

WAS KENT A HAHNEMANNIAN?

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An adulator is far worse than a vilifier.
—A Punjabi Proverb.

Kent has been hailed as a true disciple of Hahnemann.¹ There should be a reassessment in the light of the following contrasts between the views of Kent and Hahnemann:

ON 'AUTHORITY' AND 'EXPERIENCE'

Kent: "We must begin by having respect for law... Let us acknowledge the authority."²

"...and medicine today, outside of homoeopathy, is a 'medicine of experience'... It is necessary that the exact and proper position of experience should be realized... Experience has... only a confirmatory place. It can only confirm that which has been discovered through principle... Experience leads to no discoveries... One who has no doctrines... imagines he discovers by experience."³

Hahnemann: "Medicine is the science of experience..."⁴

"The true healing art is in its nature a pure science of experience..."⁵

"...the complete true healing art, can never be the work of self satisfied ratiocination..., but that the requisite for this, ... are only to be discovered by due attention to nature by means of our senses, by careful honest observations and by experiments conducted with all possible purity and *in no other way*..."⁶

"I demand no faith at all, and do not demand that anybody should comprehend it. Neither do I comprehend it; it is enough that it is a fact and nothing else. Experience alone declares it, and I believe more in experience than in my own intelligence."⁷

"But *what* and *how much*... can be determined by no speculative reason or unreason, but *experience* alone must determine..., and *in the domain of facts there is no appeal from experience*..."⁸

ON RELATION OF SKIN SYMPTOMS TO INTERNAL MALADY

Kent: "But this very scientific ignorant doctor has made a failure; he has driven what was upon the surface and harmless into the innermost precincts of the economy and the patient is going to die as a result of scientific ignorance."⁹

Hahnemann: "The diseases... springing from such a onesided destruction of the chief skin symptom (eruption and itching) which acts vicariously

and assuages the internal *psora* (which destruction is ERRONEOUSLY called 'Driving the itch into the body:)..."¹⁰

"All miasmatic maladies... are always present as internal maladies... before they show their local (skin) symptoms"¹¹

"... when the development of the (internal) venereal disease has been completed, only then diseased nature endeavours to mitigate the internal evil and to soothe it, by producing a local symptom..."¹²

"... some wretched casuists have considered as resulting from driving back of the poison out of the chancre into the interior of the body..."¹³

ON PSORA

Kent: "Psora is the beginning of ALL physical sickness. Had psora never been established as a miasm on the human race, the other two chronic diseases would have been impossible and susceptibility to acute diseases would have been impossible. All the diseases of man are built upon... it (psora) goes to the very primitive wrong of the human race... that is the spiritual sickness, from which... the race progressed into... the true susceptibility to psora..."¹⁴

Hahnemann: "... the ailments and infirmities of body and soul... (if they do not belong to the two venereal diseases, *syphilis* and *sycosis*) are... manifestations of (psora)."¹⁵

"In Europe and also in other continents... only three chronic miasms are known..."¹⁶

"... and indeed so many that at least *seven eighths* of all the chronic maladies spring from it (psora)... while the *remaining eighth* spring from *syphilis* and *sycosis*, or from a complication of two of these three... chronic diseases, or (which is very rare) from a complication of all three of them."¹⁷

ON VITALISM

Kent: "Hahnemann could perceive this immaterial vital principle. It was something he arrived at himself, from his own process of thinking (but all historians mention that it was Joseph Barthez, b. 1734, d. 1806, who introduced the term "vital principle"¹⁸). There was paucity of individual ideas at that time... but Hahnemann thought much, and by thinking he arrived at the ideas contained in this (i.e. the 9th paragraph of the 5th edition of the *Organon*), which only appeared in the last (i.e. 5th, edition of 1833)."¹⁹

(Allusion to "vital force" appeared in the *Chronic Diseases*²⁰, published in 1828, and in the fourth edition of the *Organon* that we shall refer to shortly. *Kent* substitutes "simple substance" for "immaterial vital principle" in the paragraphs subsequent to the one cited above—vide reference 19. This new expression appears to be *Kent's* own coinage. Imputation of "much thought" to Hahnemann appears to be *Kent's* projection of his own thinking, the result

of which was the new expression. Hahnemann's views on reasoning and speculation are clear in reference 8).

"...simple substance is *endowed with formative intelligence*..."²¹

Hahnemann: "...the instinctive, irrational, unreasoning vital force (in stinkartige, verstandlose, keiner Ueberlegung fähige...Lebenskraft—this could also be translated: instinctive, unable to reason/understand, without capacity for reflection)"²² (the contrast between Kent and Hahnemann over the attributes of vital force is obvious from these words).

"...unreasoning, merely animal vital force (die verstandlose, bloss animalische Lebenskraft.)"²³

ON BACTERIOLOGY

Kent: "Hahnemann did not adopt any such theory as bacteriology."

Hahnemann: "...the cholera miasm...grows into an enormously increased brood of those excessively minute, invisible creatures..."²⁴ (How else could one have described bacteria at that time!)

Why was Kent so often wobbling off the pivot? Perhaps it was not for nothing that Jouanny wrote:

"The second trap is to do what certain absent-minded homeopathic doctors do, namely to consider only the symptoms of the patient in his reaction to his disease, and in particular his psychic signs. This was the attitude of Kent and his spiritualistic school which went so far as to say that 'the pathognomonic signs of the disease have no importance in the selection of the homeopathic drug.'

"This is a philosophical attitude which makes Homcopathy into a theology, and considers man to be made only of the soul. There is a great danger here....

"This attitude has practically destroyed Homeopathy in America where it was at one time a flourishing discipline. It is now practised by a few esoteric doctors.

"One can say that this attitude is not in conformity with the method set out and defined by Hahnemann, because generally the 'psychic symptoms' taken into consideration by the followers of Kent, are not experimental changes in the mental behaviour of a patient, but the psychological characteristics of susceptible types of individuals. This is the result of the subjective interpretation of the experimenter and the patient. These doctors select the homeopathic drugs on the basis of 'psychic symptoms'... such a practice can be justifiably criticised..."²⁵

Kent's Homoeopathy is not necessarily always Hahnemannian. As Campbell recently put it: "Nevertheless, it does not take a very detailed study of the history of homocopathy to show that modern practice actually differs in quite significant ways from Hahnemann's own practice. In both England and

America, for example, the influence of J. T. Kent, who imported certain ideas derived from Swedenborg, has been paramount since shortly after the turn of the century."²⁶

Hahnemann's distinction between the responses of the animate and the inanimate; his views about adaptive responses of the organisms;²⁷ his stress on the value of signals in biology;²⁸ his almost foreshadowing of "the law of initial value" of Joseph Wilder;²⁹ his near modern views on nutrition;³¹ and his suggestions for psychological exercise³² are all missing from Kent's writings. One feels constrained to ponder how far the words of Inglis (on the relation of Galen to Hippocrates) would apply also to the relation of Kent to Hahnemann.

"Ostensibly of the Hippocratic school, he was to subvert its saner teachings. Hippocrates, Galen admitted, had lead the way... 'He opened the road, I have made it passable.'... Galen was able to impose his views on how the road should be followed; and as a prolific writer, he saw to it that they were published."³³

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HAHNEMANN'S THEORY OF CONCEPTUAL ESSENCES

(Continued from 160)

We are never to forget that ideas are forms of force which must have at some level their effects and by resonance influence all planes of being.

Finally may I quote from the 6th edition of the *Organon*, paragraph 275: "The suitability of a medicine for any given case of disease does not depend on its accurate homoeopathic selection alone, but likewise on the proper size, or rather the smallness, of the dose."

REFERENCES

All quotes are from translations of the *Organon* by Dudgeon & Boericke.

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