

## THE BIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF HAHNEMANN'S VITAL FORCE\*

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The vitalistic comprehension of 'Life' holds that it is created for the purpose of a superior supernatural destination. Hahnemann is also found to hold the same view on 'Life', so much so, that he is often considered as belonging to vitalistic school of philosophy. But the vitalistic comprehension of Life has numerous versions in philosophy, such as, Neo-Vitalism, Psychism, Entelechism (Driesch) etc: etc.

Opposed to this view another version is also in sight. This view demands the absolutism of cause and condition within the scope of the living natural body. The branches of this school of thought cover the Materialism of the Monism and the Energetism.

According to the Materialistic school of Philosophy energy, power, force, motion, principle, law, mind, life and thought, which represent intangible things are regarded as attributes only or as products of matter. To materialism, things represented are not real, neither substantial. They exist only in the imagination or in thought. Thus not being real, nor tangible, they are not worthy of scientific consideration. (1)

Militating against this view, the doctrine of substantialism maintains that "all things in Nature, which exist or at least can form the basis of a concept are substantial entities, whether they are the so-called principles or the forces of Nature, or the atoms of the corporeal bodies, ever extending to the life and mental powers of every sentient organism from the highest to the lowest" (Hall). (2)

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(1) This seems to be an one-sided representation. Even Mechanical Materialism took these attributes into due consideration. Newton's Laws of Motion are based on these attributes of matter. In reality, modern Materialism has raised these attributes themselves into many, e.g.—Light particle—Photon, Electric particles—Electron, Proton, etc.—*Ed.*

(2) This hypothetical concept is not required by modern Materialism.—*Ed.*

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the numerous hypotheses, regarding the nature of the substantial or entital characteristics of power, force, motion, gravity, magnetism, sound, light, heat, electricity, mind, thought, energy, life and spirit but to find out the abode of Hahnemann's spiritual Vital force.

Hahnemann's conception of "Vital force" was the outcome of his strenuous search for a new philosophy which could explain the vital operations, hidden from the microscope and test tube, a fact which, medical philosophy, as was understood in his time, could not help him much to adjust his new discovery on the efficiency of attenuated drugs, being necessary corollary to the successful application of the Law of Similars. His conception of "Vital force" was an inference, a hypothesis. But it was an inference from known facts, which later scientific researches made it open bud by bud into a flower of verified biological experience though not experiment.

Some Philosophers maintain that Homœopathic medical science views the facts of the universe in general and medical facts in particular from a vitalistic standpoint. Others say, that the vitalistic viewpoint of Hahnemann blends with that of the substantial philosophy in its deeper strata. The line of argument, adopted by this school, regards all things and force including 'Life' and "Mind" as substantial entities, having a real objective existence.

That Hahnemann had this outlook in view on his explanation of "Vital force" was supported from his own statement made about it by him, in the sixth edition of the "Organon".

Here, he invariably uses the term "Vital Principle", instead of "Vital force", even speaking in one place as "the Vital force of the Vital Principle" thus, as Dr. Stuart Close says, "... making it clear that he holds firmly to the substantialistic view of Life—that is, Life is a substantial, objective, primary originating power or principle and not a mere condition and mode of motion—neither it is primarily a phenomenon. Instead, it is the cause of phenomena. In earlier editions Hahnemann called "Life"—a force. But in later editions he had to change his opinion and called it a substance, a power, or principle which acts to generate force.

Elsewhere, he added, 'it is self-existent, self-acting entity and not a mere abstraction.'

From the above, it may be concluded, that Life is intelligent, incorporeal vital substance—the original simple substance of ancients as Dr. Kent puts it.

But in the concluding portions of section "9" of the Organon of Medicine, Hahnemann appears to have used the terms Life and Mind as synonymous and identical (3). The idea concerned might have originated from the thought that both Life and Mind have identical qualities and attributes and Mind being synonymous with Life and spirit is the primary cause of motion. Hence Life is Energy.

But Energy must exist before work can be done. Hence Life and Mind logically and necessarily precede organisation, and thus must be not only the cause but the controlling power of organisation. Life built the body, and Life preserves it as long as it is needed, and says Hahnemann in the last lines of the said paragraph, "so that our indwelling reason-gifted mind—", or in other words, as put by Dr. Stuart Close, "our indwelling rational spirit".

"Ay, there is the rub'. How can reason be spirit? Reason is a late arrival on the evolutionary scene, it is logical, cold and fashioned finally on Mathematics. It is the latest development of Mind, emerged from earlier and different psychical qualities, instincts and patterns of internally directed behaviour, inborn or ready to be released by a stimulus from the outside world.

Whereas, spirit is a dauntless thing that gropes in a material world as something immaterial, intangible and elusive. For many it is a lofty symbol, a quality that sets man off from matter, and stands on the frontier of mystery. Others regard it not as mystery but simply unintelligible mysticism, the survival of primitive superstition that deserves no place among scientific men. More-

(3) There seems to have been some confusion of ideas here, which will be cleared if the Aphorism 9 is read in context with Nos. 10 and 15. In the concluding portion of Section 9 we find—"... so that our indwelling reason-gifted mind can employ *this living, healthy instrument* (Italics ours) for higher purpose of our existence." What this living, healthy instrument actually is, we get from Section 15, and that is a *unity* of body and vital force. So Mind is nothing but one of the basic attributes of this Unity.  
—Ed.

over, the problems that divide the medical world (especially Allopathy from Homœopathy) most deeply, are centered not in matter but in spirit. Whether the spirit is reality or illusion is the greatest question that confronts the therapeutic field of Modern Medicine and Homœopathy. About it toss high waves of controversy. It also underlies other investigational problems of both the Medical world and the answers that we give to it will determine philosophies of Homœopathy and Modern medicine, as also the kind of scientific medical world we can build henceforward.

But the exit of spirit from the platform of Modern medicine cannot exclude the appearance of Instincts in the broad field of Biology. A study of the lower animals shows how complex and amazing instincts are? Biologists hold that they are ancient and original aspects of Mind, rooted in the past and in all protoplasm derived from the primitive self-regulatory activities of the body and grown diverse by the slow, perfective processes of Evolution. But man has few instincts—only one or two comparable to those in animals, performed and almost automatic. In man, there are inner urgencies that guide behaviour, and are no longer precisely patterned and ready to be released, but are more plastic and can be directed into many courses. They powerfully determine what a man does.

Within him comes up bubbling a host of desires that often quite over-rule his sober reason. We very often hear Dr. Kent saying, "before one catches syphilis one's inner urgency leads him to where syphilis is." These are experienced and subjective. Feelings and emotions are their expressions. Here is the origin of those hatreds, lusts and passions, that have made man abnormal in all ages and climes. But from this source are born man's deepest satisfactions, his love for his fellows, his cravings, his moral aspirations, his reverence for something greater than himself in the universe outside. It is not known through which hit of intelligence Hahnemann could come by these thoughts and stress these factors in the investigational field of clinical picture of the sick man,—an event which thus covers only half the field of investigation for clinical data.

The above are the highest expressions of the goat-seeking reality

that begin with the formative processes in every living cell. Reason also is a powerful tool. Its possibilities and triumphs in the future are incalculable. But the influence of these inner promptings that rise up from the living core cannot be evaded. The Zest, the fire, the savour of existence come from something deeper, something spontaneous, native and protoplasmic which human life can never outgrow or avoid. The deep-seated inborn urgencies and desires which are highly stressed on as forming the determining symptoms in the choice of a homœopathic similimum, arise spontaneously in the mind, but are subject to a wide measure of direction, often dragging man down to the level of beasts (considered to be diseased states as well as manifestations often noticed in drug pathogeneses); but coming to flower as the higher expression of what he is in disease and what he might become in health, of what he is in abnormal condition and what he might become in normal state, one might rightly call, it is thought the human spirit. Perhaps these ideas might have led Dr. Stuart Close to interpret "Reason-gifted mind" of Hahnemann as "Rational spirit"—thus identifying Mind with spirit.

But the point arises how to separate sharply the rational from the spiritual side of Man, when both of them originate from the same root and both are closely blended. That a kind of distinction exists between them can be supported from a knowledge of the structure and activity of the brain itself.

The massive cerebral cortex, much its largest portion is relatively recent in evolutionary origin and is well developed in those forms where the beginnings of intelligence appear. It is very large in man and has been shown to be the seat and center of his higher mental faculties and the processes of reason. Hidden underneath its folds, however, is a far more primitive portion of the brain, the Thalamus, which goes back in origin to the simplest of the vertebrate animals. Here, Psychology tells us, is the center of the instincts, of the mental life of the man's progenitors, and here in man himself is the structure that acts as intermediary between the higher centers of the brain and that far-flung system of nerves, controlling all over activities, both voluntary and involuntary ones. In the thalamus, so to speak, the whole body comes to focus. It is the seat of the emotions, the place

where motives and desires are born. If the cerebral cortex is the dwelling of the man's rational part, those qualities in him that we call spiritual may be said to center in the thalamus.

At least one aspect of man, which may legitimately be called his spirit, is established by the lines of thoughts stated above. Still the problem arises how scientists can get at it. It is difficult to see how spirit, though anchored in the brain, can ever be reduced to intelligibility. Emotions can be studied but not spirit. So the scientists say it is preposterous to speak at all of such a thing as the biology of the spirit".

But Dr. Sinnot, an eminent American scientist and a prominent biologist and professor of Botany in Harvard, Columbia and Yale universities says "If mind is another name for the higher levels of what at bottom is the quality of self regulation, present in all living stuff, then these psychical qualities, these inner urgencies, emotions and desires, that we have called the spirit also must have biological roots. Biology deals with life and whatever life may be, it produces not material bodies only, but poems and symphonies, the artist's imagination, the exalted visions of the seer, the heights of aspirations, self-sacrifice and love. They are a part of life, of that richer life of the emotions that distinguishes human beings from the brutes. Shakespeare was a living organism, Lincoln a protoplasmic system, Moses and Michelangelo were complex aggregation of proteins. But they were far more than these things alone. In their material substance, as in that of every great and gifted man, there somehow come to birth high qualities that the student of matter never would suspect were latent in it, qualities rising out of that deep center where life and matter and energy are inextricably mingled." He further brings the concept of the human spirit into more intimate association with the body, instead of leaving it as something merely nebulous, intangible and mystical. Bergson urges us to see the life of the body just where it really is, on the road that leads to the life of spirit.

The great error of the doctrines on the spirit has been the idea that by isolating the spiritual life from all the rest by suspending it in a space as high as possible above the earth they were placing it beyond attack, as if they were not thereby simply

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prevent any ill effects. If you have an opportunity of taking fencing lessons, take half-an-hour's fencing a day, on account of the movements of the upper part of the body, and in order to strengthen the arms you must learn to fence with both arms. If that cannot be done, you must choose the dry and uninteresting occupation of sawing wood.

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exposing it to be taken as an effect of mirage. Philosophers through the ages have been perplexed by the relationship between the material aspect of man—his body, and the immaterial or the spiritual aspect which inhabits it. But Hahnemann was fully aware of this double-sided nature of life. According to him both the material and the immaterial aspects of the organism constitute the unity. In one place he clearly impresses the Homœopaths with the idea that the dynamics and the material organism constitute a unity. In Hahnemannian pathology, the constituents of the whole disease which attacks this unity are the invisible Dynamic affection together with the cognizable affection. Just what the relation is of spirit to the body is a problem which the biologists today cannot yet solve. Hahnemann also could not solve it but he saw the spirit born in life and had a conception that helped him draw it down out of the clouds and brought it in closer touch with human sufferings and their medications, through his new philosophy of spiritual vital force.

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