge of the remedies. This comprehensive body of information about the organic patterns of nature as expressed through the human form brings us to the other direction, the one in which our attention turns outwards to the *study of the outside world - the remedy and the patient*. Knowledge of the remedies, of their essential and timeless patterns, is a topic on which so much has been debated, argued and written that even to begin to address this in an intelligent way is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that in the view of this author the essential nature (that by which a thing is what it is) of any substance will express itself in a coherent and recognizable form in any medium in which it is released. As regards the patient and what he says, our main focus must lie in identifying and isolating the most central subjective sensations from whatever explanation or interpretation

the individual places upon them. While paying attention to this important aspect, a definite percentage of our attention is also directed towards the physical gestures and the rhythms of speech and motion. However, it is not only the detail or characteristics of the individual gestures, peculiar motions and so on that carry the important data. All these impressions together with those of the organic structure (such as body shape, hairstyle, clothing, etc.) can leave one with a sense of the weight and speed of the organism as a whole. When this particular sense is present, it can offer an invaluable aid in the differentiation between remedies. Remembering that the best prescriptions are those which are based on the fullness of the case, this particular differentiation can serve as an important general of the same order as warm-blooded or chilly, which, when pronounced, is ignored at one's peril. As an example, when the prescriber is considering a remedy from the realm of the heavy metals, but the impression of the patient is one of lightness and speed, or, alternatively, when considering a remedy from the bird kingdom and the overall impression is one of marked heaviness and sluggishness, these facts should raise a significant warning signal regarding the choice of remedy. Considerable emphasis needs to be placed on this phrase "a warning signal." This phrase in no way implies the exclusion or elimination of the remedy in question. What it does indicate is that there is something quite deep in the case which has not been understood, and, thus, the first remedy that comes to mind should be very carefully reconsidered.


One last aspect which I would like to touch upon is *the pattern or 'story' of the life of the individual in question*. Observations in this area do not lead directly to a choice of remedy, yet they provide an overall perspective which, being relatively judgment-free, allows for an atmosphere of acceptance which is in itself an agent of healing in addition to ensuring that what is revealed is close to the heart of the matter. Over the years it has become clear to me that even though we as individuals have a daily sense of choosing and thus determining the course of our lives, this sense is almost completely subjective. Viewed from the outside and over time each life is like a story in which the patient is the protagonist. A story composed of certain basic elements and played out by a predetermined character who is bound to have certain experiences. What is of fundamental importance here is the fact of, the existence of, each of the elements in the story rather than who did what to whom. In the same way as any symptom which is central to a remedy is to be found listed along with its opposite³, so the presence of any particular thematic axis is more important than the particular position on that axis where the symptom is to be found. Thus, in a story containing the element of

³ *Arsenicum album* is to be found both in the rubrics fastidious and chaotic.

violence, the existence of violence is more important than whether the protagonist is the perpetrator or the victim of this violence. Where deceit is an element, it is the existence of deceit rather than who was deceived or who did the deceiving which determines the overall pattern. Where the main elements are violence, deceit, confusion and crime, the story is quite different from one in which the building blocks are struggle, poverty, work and despair - a different story and thus a different remedy. A different remedy implies a different substance transforming different energies, composed of different forces, and whose manifestations form a completely different pattern.

What is of central importance for the prescriber in all

this is not the reason for, or explanation of, the events, but rather the particular pattern which they form in their mutual relationship and, of course, the matching of that pattern with the particular substance which manifests the same pattern - the simillimum.

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