

# On The Meaning Of Being A Homeopath—Personal & Philosophical Reflections

By Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, PhD

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and have the two placed as close together as possible.

—George Burns

As far as *I'm* concerned, if something is so complicated that you can't explain it in 10 seconds, then it's probably not worth knowing anyway.

—Calvin

I think all of life's problems ought to be solved in 30 minutes with simple homilies, don't you? I think weight and oral hygiene ought to be our biggest concerns.

—Calvin

philosophum barba non facit.—Having a beard does not make you a philosopher.

Hahnemann lived 1755—1843.

## Introduction

I am going to discuss with you my thoughts and reflections on the practice of homeopathy from a personal and philosophical perspective. I have worked as a homeopathic practitioner (though tentatively at first) for nigh on 25 years. It is interesting sometimes to look back on one's experience and see what thoughts and conclusions have developed with that experience. From this vantage point I can see things about homeopathy I did not understand before.

I would like to take a philosophical perspective with this and I apologize to you, ahead of time, if you find this sort of thing boring.

Why this topic? I have had an interest in philosophy for a very long time (I will tell you in a moment what I consider philosophy to be). It just seems to come naturally to me to ask certain questions. Isn't it strange that I would read books like Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (French philosopher who received the Nobel prize for his writings in 1927) or Descartes' *Meditations* for pleasure? It is one of the fascinating things about people as to how different our interests can be. It is what makes for endless variety. One person can devote their life to collecting old cars, another to seeing how many mountains they can scale.

I was struck by this on reading a little excerpt from J. Compton Burnett. It is an amusing example of two interests meeting in an encounter. This same thing happens to me frequently. Does it for you?

Some time since I was casually sitting in a pretty garden with a gentleman. Left a few moments together we began to chat, and the gentleman asked if I could discern a bar across the attic window. No, was my reply. "I can," said he, and almost immediately he inquired whether I had been to the Academy. No, I had not. And then in a twinkling he exclaimed: "Oh, what lovely tints, just look at the shade of the plum tree across the path, and that green, I mean there just by the nut - tree." Need I say he is an artist? I had not noticed any of the pretty things to which he called my attention, but I had seen a small issue [opening]—a tiny aperture in his skin covering his larynx.

—James Compton Burnett, in the introduction to *Ceanothus americanus*.

## **What is philosophy anyway?**

So often the word is used disparagingly, as in “I am not interested in your philosophical musings!” the implication being that it is akin to babble. Literally philosophy means “love of knowledge” and usually refers to those questions that consider the nature of reality. It is the bed from which the stream of science has flowed. Before there was the word “scientist” people looking at the world in this way were called “natural philosophers”. Since that time, over the last 300 years or so, really from the time of Isaac Newton (born Christmas Day 1642) who first proposed the concept of an objective world governed by natural laws, science and philosophy to some extent have diverged. Scientists look at the material world, assume an objective world, and try to understand the laws that are behind it. Philosophers ask questions about the topics of science, even science itself, but even more about the kinds of things that do affect us as human beings but are not considered within material reality in the same sense.

If you will indulge me, here is an example from Plato’s *Republic, Book I*

In discussion with friends the topic of justice comes up. It happens like this—Socrates is asking an old friend who is near the end of his life how he feels about being old and what he values from his life. Cephalus (the friend) responds like this, referring to the writings of the poet Simonides: Hope, he (the poet) says, cherishes the soul of him who lives in justice and holiness and is the nurse of his age and the companion of his journey....

Socrates then enters into a discussion of what the meaning of “living in justice” is. The poet Simonides said that living in justice was to speak the truth and to pay your debts—which seemed like good advice.

*[A]s concerning justice, what is it?—to speak the truth and to pay your debts—no more than this? And even to this are there not exceptions? Suppose that a friend when in his right mind has deposited [weapons] with me and he asks for them when he is not in his right mind, ought I to give them back to him? No one would say that I ought or that I should be right in doing so, any more than they would say that I ought always to speak the truth to one who is in his condition.*

You are quite right, he (Cephalus) replied.

*But then, I said, speaking the truth and paying your debts is not a correct definition of justice.*

He said that the repayment of a debt is just, and in saying so he appears to me to be right.

*I should be sorry to doubt the word of such a wise and inspired man, but his meaning, though probably clear to you, is the reverse of clear to me. For he certainly does not mean, as we were now saying that I ought to return a deposit of arms or of anything else to one who asks for it when he is not in his right senses; and yet a deposit cannot be denied to be a debt.*

True.

*Then when the person who asks me is not in his right mind I am by no means to make the return?*

Certainly not.

*Simonides, then, after the manner of poets, would seem to have spoken darkly [unclearly] of the nature of justice; for he really meant to say that justice is the giving to each man what is proper to him, and this he termed a debt. When Simonides said that the repayment of a debt was justice, he did not mean to include that case?*

Certainly not; for he thinks that a friend ought always to do good to a friend and never evil.

*You mean that the return of a deposit of gold which is to the injury of the receiver, if the two parties are friends, is not the repayment of a debt—that is what you would imagine him to say?*

That must have been his meaning, he said.

*By heaven! I replied; and if we asked him what due or proper thing is given by medicine, and to whom, what answer do you think that he would make to us?*

He would surely reply that medicine gives drugs and meat and drink to human bodies.

*And what due or proper thing is given by cookery, and to what?*

Seasoning to food.

*And what is that which justice gives, and to whom?*

Now when you hear this discussion do your eyes glaze over? Do you think it doesn't matter how one defines justice? It would likely matter if the question was personal. It matters in court, doesn't it? Personally, I find discussions like this thrilling and it stimulates an exciting inquiry for me. What is justice anyway? I thought I knew but now I am not so sure. Is it possible to even decide clearly what justice is? Notice how Socrates has taken the questioning from the unspoken assumption of what justice is to more of a focus of its use. When he does this I think about it in an entirely new way, in terms of "uses".

Does it really matter or is this idle speculation? Personally I think it is of the utmost importance to consider these questions because it is this kind of thinking that allows us to understand at a very deep level. This is what drives us in the domain of science, posing questions at the fringe of knowledge. It also changes us at a deep level. Let me put it like this. We all have a model of what reality is or what the world is really like, and we act from this model in our daily lives. So obviously the accuracy of this model is of importance.

To some people this is simply not an issue. They don't feel there is a model, just the world the way it is but it doesn't take a great deal of experience to realize that ways to see the world are almost as numerous as there are people. It is likely that any one of us, when pressed on this, would say that our cultural view of the world is the most accurate (compared to other cultures). The interesting thing is that other cultures say the same thing. It would not matter except that these assumptions that we act from *determine both our experiences and how we act*.

Take homeopathy for one example. Homeopathy and allopathy (if we compare just these two) exist within our one culture yet are they quite different views, with different assumptions about the nature of reality. Allopathy is firmly based on modern scientific materialism that started with Newton and has developed along these lines stopping (philosophically) in the pre-Einstein era. Its philosophical development stopped there and has not moved into the modern era. There are certain premises within that system, not extant, but there, which underlie the tension between the two systems, homeopathy and allopathy. Like the science of Newton's time allopathy assumes the existence of discrete objects that are controlled only by natural laws, laws that can be discovered through material instruments. (We will see how this has changed in physics a little later.) Homeopathy comes to us by a different route, using a much more modern viewpoint, one not so committed to the materialistic viewpoint.

Let's look at this, from Hahnemann.

### ***Hahnemann's Philosophy***

Paragraph 6 of the Organon: The unprejudiced observer, even the most sharp-witted one—knowing the nullity of supersensible speculations which are not born out in experience—perceives nothing in each single case of disease other than the alterations in the condition of the body and soul, *disease signs, befallments, symptoms*, which are outwardly discernable through the senses. That is, the unprejudiced observer only perceives the deviations from the former healthy state of the now sick patient, which are:

1. felt by the patient himself,
2. perceived by those around him, and
3. observed by the physician.

All these perceptible signs represent the disease in its entire extent [my emphasis], that is, together they form the true and only conceivable gestalt of the disease.

Paragraph 70 Everything that the physician can find that is really diseased and that is to be cured in diseases consists only in the state and the ailments of the patient and the alterations of his condition that are perceptible to the senses.

On the other hand, every inner cause falsely attributed to the disease, every hidden quality or fancied material disease matter is nothing but an idle dream.

Footnote 6 The medical-art practitioner can never see the spiritual wesen, the life force, that creates the disease, and he never needs to see it. In order to cure, he only need to see and experience its diseased effects. Therefore, in the eyes of the medical-art practitioner, is not that which reveals itself to the senses by disease signs the disease itself? What else is the old school looking for in the hidden interior of the organism as [primal cause] while at the same time rejecting and haughtily disdaining the disease presentation that is clearly perceptible to the senses, that is, the symptoms that audibly speak to us? What else do they want to cure in disease but these symptoms?

Paragraph 18: It is an undeniable truth that nothing can, by any means, be discovered in diseases whereby they could express their need for aid besides the totality of symptoms, with consideration for the accompanying circumstances. Therefore it follows incontestably that the complex of all the symptoms and circumstances perceived in each individual case of disease must be the *only indicator* [Hahnemann's italics], the only reference in choosing a remedy.

Footnote 17b God, the sustainer of humanity, reveals His wisdom and goodness by openly setting forth for the medical-art practitioner what has to be taken away in the diseases that befall humanity here below, in order to annihilate them and so to establish health. What would we think of His wisdom and goodness if He shrouded in a mystical darkness that which is to be cured in diseases (as is asserted by the hitherto school of medicine, that affected to have a divinatory insight into the inner wesen of things) and shut it up in the interior, thus making it impossible for humanity to distinctly discern the malady, consequently making it impossible to cure?

### **Interpreting Hahnemann from a contemporary perspective**

On first reading of these passages from the Organon it would be very easy to interpret it from the mindset of our training in medicine. The interpretation would likely go something like this:

Hahnemann is saying that we should pay special attention to the symptoms and not become swayed by theory as to the interior changes without some evidence that these changes actually occur. In Hahnemann's time, it was not possible (the technology did not exist) to find out what was wrong with the interior of the body but now medicine has now advanced to the point that examination of the interior is *now possible*, and *if Hahnemann was alive today he would be excited by these findings and be using them himself*.

This is an understandable interpretation from our contemporary mindset but not an accurate reading of Hahnemann.

### **Understanding Hahnemann's philosophical statement**

I take his passages in the Organon as a philosophical statement, a statement concerning the *nature of reality* (specifically in the area of health and disease). So I think it goes, more accurately, like this:

We human beings will never be able to perceive the life force directly or the changes that have occurred at that level even with great advances in technology. That is because all material means and instruments exist in the time-space continuum, a dimension that the life force does not. Furthermore, psychic means of determining this information (*the nullity of supersensible speculations which are not born out in experience*), information that cannot be confirmed, is equally unreliable. Rather the proper understanding of our role as healers is to *directly face the sense-evidence presented to us, to know that this is a sufficient guide for us to be able to cure the patient.*

He is saying that *this* is the information we need—we have been given it (has assumed the action of Providence) and we don't need more than this. So the further implication is that much of modern medical technology is not necessary—the CAT scans, MRI's, genetic profiling, etc. These are all attempts to look into the interior but “miss the mark” in terms of noticing the information needed to cure the patient. Indeed, one of the things that marks a difference between homeopathy and allopathy is how much attention is given to symptoms. I can read a homeopathic case and see wonderful detail on the patient's individual experience. I could read the same case in an allopathic journal and be unable to learn anything about what that patient experienced or how they behaved. Instead we will have a great deal of information from lab tests, biopsies, X-rays, etc.

Hahnemann, in saying the presentation of the patient to the senses of the doctor is all we need to perceive, is making a philosophical statement. He is saying that this is the way it is, not as limitation of his times, but as an aspect of the reality we experience as human beings. The way to cure the patient is to first see them, directly, in a sense to look at the raw data without interpretation (e.g., speculation).

This is of tremendous importance to understand because, at one stroke, it wipes away the perceived need to know and apply allopathic thinking. Hahnemann says the observation of the patient is all we need to see the disease and be able to cure. All the rest of the frenzy of allopathic thinking, research, technology, manipulations are irrelevant (if cure is your intention). Doesn't this resonate with our experience? We come to homeopathy from a system of uncertainty, changing theories, changing treatments—really a world of ferment and unreliability—to a system, in homeopathy, of stability and certainty, simplicity really. All it takes to cure is to observe the patient using our inborn senses and apply the principle of using similar remedies.

Here is another philosophical statement of Hahnemann, one that undermines a major concept in allopathic medicine.

Paragraph 15 The suffering of the morbidly mistuned, spirit-like dynamis (life force) enlivening our body in the invisible interior, and the complex of the outwardly perceptible symptoms portraying the present malady, which are organized by the dynamis in the organism, form a whole. They are one and the same. The organism is indeed a material instrument for life, but it is not conceivable without the life imparted to it by the instinctual, feeling and regulating dynamis, just as the life force is not conceivable without the organism. Consequently, the two of them constitute a unity, although in thought, we split this unity into two concepts in order to conceptualize more easily.

Paragraph 7 The totality of these symptoms is the *outwardly reflected image of the inner wesen of the disease, that is, of the suffering of the life force.* [Hahnemann's emphasis]

Thus in a word, the totality of symptoms must be the most important, indeed the only thing in every case of disease, that the medical-art practitioner has to discern and to clear away, by means of his art....

Footnote 7b From time immemorial, adherents of the old school...have used medicines in an attempt to combat and, whenever possible, to suppress *a single one* of the various symptoms of a disease. This

*one-sidedness*, called *symptomatic treatment*, has rightly aroused general contempt because through it, not only is nothing won but much is also spoiled. [Hahnemann's emphasis]

A single symptom of disease is no more the disease itself than a single foot is the man himself. This procedure is so much the more reprehensible because the single symptom is treated with an opposed means....

Paragraph 17 When a cure occurs through the taking away of the entire complex of perceptible signs and befallments of disease, *the internal alteration of the life force which is lying at its base (consequently the totality of the disease)* is simultaneously lifted. [my emphasis]

I have drawn from the Organon several passages that point to the understanding that disease is one thing, not many. Not only is the disease one but so is the patient. The most accurate way to put it is that there is one (whole) patient who, when diseased, has been mistuned.

What is the implication? That the edifice of thousands of described diseases (as if independent entities) is incorrect. That the practice of making a diagnosis is unnecessary. That treating the patient as if she has several diseases is not an accurate understanding. Can you see how fundamentally homeopathic understanding eliminates most of the foundation of allopathic practice? It has removed:

- Named diseases.
- Diagnosis.
- Multiple disease states.
- Specialization.
- Division of the patient into psychological vs. physical.
- Use of technology.
- Emphasis on laboratory data.
- Symptomatic treatment.
- Palliative treatment.
- Suppressive treatment.

So what is left from gutted allopathic medicine? We still have anatomy, physiology, pathology, surgery—in fact most of the knowledge and skills but now reframed into a different, wholistic, perspective. Is it any wonder that homeopathy and allopathy do not go well together?

Now mind you Hahnemann was writing a couple of hundred years ago and, to me, this makes his conclusions even more amazing. The more formalized philosophical perspective that embodies this has developed in more modern times but Hahnemann came to it on his own. It makes his insights even more remarkable to me.

In this paper I would like to explore this topic with you. I personally think accepting Hahnemann's perspective is essential to mastering the use of homeopathy. I quite understand that others may not interpret Hahnemann's writings as I have. Still, I beg your indulgence in considering this aspect. I think it will have interest to some of you.

Let's look further at this idea of simply observing the patient with our senses as the basis for reality. In modern terms we would call this perspective *Phenomenology*. Here is a description of Phenomenology from a contemporary book on this subject.

I believe a correct description of consciousness and its objects yields a way of seeing the real world as something not fixed and determinate in itself out there, causing what we experience to be as we experience it. Instead, the world becomes what it is as we enact our project—objects become salient as they crystallize in our experience, not before.

Can you see how this is different from the Newtonian perspective? Rather than objects existing in fixed and definite form, the experience we have of them depends on how we approach them (as we enact our project).

Here is another way of putting this from Henri Bergson's masterful work *Creative Evolution*.

[W]ith regard to the moments of our life, of which we are the artisans...each of them is a kind of creation. And just as the talent of the painter is formed or deformed—in any case, is modified—under the very influence of the works he produces, so each of our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form we are just assuming. It is then right to say that what we do depends on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are, to a certain extent, what we do and that we are creating ourselves continually.

The significant difference here, is that we have made a switch from the idea of us, the observers, and the observed (objective reality). The scientific approach is to, as much as possible, eliminate the observer from the equation—leaving just the objects under consideration. What we see in the statement above is the reversal of this. The observer now, in the act of perception, shapes the world into our experience of it.

To bring this back to Hahnemann, he is saying we will see the patient as clearly as possible if we approach him with *a minimum of our own conceptual activity*—more as an open observer seeing just what is perceptible to the senses, this being the bedrock of our conscious experience. Anything beyond this is speculative and not just misleading but *actually creates a state that is changed from that presented to our senses*.

## **Support for Hahnemann's Philosophy**

As far fetched as this may seem to us we have quite a bit of agreement from physics. Physics, one of the most “solid” of the sciences has had an interesting evolution. If we start with Newton and his formulations of the natural laws governing the universe, we see that the world picture of that time was a reality of infinite space ruled by absolute (unchanging) time. Within this framework existed objects of definite shape, weight, mass, speed, etc. The conclusion was that if you could know the coordinates (in 3-dimensional space) of an object and its velocity, then you could predict with absolute accuracy where it was going—where it would be with the passage of time.

This seemed to more or less hold well for quite a while. However, with more investigation and greater tools to study the material world, this whole model gradually became undone. Much of this “undoing” came through the study of atom structure and electromagnetism (the basis for physical life). The realization that it would never be possible to determine position and velocity for electrons, light photons and other small particles put an end to the Newtonian idea. Then Einstein's theory of special and general relativity discarded both absolute space and absolute time. We were left with a very different view of the material world, one in which our space-time is an expression of a deeper reality, one not that cannot be accessed by our scientific method.

Everything we know about Nature is in accord with the idea that the fundamental process of Nature lies outside space-time...but generates events that can be located in space-time.

—H. P. Stapp

We may picture the world of reality as a deep-flowing stream; the world of appearance is its surface, below which we cannot see. Events deep down in the stream throw up bubbles and eddies on the surface of the stream. These are the transfers of energy and radiation of our common life, which affect our senses and so activate our minds; below these lie deep waters.

—Sir James Jeans

All earlier systems of physics...fell into the error of identifying appearance with reality; they confined their attention to the walls of the cave, without even being conscious of a deeper reality beyond. The new quantum theory has shown that we must probe the deeper substratum of reality before we can understand the world of appearance.

—Sir James Jean

In some ways the path that physics has taken, in that the Newtonian model of reality has been completely overturned is similar to how homeopathy has overturned the allopathic system based on the same Newtonian model. Just as physics has found it necessary to acknowledge the importance of the conscious observer in what is experienced—and rejected the idea of an objective reality that can be studied in itself—so Hahnemann is pointing us to the importance of the observer in relationship to the patient. The physicist is looking at, perceiving, an aspect of reality with the realization that what is seen depends on how the question is asked. In the same way the homeopathic practitioner is facing the patient, perceiving that aspect of reality and, once again, seeing depending on what frame of mind (what is asked) is brought to the occasion. Hahnemann is saying that the most accurate way to see the patient is to bring a mind that is open, receptive and free of preconceptions. The churning mind, intent on manipulating what is in front of it, cannot see the simplicity of what is there.

### **The similarity of spiritual and scientific insights**

It is interesting how much the insights of physics have come to be similar to the insights of the more spiritually oriented explorers. For example, look at these two statements.

The concept of space detached from any physical content does not exist.

If there is only empty space, with no suns nor planets in it, then space loses its substantiality.

One of these statements was by Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, who lived around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and founded a major religion which today has 350 million followers worldwide. The other statement was written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Albert Einstein, whose theory of relativity revolutionized the science of physics.

I teach that the multitudinous of objects have not reality in themselves but are only seen of the mind and, therefore, are of the nature of maya and a dream... It is true that in one sense they are seen and discriminated by the senses as individualized objects; but in another sense, because of the absence of any characteristic marks of self-nature, they are not seen but are only imagined. In one sense they are graspable, but in another sense they are not graspable.

—Buddha

The concept of substance has disappeared from fundamental physics.

—Sir Arthur Eddington

The materialist must decide for himself...whether the ghostly remains of matter should be labeled as matter or something else; it is mainly a question of terminology. What remains is in any case very different from the full-blooded matter and the forbidding materialism of the Victorian scientist.

—Sir James Jean

But there is that which does not belong to materialism and which is not reached by the knowledge of the philosophers who cling to false discriminations and erroneous reasonings because they fail to see that, fundamentally, there is no reality in external objects.

—Buddha

The requirement of [general relativity] ...takes away from space and time the last remnant of physical objectivity.

—Albert Einstein

The main trouble with the human mind is that while it is capable of creating concepts in order to interpret reality it hypostatizes them and treats them as if they were real things. Not only that, the mind regards its self-constructed concepts as laws externally imposed upon reality, which has to obey them in order to unfold itself. This attitude or assumption on the part of the intellect helps the mind to handle [superficial] nature for its own purposes, but the mind altogether misses the [deep] inner workings of life and consequently is utterly unable to understand it.

—D. T. Suzuki

Modern science may have brought us closer to a more satisfying conception of this relationship [between spirit and matter] by setting up, within the field of physics, the concept of complementarity. It would be most satisfactory if all of physics and psyche could be seen as complementary aspects of the same reality.

—Wolfgang Pauli

We can see from these quotes how modern physics, in agreement with spiritual insights, are describing a world quite different than the one that medical science is based on. The “new” world is one more subjective, more flexible, more and interaction of consciousness with “what is out there.”

### **The concept**

Let's put what we are considering in a nutshell so to speak. The idea is this.

Reality is not so rigid and solid as we once thought. It much more subjective and individual than was the idea of the Newtonian model. Reality presents itself to us, to our senses, and we than “carve it up” into segments that we can organize and use in our daily lives. How we view reality then has importance on our experience, what we perceive out of the cornucopia of sensory input we receive every moment. Our perception is filtered. There is the basic level of perception, the “raw data” so to speak, in which we are presented with information (reality confronts us) and then there is the transformation, cataloguing, analysis and judgment that follows. The second part, though interesting, often takes away from reality rather than bringing us closer to it. So to see things in an objective, unprejudiced way, “as they are at first”, requires these conditions:

- An alert, open mind.
- An awareness of how culture has conditioned us (and our training in school).
- A minimum of the movement of the conceptual machinery.

### **An example from Zen**

A monk, watching a flag flapping in the wind, asks his teacher “Is the wind moving the flag or is the flag moving the wind?”. “Neither,” responds the teacher, “it is the mind moving.”

Buddha said that when the mind does not grasp things of the past, does not long for things of the future, and does not dwell on things of the present, then one realizes that past, present, and future are empty.

Don't think about past events, whether good or bad, for if you think about them, this impedes the Way. Don't calculate future matters, for if you calculate, you go mad. Don't fix your attention on present affairs, whether unpleasant or pleasant, for if you fix your attention on them, they will disturb your mind.

Just deal with situations as they happen....

—Zen Master Dahui

At first reading of this it sounds as if one should just be vacant, no mind at all, but this is not the meaning. It is referring to that second level of conceptual thought that, according to the Zen way of thinking of things, obscures the real nature of reality. To “just deal with situations as they happen” means to directly confront each moment with a mind that is clear of preconceptions.

People have been used by the mind's conceptual consciousness since before they can remember, flowing in the waves of birth and death, unable to be independent. If they want to leave birth and death to be joyfully alive, they must cut through decisively, stopping the course of mind's conceptual consciousness.

—Zen Master Dahui

The is very typical of the Zen message—that conceptual thought is using us.

The Way does not require cultivation—just don't pollute it.

What is pollution? As long as you have a fluctuating mind fabricating artificialities and contrivances, all of this is pollution.

If you want to understand the Way directly, the normal mind is the Way.

What I mean by the normal mind is the mind without artificiality, without subjective judgments, without grasping or rejection.

—Zen Master Mazu

Does this last passage remind you of Hahnemann saying to avoid “the nullity of supersensible speculations”. In almost a Zen-like way Hahnemann tells us to just face the patient with an open mind, not racing ahead with questions, not thinking in terms of diagnosis or what remedies we have used before—just being there and looking, listening.

### **Let's look at this from another angle**

To follow Hahnemann's advice (and that of the scientists and others quoted above) then we can train ourselves to be more quiet internally when we see our patients. I mean by this that we can become aware of the process of interpretation, comparison, cataloguing, and filing away of our sensory experience that happens automatically. The natural tendency of the mind is to do this, to add what we experience to what we have already experienced and, whatever doesn't fit, to throw away as not important. To change, we have to become aware of that internal process. In that awareness, not just running on automatic, there is the chance that the “new” will take hold on us.

It is my idea that we have help with this. As an example, for many of us that start out in homeopathy there is an amazing first case. If we are receptive, open to perceiving the world differently, then is this homeopathy welcoming us?

Hahnemann refers to homeopathy as having a *wesen*, a life force of its own which includes the body of knowledge associated with the work. Is this life intelligent?

Some of my early cases:

- Trudi—a case of urethral polyps and strictures.
- Dorothy—a case of prosopalgia; later cervical dysplasia.
- Barbara—a case of head injury and seizures.

These cases changed me. When our minds are open and we receive information that was formerly filtered out, then this changes us.

### ***Are We Changed By Our Cases?***

To introduce this concept first let's start with a case. What I suggest you do is to *visualize yourself as the doctor* treating this patient—not trying to analyze the case but rather focusing on your *feelings* as you hear it.

#### **A Case of Syphilis**, from Henry Newell Guernsey, MD

Some time ago, I was called to attend a patient afflicted with syphilis, who had been discharged from the syphilitic ward of the largest Philadelphia hospital as an incurable. I found him in the following deplorable condition; the prepuce had sloughed off, leaving that organ perfectly denuded. At one inch posterior to the corona glandis, on the left side of the corpus spongiosum, was a fistulous ulcer extending into the urethra, so that in micturition a portion of the urine escaped through this orifice. The integuments covering in the pubic region had likewise sloughed away, leaving the muscular structure bare, and ulceration was extending upwards under the pubis.

The entire diseased surface was in a very unhealthy, or phagedenic, ulcerated condition. Frequent painful erections occurred in the latter part of the night. He had had chancres on the glans, and buboes were still in a condition of ulceration. I had the entire diseased surface dressed with sweet oil and raw cotton, and ordered *Nitric acid 200*, in water, to be taken night and morning. This resulted, in a comparatively short period, in a perfect cure, the fistulous opening into the urethra even being closed. Of course, the true skin, prepuce and hair, which had been destroyed, were not reproduced.

Here is my question to you: What has changed as a result of this experience? Of course, you will say how the patient was better, became well, etc., but is that all? *Isn't it also true to say that you changed as well?* Isn't it true that being the agent of change, to cure this poor human being, does something permanently to you? How could it not?

Let's look at another case.

#### **A Near-Death Experience**, a case from Stuart Close, MD

A woman, age 45, previously healthy, had been ill for over two months with what started out as an eczema, affecting principally the lower extremities. In the beginning of treatment by her allopathic family physician, she did not appear to be seriously ill; but as treatment progressed she became more and more ill and weak, and finally was confined to her bed. From this time on there was a steady decline of weight and strength, of loss of interest in life, and of hope, until she became apathetic, and finally comatose. Urinary secretion had become more and more scanty until it ceased, and uremic coma came on.

The treatment had been mostly topical—consisting of the application of various ointments and lotions for the eczematous areas. In consequence the eczema had been suppressed, and the systemic symptoms developed. For two days prior to my being called, she had been pronounced to be dying.

On the day I was called the physician had called early in the morning and said that the end was very near. About noon he called again, and found her so nearly dead that he said she could not possibly live more than an hour, and that he would not call again. At this juncture I was appealed to by her daughter, who had been a patient of mine, to come and see if I could do anything. I arrived about one o'clock in the afternoon.

As I entered the room, I saw her lying on the bed surrounded by weeping relatives. Someone said: "Its too late, doctor, she's gone." At first glance it looked that way, but something impelled me to go to her and make an effort to save her. Paying no attention to the relatives, I made a rapid examination. Her limbs were cold and rigid, but the body was still warm. There was no radial pulse, and no visible respiration. With the unaided ear I could detect no heart-beat, but in my haste I had forgotten to bring my stethoscope. Her eyes were fixed, the lids slightly open, and her features had the expression of death. But the thought of death was not in my mind in spite of the evidence.

I drew down her lower lip and shook a few pellets of *Arsenic 45m* upon the exposed mucous membrane and rubbed her lips against the gum. Then, following a peculiar, but impelling impulse, I talked to her and rubbed her stiffened arms and legs, presently she opened her eyes and looked at me as I bent over her, and whispered to me "I'm coming back."

In ten minutes more she was talking to me in an audible voice, asking questions about herself and what had happened. I then noticed that under the bedclothes, her feet were both very gangrenous. Then I felt sure she had been dead! Here was local death, at any rate, plainly visible. I had difficulty keeping my patient quiet and had to prevent her from talking. Reaction had come on with a vengeance. She went on to make an uneventful recovery and has led a healthy life for these 20 years past.

Did you imagine yourself as the practitioner, watching this miracle? Could you go through this without being changed? I think this is the way it happens: the perspective begins to change, experiences become different and enforce the new way of seeing things, the mind changes more which reformulates experience further—all culminating in a quantum shift that becomes irreversible. At that point we begin to *see* differently, noticing things we never noticed before, perceiving the patient as never understood before.

The point here is that our work as homeopaths changes us. Once we take that fork in the road, in serious application of true healing, we begin to change and continue to evolve—in a new direction.

### ***Does it matter?***

Well it does if we believe Hahnemann. There are implications, one of which, as made by Hahnemann in his masterpiece the *Chronic Diseases*, is that the allopathic approach is *the number one cause of the increase of suffering in the human race*. He says, in no uncertain terms, that palliation and suppression as a system of medicine, are the chief causes for the increase in chronic disease with each generation. If we can face that conclusion in our own minds—no easy task—then what are we to do? It makes having a different perspective all the more critical for us. The body of humanity is suffering.

### ***What will it take for change to occur?***

Another way to ask this is "Why is there such resistance to change?" One of the most interesting and well-known studies is Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In this book Kuhn studies the process of change (or of stability) and refers to the "usual way" of doing things as a paradigm, a way of perceiving reality. The concepts we carry in our heads determine

what we actually perceive, or if perceived, pay attention to. Here is a listing of the essential features of the process (my emphasis added).

A. *A scientific community cannot practice its trade without some set of received beliefs.*

1. These beliefs form the foundation of the "educational initiation that prepares and licenses the student for professional practice" (5).

2. The nature of the "rigorous and rigid" preparation helps ensure that the received beliefs exert a "deep hold" on the student's mind.

B. Normal science "is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like"—scientists take great pains to defend that assumption.

C. To this end, "normal science often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments" .

D. Research is "a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education".

E. A shift in professional commitments to shared assumptions takes place when an anomaly "subverts the existing tradition of scientific practice." These shifts are what Kuhn describes as scientific revolutions—"the tradition-shattering complements to the tradition-bound activity of normal science".

1. New assumptions (paradigms/theories) require the reconstruction of prior assumptions and the reevaluation of prior facts. This is difficult and time consuming. It is also strongly resisted by the established community.

2. When a shift takes place, "a scientist's world is qualitatively transformed [and] quantitatively enriched by fundamental novelties of either fact or theory."

— Outline and Study Guide, prepared by Professor Frank Pajares, Emory University

I want to bring emphasis to the statement above "The nature of the 'rigorous and rigid' preparation helps ensure that the received beliefs exert a 'deep hold' on the student's mind." I think this is an important factor, that these beliefs are so deep that they are basically unconscious and therefore not examined. To make it conscious is difficult and requires persistent work to uproot it. It is more comfortable to stay with what is already known. These beliefs are learned when we are younger and then become "automatic", running below the surface.

This invisible structure of concepts and beliefs continue to influence our behavior but are rarely, if ever, articulated. Instead what is said is some conclusion that is *derivative*, second order. For example, a learned but not conscious belief could be that symptoms are "bad" and should not be endured. On hearing another view of symptoms, that they have a necessary function in resistance to disease and must exist for healing to occur, one may say "I think it is cruel to let an animal suffer unnecessarily", a statement that could lead to an argument that is never resolved because the *real issue* has not been brought up for conscious examination—the meaning of symptoms.

Paul Feyerabend, philosopher of science, calls this background of beliefs about the nature of reality as a "worldview" and puts it like this: "[S]cience contains many different yet empirically acceptable worldviews, each one containing its own metaphysical background."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstraction Versus the Richness of Being*; University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1999, p. 152.

The word “metaphysics” generally has bad press these days similar to the way “liberal” or “conservative” have become words of judgment in a negative sense. Actually the definition of metaphysics is “the philosophical study of being and knowing”, e.g., a study of the nature of our existence, our being, and how it is that we know things. It is the layer above the usual discourse. This is readily seen in the dialogues of Plato in which the word “good” is used, as in “this is a good thing” and Socrates asks “What is that makes something good?” starting a fascinating discussion that lasts for dozens of pages. Yet it is unusual, in our everyday conversations, that we move to this level of investigation, to discuss and consider basic beliefs.

The influence of the worldview is profound. “[W]orldviews have tremendous strength. They prevail despite the most obvious contrary evidence and they increase in vigor when meeting obstacles.”

*“Altogether it seems that people that are guided by worldviews are incapable of learning from experience.”*<sup>2</sup> [my emphasis]

In scientific debate “there is a worldview somewhere, that, presented in its full splendor, *it would not sound very scientific*—and that is therefore hidden. It is hidden, yes—but *from its hiding place it still affects the debate* through insinuations, slogans, and attitudes. Most scientific arguments about realism have this character.”<sup>3</sup> [my emphasis]

I think it is at this level that resistance to change in medicine exists. If we never look at the unconscious content of our worldview then there is no chance for a shift at the deepest level, yet there is really no platform or forum for this kind of discussion or investigation. Unless you read on these topics yourself it is unlikely they will ever be considered at all. Certainly they are not covered in school.

### **Maintaining the cultural model**

Hahnemann touches on this in a different way. He describes systems of medicine as having a life-force (wesen) just as does the patient.

The body with which a collective disease wesen forms a unity is largely supersensible; only its manifestations are perceptible.” Hahnemann also describes the allopathic medical system as a wesen. “The body with which it forms a unity is a body of thought, associated with certain organized activities in the world (which could also be thought of as a kind of supersensible corporate body). Its perceptible manifestations include practitioners with a particular medical orientation and particular forms of treatment which affect patient’s symptoms in certain ways.”<sup>4</sup>

Hahnemann brings in the *mechanism of perpetuation of the status quo*. It a practitioner spends almost all of his or her activity working within the philosophical framework of allopathy, applying its concepts to the treatment of symptoms, studying its methods, keeping up with research and new ideas (staying current)—then this supersensible body, the wesen of allopathic medicine, continues to be replenished, to grow and be strong. Extrapolating this into the thousands, perhaps millions of individuals that spend their waking hours feeding into this conceptual framework it is no wonder that it persists.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, *Organon of the Medical Art*, edited and annotated by Wenda Brewster O’Reilly, Birdcage Books, Redmond, Washington, 1996, p. 363.

Anything I've ever done that ultimately was worthwhile... initially scared me to death.

—Betty Bender

## **Is There A Conclusion?**

I have wandered about in this presentation but more or less on the topic of Hahnemann taking a philosophical stance (e.g., giving us a description of reality) in his writings. That Hahnemann did so has not been fully appreciated within the homeopathic community but to know this helps one to more clearly understand how to practice homeopathy. It also explains why homeopathy has not been embraced by the allopathic community. The allopathic premises have as their ground the Newtonian model of reality, of an objective universe completely separate from the observer. Indeed, the way that research is done is to remove the influence of the experimenter as much as possible. Even the journal reports of experiments are written in passive voice as if there was no one even writing the article.

We see that this is a model long left behind in the march of human understanding. The world is not made up that way and it is an illusion to base one's actions on such a limited understanding. To me, it explains why medicine has gotten itself into the quandary that now exists. With increasing fragmentation of the patient and more and more diagnostic categories of disease (even nonsensical ones like "idiopathic blond collie syndrome") medicine is caught in a mesh of detail and piece-meal treatment programs that can only end in failure. The only way out is to shift to a more real model of how things are—as has happened in physics.

As we looked at the question of how change can occur, especially how one's mind is conditioned by medical training, it is obvious that what is needed for a new model to take hold is to establish schools in which that viewpoint is given at the beginning. It is very, very difficult to bring an outdated model to homeopathy and try to undo it while still making a living. It is like remodeling your kitchen which still using it to fix meals.

I hope that you will now have more an appreciation for philosophy. It may not be your bent but you can perhaps appreciate the value of the function of philosophy in considering some of the deeper questions.