

## HOMŒOPATHY AND SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS

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TOLSTOI'S novel, *War and Peace*, was published in Moscow magazine in the 1860's, half a century after Hahnemann's first edition of the *Organon*. When Natasha falls ill, Tolstoi recounts how "they (the doctors) talked much in French, German and Latin, blamed one another, and prescribed a great variety of medicines for all the diseases known to them, but the simple idea never occurred to them, that they could not know the disease Natasha was suffering from, as no disease of a live man can be known, for every living person has his own peculiarities, and always has its own peculiar novel complicated disease, unknown to medicine—not a disease of the lungs, liver, skin, heart, nerves and so on, mentioned in the medical text-books but a disease consisting of one of the innumerable combinations of the maladies of these organs".

The simple idea, the uniqueness of the individual had been one of the guiding concepts in Hahnemann's philosophy; I have shown elsewhere that it is probable that one of the first books he read was *Robinson Crusoe*, a full length study of the isolated individual if even there was one.

This preoccupation with the individual patient was demonstrated before his formulation of the similia principle, in his whole time study and treatment of the patient Klockenberg. Incidentally, he appears to have anticipated Pinel in the humaner treatment of the insane individual.

It is interesting to note that nearly two centuries later, there are signs of a swing back to this concept of the unique individual.

Dr. Tanner in his address to the C.I.B.A. symposium last November sees a place in the medical curriculum for studies of human constitutional variation. He refers to Professor Viola of the University of Bologna, who defines medicine as "the

science of individual variations and nothing else". Dr. Tanner in his sketch of the ideal preclinical training, suggests that in the last three terms human differences are emphasized throughout and stress is laid on difference in behaviour.

This is in radical opposition to current clinical training consisting of "instruction by a multitude of specialists, each on how to be a specialist in his own particular field".

Indeed, these opposing tendencies are summed up in the Greek aphorism. 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.'

Dr. Isaiah Berlin, in his essay on this text, shows that these words taken figuratively, "mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and it may be human beings in general". For he continues, "there exists a great chasm between those on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision . . . a single universal organizing principle . . . and on the other hand, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory".

In this classification, Hahnemann surely would be a hedgehog. He knew one big thing.

When Hahnemann challenged Cullen's opinion of the mode of action of *Cinchona*, he was indeed taking a leaf out of that Scotch physician's notebook. A recent discovery of a manuscript copy of Cullen's lectures indicates Cullen as a man with a modern scientific outlook—for he taught:

"In all our reasonings we are apter to be led into error by assuming false premises, than by drawing fallacious conclusions when the premises are just. We must therefore be remarkably accurate in collecting Facts, as it is from these alone that a proper system can be deduced. . . . In relating facts every concurrent circumstance ought to be taken notice of in order to render them as complete as possible."

Is not this a fox trying to be a hedgehog?

But five years later, Hahnemann had succeeded in isolating his new principle from the welter of facts.

And if at first he followed in the footsteps of Boerhaave, von Storck, van Swieten, in the search for specific remedies for diseases, his experience in the application of his new prin-

ciple led him to retrace his steps. He still searched for the specific, but the specific for the individual patient, not for the disease.

It had been of old the custom of physicians to appeal to the Almighty as the final authority for their systems. The doctrine of signatures was surely a monastic tradition whereby the Creator was supposed to have indicated to those that had eyes to see, the simple herbal remedies, *Pulmonaria* for diseases of the lung, *Chelidonium* with its yellow juice for diseases of the liver.

In like manner, Culpepper, in the 17th century, claimed that his astrological system of interaction of stars and herbs was an illustration of the "Admirable Harmony of the Creation".

Hahnemann, in a pious footnote, writes: "It is only thus that God, the Preserver of mankind, could reveal His wisdom and goodness, in reference to the cure of the diseases to which man is liable here below, by showing to the physician what he had to remove in diseases in order to . . . re-establish health."

Hahnemann, in his pragmatic way, had successfully transferred the "signatures" previously displaced on to the plants and stars, back to where they belonged to the individual patient.

And following the scientific Cullen, he assembled all the signatures—that is the symptoms—in order to make an "individualizing" diagnosis, not in terms of the name of a disease, but rather a pharmacological diagnosis—a diagnosis in terms of the appropriate treatment.

This, for Hahnemann, the hedgehog, was the heart of the matter. The non-essentials to him, were the "improper ambiguous names" of diseases, the identification of the *materia peccans*!

A further stumbling block to scientific foxes was his assertion "that it would be of no practical utility to the physician to know how the vital force causes the organism to display morbid phenomena". Indeed, that it will forever remain concealed from him.

Useless to shout "Tolle causam" to Hahnemann. Foxes and scientists might be interested in finding the causes, but

Hahnemann, the hedgehog, had elucidated his natural Law of Cure.

It was the age, not so much of law giving but of law propounding.

Dalton 1803, Gay-Lussac 1808, Berzelius 1812, Avogadro 1811, had successively announced the discovery of natural laws in the field of chemistry and physics.

Not that these laws were accepted at once by the general body of scientists—far from it.

How much waste of spirit might Hahnemann have been spared if he had been familiar with Lavoisier's experiences and had adopted his attitude of detachment, that detached attitude which he preserved as he was taken to the guillotine of the Republic that had no need of savants.

The French Professor of Chemistry wrote to a friend that "Monsieur Lavoisier has been terrifying me for some time by a great discovery. His confident air nearly made me die of fright. Where should we have been, with our old chemistry, if we had to build an entirely different edifice?"

But Lavoisier replied: "I do not expect that my ideas will be adopted all at once. The human mind adjusts itself to a certain point of view, and those who have looked at nature from one standpoint, during a portion of their life, adopt new ideas only with difficulty."

In the terms of this essay, can a fox change himself into a hedgehog?

For the homœopathic corpus of knowledge is a different edifice from the much larger, more diffuse structure of orthodox medicine.

And the homœopathic physician operates with different concepts—concepts of individualizations, concepts of the similar principle, concepts of the *vis medicatrix naturæ*.

While the orthodox physician bases his practice on concepts of disease entities, of causes, of limited organ responses.

Perhaps one of the difficulties here is the need to keep in mind that medicine is an *applied* science, applied human biology.

The medical scientists will object to the homœopaths'

valuation of symptoms, that they are necessarily subjective and imprecise.

"Such demands for a 'precise science' collecting data amenable to exact measurement and statistical manipulation are based on outworn physical concepts of the 19th century."

To the scientists, "anything subject to scientific analysis and measurement is more real and therefore of far greater importance than all those qualities which clude them". This poet and archaeologist accuses the scientists of talking like naughty boys trying to shock the grown-ups. But nothing is gained if the hedgehogs are rude to the foxes!

The difficulty of the treatment situation as one psychiatrist has noted is that "the situation is fairly constant but by no means standardized".

It does not fulfil the rigorous criteria for a scientific experiment. "The multiple variables are neither described nor controlled".

And here is our dilemma described: "Too much science will kill therapy; too little science will reduce it to the status of faith healing."

One of our dangers is that our ideas have had to be fought for after long battles against heavily entrenched scientific opinion. The risk is that these ideas "become cornerstones rather than milestones and there is always the temptation for those who fought the great battles, or learnt from those who fought, to consider too questioning a scrutiny in the hard and unrelenting light of changing situations and attitudes to be unseemly and unsuitable".

We need, too, to distinguish between sciences and techniques. As has been said: "There is a tendency to think of techniques as if they were merely crude forms of sciences, or perhaps sub-divisions of them. Sciences consist of observations and laws that are formulated to link them together. Techniques are systems of rules for achieving various kinds of ends".

If homœopathic practice of medicine is a technique, whose application requires intuition as well as reason, its techniques are based on observations systematized by laws into a science.

The great men, and Hahnemann was one of them, "are wiser

not more knowledgeable. They see the way the world goes, what goes with what, and what never will be brought together. They see what can be and what cannot". This seeing "is an awareness of the interplay of the imponderable, with the ponderable . . . which is precisely what cannot be deduced from or even formulated in terms of the laws of nature demanded by scientific determinism".

"The scientist, the fox, is not a hedgehog, he has not, do what he might, a vision of the whole . . . and what he sees, is not the one, but always with an evergrowing minuteness . . . with an obsessive inescapable, incorruptible, all-penetrating lucidity that maddens him, the many."

Do not, I hope, consider me too pessimistic. But the longer my experience, the more I feel convinced that homœopathic knowledge is a separate discipline from ordinary medicine, and present-day science.

We have our separate concepts, our separate natural laws, but any bridge between Homœopathy and science is likely to be a slender structure, a foot bridge only for the occasional solitary traveller, not an autobahn for two-way regular traffic!

—*The Brit. Homœo. Journl.*, April, '59.

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