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LAW Vs. RULE

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We have seen how a single vowel in the dictum, Similia Similibus Curentur, led many to a controversy in the doctrinal, philosophical aspect of Homœopathy. Some contend that the principle of Similia is a Natural Law of Therapeutics, as universal, eternal and immutable as the Natural Laws of Gravity, Tides, etc.; others contend that it is simply a rule, representing a particular method of approach, a technique, that has been evolved to solve therapeutically, for the time being, the problem of Disease. For, while a Law has the dignity of universal, unfailing applicability, a rule is a common proposition devised for the nonce.

Let us quote some passages from the arguments of the contending groups.

DR. P. P. WELLS :

"To call homœopathy merely a rule of practice is a crime for which our language fails to give a designation sufficiently condemnatory".

"It is an important element in the Nature of Law, that it is wholly mandatory. It commends, it neither solicits nor permits".

—*North American Journal of Homœopathy, August 1878.*

DR. RICHARD HUGHES :

"In maintaining it to be a law, however, he (Dr. Wells) confuses the sense in which science uses this term and that which belongs to it in the sphere of ethics and politics. He says—it is an important element in the

nature of law, that it is wholly mandatory. It commands, it neither solicits nor permits'. Now this is true enough of a moral or a criminal law, but it is entirely incorrect when applied to a so-called Law of Nature. The latter is simply an expression of a certain general fact which we perceive in the order of the universe; and it takes the form, not of a mandate, but of an affirmation. 'Though shalt not kill'—here is the law of conscience and of citizenship: the law of Nature is such as that all matter attracts all other matter in direct proportion to its mass and in inverse proportion to the square of its distance. The real question is whether Homœopathy is such a law as that of gravitation. It is an inference from certain observed facts: shall we state the inference by an affirmation, universal, exclusive, unchanging, that 'likes are cured by likes', or by a practical conclusion, admitting of qualification and exception—'let likes be treated by likes'? Dr. Wells, and those who think with him, declare for the former alternative. I must follow Hahnemann himself in thinking the latter the utmost for which we have warrant. It requires a vast number of observations and experiments ere we can formulate a law of Nature, while a rule of art can be deduced from a very few particulars—its application being a speedy test of its validity. I can not think we are justified in affirming that all morbid states are curable by their similars or better cured thus than by any other means: I can only feel borne out by the facts when I affirm that my practical wisdom lies in following the rule, 'let likes be treated by likes' as fully as I am able".

—*Dr. R. Hughes: Principles and Practice of Homœopathy (Ind. Ed.) p. 11.*

DR. R. E. DUDGEON:

"In the aphoristic portion of the work, however, he teaches that the homœopathic therapeutic rule is the outcome or corollary of the law of nature that *a weaker affection is extinguished by a stronger similar one* (Secs.

24—26). From this the therapeutic rule 'treat likes by likes' is an obvious logical deduction".

—*Organon, 5th Ed. p. 206*

Analysing the arguments of the above authors, we come to the following conclusions :

1. DR. P. P. WELLS :

The principle of similia is a Law (not a mere rule), and must be obeyed as such. Else, it not only degrades the followers of the art, but vitiates the principle itself.

2. DR. R. HUGHES :

(a) The homœopathic principle has not been established by a vast number of observations, verifications and experiments, as required of a Law of Nature to be formulated inductively.

(b) So, the principle of homœopathy can not be applicable to one and all and for all Times and Spaces. The canon of universality of application is violated thereby.

(c) Therefore, not all cases of morbidity are cured by the application of the principle, Similia Similibus Curentur.

3. DR. R. E. DUDGEON :

Similia Similibus Curentur is not a Primary Law, but only a corollary to the basic Law of Nature :

A weaker dynamic affection of the *living organism* is extinguished by a stronger similar one.

Let us examine the objections Nos. 2 & 3 one by one.

2. (a) NOT FORMULATED INDUCTIVELY

Dr. Hughes unequivocally alleges that the principle of Similia has not been established inductively. For, it has not been based upon observations, verifications and experiments in a vast number of cases. But is it a fact? Does the history of homœopathy corroborate it?

Since 1790, the year of the proving of Cinchona bark, long six years had been expended by Hahnemann on proving drugs after drugs and verifying the principle of Similia in innumerable cases before first announcing it to the world, in 1796, in his Essay on New Principles for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs. Not

only single, isolated provers were utilized, but prover-groups of varying age, sex and susceptibility were experimented upon. Further, medical literature comprising volumes of recorded experiments on *Materia Medica*, the whole history of toxicological effects, and the dependable evidence of trustworthy medical thinkers regarding the Law of Similars were ransacked. History formed the basis of Deduction, his experiments that of Induction, and they, again, tested, verified and confirmed each other. So, the history of homœopathy records that the principle of Similia has been sufficiently tested, verified and experimented with; and positively confirmed by the history of medicine in general, it has been raised to the certainty and dignity of a Natural Law. One wonders how Dr. Hughes, with such a vast knowledge of the history of medicine in general and of homœopathy in particular, could raise such a point. He himself gives us the history of propagation of homœopathy throughout the world, in his famous work, *Principles and Practice of Homœopathy*, published in 1902, but, strangely enough, he can not recognize that even if the principle of Similia could not be regarded as a Law, at its first proclamation in 1796, it could be so considered at least in 1902, after 106 years of verifications and experiments in millions of cases of sick people of different climes, nationalities and circumstances, distributed through-out the length and breadth of the Mother Earth.

If Dr. Hughes means "by a vast number of observations and experiments", the logical principle of Simple Enumeration, his case becomes worse-confounded. Take, for instance, the reasoning or syllogism, as it is called :

All men are mortal
John is a man
∴ John is mortal.

Probably, you agree that it is a sound piece of reasoning. But how do you come to the conclusion? Upon the assumptions of the first two premises, of which the first i.e., the Major Premise is the most difficult to prove. Have you

approached and investigated all human beings, to come to the conclusion? Neither it is physically possible, nor it is logically necessary. For, all processes of reasoning and investigation can not but be based upon some basic assumptions, which are the fundamentals beyond which no human thought can move. For instance, Logic, which investigates, proves or disproves the validity of all reasoning, is itself based upon the three Laws of Thought, e.g., of Identity, Contradiction and Excluded Middle. It also takes for granted the Theory of Uniformity of Nature, the Laws of Causation and the Persistence of Matter and Energy. Mathematics, the science of accuracy, has its own assumptions, e.g., in "magnitudes equal to the same magnitude are equal to one another." Geometry has its own Axioms which are assumed concepts. So, assuming the validity of the Laws of Causation (that cause and effect are irrefutably related to each other), of the Law of Uniformity of Nature (that Nature is uniform in all her behaviour), and taking for granted the Commensurability of Times and Spaces (that Times and Spaces are always measured by the same standard), Hahnemann experimented with a large number of cases (not all living beings) to verify and test the validity of his hypothesis,—*Similia Similibus Curentur*, and came to conclude, after laborious researches for long six years, that the hypothesis is a proved Law,—nay, "the only therapeutic Law conformable to nature" (Vide: *Organon*—V-Ed. page-38), since it is valid for all living beings, under all circumstances, and for all times, past, present and future. What ground can there be to pull down The Principle of *Similia* from the high pedestal of a Natural Law to the too common floor of a "rule of procedure", when after years of "careful trials, pure experience, the sole and infallible oracle of the healing art", in a large number of cases, and corroborated by all the history of medicine, Hahnemann could formulate and prove the Law of Similars, its universal, eternal, unchanging validity and applicability?

2. (b & c) NO UNIVERSAL APPLICABILITY

Hahnemann says :

"all medicines cure, without exception, those diseases whose symptoms most nearly resemble their own, and

leave none of them uncured".

—*Organon, V & VI Eds. Sec. 25*

But Dr. Hughes contradicts this and affirms :

"I can not think we are justified in affirming that all morbid states are curable by their similars or better cured thus than by any other means".

In justifying the validity of the Principle of Similia as a Law, whether it cures better than any other method or not is irrelevant. The pertinent question that can be is : whether it cures one and all, in all times and spaces, or not.

No one claims that he never meets with failures in the application of the homœopathic principle in the treatment of morbid states. Failures are there, and they must be for all time to come. Else, death and disease would be completely eliminated from the surface of the earth. But the question arises whether it is a failure of the principle or of the person who endeavours to apply it.

Similia Similibus Curentur is claimed to be a Natural Law. But, what is a Natural Law ? The Concise Oxford Dictionary states it as "a correct statement of invariable sequence between specified conditions and specified phenomena". Logically, it is the statement of an invariable, unconditional relation between a condition or a set of conditions, called Cause, and a phenomenon or a set of phenomena, called Effect. Now, a cause, according to John Stuart Mill, is an "invariable unconditional antecedent of a given phenomenon." The cause is the antecedent of which the effect is the consequent. The effect is nothing new, but an event that is invariably, unconditionally interlinked with the cause, as a resultant. The cause may be a condition or conditions and the effect may be a sequence or a succession of sequences called Co-effects. So, the statement of a specified relation between a Cause and an Effect is the formulation of a Natural Law. Such a Law is the Natural Law of Gravitation, which stated formally is : All matter attracts all other matter in direct proportion to its mass, and in inverse proportion to the square of its distance.

Though Cause and Effect are invariably and unconditionally related to each other, the effect or a part thereof varies when you vary the cause or a part thereof. You add to, take away from, and thus alter the composition of a chemical compound or a combination, and the result or effect varies invariably, but accordingly. Similarly, you can show the variability of the universal, invariable, eternal Law of Gravitation. All bodies move towards the centre of the Earth, which is the centre of Gravitation of all earthly bodies. But the apple attached to the tree does not move towards the earth; nor does the bird in the act of flying, the balloon in the act of floating, and a man in the act of swimming. A new factor (e.g., of attachment to the tree in the case of the apple-body, of propelling force in the case of the wings of the bird-body, inflation in the case of the balloon-body, and paddle-like movements of the arms and legs of the human-body) is temporarily added to each condition or element of cause in the said instances, when the phenomenon or effect varies, and the universal, invariable Law seems to be inoperative, though for the time being. In like manner, the universal, eternal, invariable Law of Similia, as it is claimed by the supporters of the Law-Theory, may be shown to be inoperative, which fact does not and must not detract from it the fundamental quality of a universal Law.

Now, for convenience let us re-state the Law of Similia : If the known morbid conditions of a diseased living organism i.e., disease-symptoms, find an accurate similarity in the known properties of a drug, i.e. its disease-producing symptoms, the matching in the living organism, of the manifestations of the drug, with the manifestations of the disease, is invariably followed by the neutralization and removal of the disease manifestations.

The conditions or causative elements in the re-stated Law are :

1. Knowledge of disease.
2. Knowledge of drug-symptoms.
3. Comparison and matching of the above two.
4. The condition of the living organism.

If you vary any one or more of the said conditions or

causes, the result or effect of cure will invariably vary, in direct proportion to the variance of the cause or causes. Therefore, any deficiency in the knowledge of disease or of drug, or a lack of accuracy in comparing and matching the first two, or an irreversible deterioration of the living organism (in irreversibility of organic or functional states e.g., in malignant conditions and ebbing of vitality, which render the organism more akin to Death than to Life), is a factor that singly or in combination with another or two or more contributes to the variability of the effect i.e., Cure. What Dr. Hughes alleges to be the failure of the homœopathic principle is not due to the non-universality of the principle, but due to the variability and variance of the antecedents, the causes, leading to the variability and variance of the resultants, the effects. The wrong is not with the principle, but either with the individual or with the group (in not ascertaining the effects of new drugs or not re-ascertaining those of old ones), who apply the said principle, or it is with the living organism, which is the sole field of the activities of the principle.

3. A RULE, NOT A LAW.

As is obvious from the quotation from Dr. Dudgeon, according to him, the homœopathic dictum is not a Natural Law, but a corollary thereto. The homœopathic Natural Law as formulated by Hahnemann is :

"A weaker dynamic affection is permanently extinguished in the living organism by a stronger one, if the latter (whilst differing in kind) is very similar to the former in its manifestations."

—*Organon, V & VI Eds. Sec. : 26*

Dr. Hughes elaborates the idea of Dr. Dudgeon, and taking over where Dr. Dudgeon leaves, contends that the dictum is merely "a rule of art". But what Dr. Dudgeon means to say is that the principle of Similia is deductively inferred from the above-stated homœopathic Natural Law. Now, resolved into Logical form, his reasoning may run thus :

"A like weaker affection (dynamic-vital) is cured by a like stronger affection.

A like drug is a like stronger affection

A like (weaker) affection is cured by a like (stronger) drug,
which is equivalent to : Similia Similibus Curentur.

Therefore, corollary or not, it is quite admissible that the homœopathic dictum is derived from the Homœopathic Natural Law as quoted above. But, that does not forfeit its claim to the designation of Law. For, Laws are Primary and Derivative as well, as will be evident from the Logical Classification of Laws, given below :

1. Axioms or Principles, that are real, universal and self-evident propositions. For example, Logical, Mathematical and Geometrical Axioms.

2. Primary Laws of Nature, that are of less generality than the Axioms, universally true only of certain forces of Nature, or of certain forces, properties of Matter, but depending upon the Axioms for their formal evidence. For example, the Law of Gravitation, in Astronomy; the Law of Definite Proportion, in Chemistry; the Law of Heredity, in Biology; the Law of Relativity, in Psychology.

3. Secondary Laws, that are either

(a) Derivative or

(b) Empirical.

Of these two, the derivative Laws are so called, being derived or derivable from the Primary Laws of Nature, and are of less generality than the latter, but result from a combination of primary forces or conditions, or forces of Nature in a given circumstance.

And,

What is equally significant is that Derivative Laws are never negligible, as they comprise the bulk of the Exact Sciences. A quotation from a universally accepted text-book of Logic, published in 1898, only five years after the publication of Dr. Dudgeon's revised edition of the Organon, 5th Edition, in 1893 and four years before the publication of Dr. Hughes's Principles and Practice of Homœopathy, in 1902, will suffice to confirm, in conclusion, our stand that the homœopathic dictum is and can be a Law, a Secondary, Derivative Law, far dignified than a mere rule, though less general than

a Primary Law :

"Derivative Laws make up the body of the exact Sciences, having been assimilated and organized ; whilst Empirical Laws are the undigested materials of Science. The theorems of Euclid are good examples of derivative laws in Mathematics ; in Astronomy, Kepler's Laws and the Laws of the Tides ; in physics, the Laws of Shadows, of Perspective, of harmony ; in Biology, the Law of Natural Selection, and others from this ; in Economics, the Laws of Prices, rents, wages, interest".

—*Logic Deductive and Inductive, Carveth Read : p. 268*

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REPERTORIES AND THEIR USE

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One of the earliest repertories is said to have been a partial one, written in Latin by Hahnemann. He refers to the use of repertories in his chronic diseases. The early men were forced to depend upon a good knowledge of the new provings. This acquaintance with the materia medica led to fine examples of cures according to the law of similars.

As more and more substances were tried on human men and women to demonstrate their sick-making powers in health, it became obvious that repertories were necessary aids. No mind could memorize the enlarging materia medica. The detail