

## THE DOGMATIC AND THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH IN MEDICINE

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### THE COMBINATIONS OF THERAPIES

In a previous article published in the September issue of "Homœopathy", Homœopathy was considered as one of the systems of medical science. It was suggested that in spite of its wide range of application it should not be isolated, but should make contact with the other branches of medicine. Some, such as natural therapy and certain schools of psychotherapy, were found to be based on conceptions which made the combination of these treatments with the homœopathic one an obvious choice. Orthodox physical medicine was found to be based on different conceptions. Therefore its combination with Homœopathy was considered inadvisable, but it must be admitted that the use of allopathic methods should be held in reserve for those cases which do not respond to other treatments. This attitude of combining treatments is based on the idea that there is not only *one* system which gives good results, that there is no monopoly of truth in science.

### THE DOGMATIC APPROACH IN GENERAL

Such an admission is not conceded by the dogmatist. He is convinced that he is in possession of absolute truth. He scorns any idea that a different school can also offer cure. Nature herself, to him, has been constructed according to *one* principle ; that which he has studied and which he applies. This he calls *the* Law of Nature. No doubt, he has good results, but he asks that nobody should be credited with any who does not follow his particular line.

The words "must", "cannot otherwise", "all" and "always" are prominent in his vocabulary. His powers of persuasion may be great ; he makes a great impression on his friends ; but he also has many enemies, those who do

not allow "one Law" or those who maintain another "Law" to be the only one.

Let us see how this attitude of dogmatism expresses itself in the different branches of medicine.

#### DOGMATISM IN HOMŒOPATHY

The law of "*similia similibus curentur*" is often interpreted dogmatically. Whenever any cure by any remedy—homœopathic or allopathic—occurs, it is supposed that the cure can only be interpreted according to this law. It is claimed that it must be possible for *all* patients to be fitted with a simillimum. This would mean that Nature has constructed human beings according to the drug pictures published in the homœopathic *Materia Medica*. Such a statement does not even take into account the results of further provings. The number of possible remedies is unlimited. Each time a remedy is added to the *Materia Medica*, better matching of certain patients will be possible. But even if all remedies were known, an individual patient may well require a combination of remedies, or it may not be possible to match his peculiar make-up at all.

Sometimes the dogmatist makes the following observations in favour of his approach. "The allopathic school is now coming round to Homœopathy. Their latest discoveries show that Hahnemann was right. He was so much ahead of his time." The "high potency" is considered in terms of certain small doses which are used in orthodox medicine. It is not realised that—no matter how small these are—they never approach a high potency and that the principle of potentisation is not acknowledged nor applied in such cases.

The case of vaccine treatments is usually adduced. This is a form of specific therapy which has no parallel in the use of the simillimum (which is unspecific), but only in the use of the nosode.

No wonder the dogmatist makes no impression on his professional colleagues of the other school except one of arousing suspicion and hostility.

#### DOGMATISM IN ALLOPATHIC MEDICINE

The dominant school in medicine professes its empirical character, which means it maintains that it will accept anything which can be proved to be successful in practice.

This attitude is not, however, demonstrated in dealing with such a different system as Homœopathy. The dominant school has never investigated the claims of the homœopathic one. The medical student is not taught the principles of Homœopathy; even worse, these are ridiculed whenever they are mentioned. The medical specialist is kept in ignorance of them and obstacles are placed in his way when he attempts to combine orthodox medicine with Homœopathy.

#### DOGMATISM IN NATURAL THERAPY

The school of Natural Therapy uses the natural methods of dieting (including fasting on juices), of water, sun, air treatments and exercise in combination with enemas, spinal manipulations and massage. It relies on the response of the vital force. This is considered absolute by the dogmatic adherents of this school. They interpret disease, especially in its acute forms, also dogmatically. As a manifestation of the life force it is looked upon as beneficial, a "healing crisis". It must not under any circumstances be interfered with by drugs, whether homœopathic or allopathic. All drugs are considered to be "suppressive". All diseases are thought to be the results of toxins (poisons). All germs are taken to be the "results" and not the "cause" of disease. In this way the dogmatic followers of this school isolate themselves from medicine in general.

## DOGMATISM IN PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE

In psychological medicine the fact of the existence of different schools is well-known and very striking. It is confusing to the outsider to hear a Freudian disagree with a Jungian or vice versa. How can the practitioner or patient choose his psychologist?

Is man the product of the libido, as Freud taught, or is his unconscious life to be interpreted in terms of the influence of "archetypal forces" according to Jung? Is Adler's "social instinct" the only one to account for man's symptoms of mental illness?

The enormous amount of literature which the various schools produce makes one realize the prevalence of the dogmatic attitude.

## THE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE IN SCIENCE IN GENERAL

*Science is systematised knowledge.* There are different ways of systematisation. Each system is characterised by certain basic concepts. Their difference makes up the difference of the scientific schools. The concepts characterise different *theories*. These have no absolute value, are not absolutely "true". On the contrary, scientific theories have always the character of the provisional. The theory changes. With it changes the interpretation of phenomena and often the approach to these; for instance, medical treatment. The present generation of scientists considers the science of one hundred years ago as out-moded. In one hundred years the same will be true with regard to present-day science.

A SYNTHESIS OF SCIENTIFIC MEDICINE AND THE  
HIERARCHY OF TREATMENTS

Each school of medicine should realise the nature of its own particular theory. It would then recognise its own limitations. Such insight would make a synthesis of medicine possible. This would not mean that a particular patient would always be treated simultaneously by dif-

ferent methods, but it would mean that all methods would be kept in readiness. They should be used in the following order.

The natural methods of treatment should be considered first, as they constitute the fundamental conditions on which health depends. Without a sound basis no cure is possible. The habits of life are the basis for health and ill-health. Hahnemann, the founder of the homœopathic school, pointed out that the wrong conditions of life have to be rectified before the homœopathic remedy is given, as it can only work if the patient's habits are health-promoting.

After the patient has been advised to correct his habits he should be given homœopathic treatment. The homœopathic remedy can be matched to the whole personality, to the patient's body and mind. It has no detrimental side nor after-effects. Its use can be combined with natural therapy.

Psychological commonsense treatment should also be given at the same time whenever necessary. A great deal of illness and unhappiness can be prevented and cured by such treatment.

If the patient's condition has not improved after these treatments, the potent specialised methods of allopathic medicine and of surgery are to be used as palliation or cure. A psychological case may require specialised psychological treatment.

Thus medicine would be *one* and all hostility between schools would disappear. They would all be asked to contribute to the common aim.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION BY ORTHODOX MEDICINE

The orthodox school of medicine is all-powerful to-day. It has the full support of the Government. The medical schools and research facilities are supported by the State. The orthodox school has, therefore, the responsibility of administering the right treatment to the people. By

having taken over the homœopathic hospitals in this country, Homœopathy has officially become part of general medicine.

To do justice to their responsibilities, the leaders of the orthodox schools should recognise the mistake of dogmatism and should be willing to examine the claims of the other schools to bring about a synthesis of medicine. Although not every doctor can be expected to know the details of homœopathic medicine, its principles should be taught by the orthodox medical school. As for Natural Therapy, every doctor should consider this form of treatment fundamental. A great deal of ill-health would be prevented and a great deal of money (public money) saved, if the orthodox medical school embodied Natural Therapy in its curriculum.

Such an attitude would, however, mean that the adherents of these schools, too, must make *their* own contributions to the general synthesis.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION BY HOMOEOPATHY

The homœopath's approach is an unspecific one in the use of the simillimum. It must be tested scientifically. This should not be done by comparing results which have been achieved by the use of another system, e.g. the orthodox medical one. Control experiments should be conducted with Homœopathy. The control should consist of cases which have received a placebo, i.e. unmedicated sugar. Statistical analysis would show whether those who have received the simillimum have derived true benefit. A referee should not know who has had the homœopathic treatment and who has not.

Those who had a "true" simillimum may fare better than those who only had a "similar" remedy. The former prescriptions would be based on mental and physical symptoms including so-called modalities (such as reactions to temperature and climate) and peculiar symptoms (such as strange dreams and delusional feelings), the latter only

on pathology such as the existence of boils or cancer or tuberculosis.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION BY NATURAL THERAPY

The concept of the "life force" is to be considered as a guide to the understanding of life and not as absolute. It is true that all therapy is based on trusting this force; on expecting a response. There are cases, however, when Nature should not be left "alone", when natural methods fail. In these cases other methods have to be used. These may be in the first instance the homœopathic one, but may even be ordinary drug treatment or surgery. Not every acute condition can be interpreted as beneficial. Some fevers may be followed by a higher level of health—these are the "healing crises"—others may lead to permanent weakness or death. These are not healing. The *interpretation* of the clinical phenomena is the decisive factor. From it the choice of treatment follows.

#### THE CONTRIBUTION BY PSYCHOTHERAPY

The limitations of each school become obvious if one realises the general limitations of a system of science. In the case of psychotherapy the fact of *subjectivity* of psychological phenomena adds to the difficulty of scientific objective judgment. All feelings, sensations and urges, etc., are only subjective. They are real to the person who experiences them, but the scientific observer can only conclude their presence from the patient's description and from observing his gestures, facial expression and posture, etc. This leads to possible errors.

The mind has no extension in space, therefore it cannot be demonstrated as existing as can the body. Our language uses pictorial spatial expressions which in the case of mental phenomena are only figurative. There is no real "threshold" of consciousness, the personality has no parts which can be conceived in terms of "above" or "below". The various "parts" of the mind as pictured in

some of Freud's works have to be understood with this proviso.

The claim of the existence of spiritual forces in Jung's system amounts to moral valuation which is foreign to science. He condemns Freud's influence from a moral point of view. He asserts the existence of the archetype of God in terms which come near to the affirmation of God by a religious writer. Adler has admitted that to him the social sense is of absolute metaphysical nature. In that he has made an unscientific statement.

#### CONCLUSION

Dogmatism is characterised by the claim of absoluteness. This is foreign to science although it has its place in religion and metaphysics.

A physician has to understand the nature of scientific knowledge. He will then avoid dogmatism and remain open to different approaches to life. He will be tolerant and aware of the limitations of every scientific approach and of his own limitations. He will try to add to his knowledge in different fields. He will work for a synthesis in medicine. His patients will thus benefit most. He will follow Hippocrates, the Father of medicine, who taught "Life is short, the art long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgment difficult".

—*Homœopathy*, October 1951.

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