

MEDICINES—WHAT ARE THEY

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Over the world the story of medicine has no more acrimonious chapter than the war between scientific development and traditional prejudice as to precisely what a medicine is. Certain things in their natural state do us good and other things in their natural state do us harm, and in between there are things which in their natural state do neither. Looking about for possible medicines the medicine men passed by the good things and the neutral things and chose the harm-doers. Their one idea seemed to be that for a substance to alter the state of a sick person it must have power to harm both the sick and the well. After some seven thousand years of never questioning this idea, Hahnemann did question it. He devised and carried out systematic scientific testing and in the course of time arrived at a truth about medicines of the utmost precision which he could demonstrate beyond all question, and so could anyone else who was willing to take the pains.

The wonder was that the question, 'What are medicines any way?', had never been asked before. It might be supposed that everyone would have been curious. It might have been expected that as soon as someone did ask the question and dug into it scientifically to bring up the answer, every physician and every druggist would feel a sense of relief and gratitude; but the answer was simple and clear and straight, confounding previous notions, undressing professional pomp to awkward nudity, and divesting a big business in drugs of the bulk of its income. The answer, put into practice, was potentized medicine. Potentization brought into service as medicines the good things as well as the harmful and made precious medicines out of the neutrals, enormously enriching the field of choice for the physician and delicately refining medicinal action, at the same time revealing in it unsuspected power.

History seems to show that never so great a boon to mankind wins without a struggle with self-interest and with face-saving self pride. So the war was on. And so the war continues. But no one who follows the scientific steps or who makes clinical test of the results is ever at war with potentization.

POTENTIZING

Hahnemann had been vigilant and this had put him on the track of the law of similars. He had seen that the law of similars holds good whatever the substances used as medicines, but what he needed was the most incisive medicines possible to discover, which could be selected with precision and which would act without effects other than those intended. It was already known that medicines then in use were producing side-effects and over-effects far beyond control, often more hazardous than the ills they were given for, and

it was almost an axiom that if the patient got over his original complaints he still had to recover from his doctor's medicines. Moreover, so fuzzy was the knowledge about any of the medicines that doctors were combining them in prescriptions written in mystic code for the druggist to put up, in the hope that between the various ingredients the various symptoms of the case might be covered or that in case one or more of the ingredients would not work then at least one of them might. That theory of prescribing still prevails; the only practical change is that the drug manufacturers are now doing more of the combining and the physicians less.

It was already seen, too, at that time, that another assumption about medicines needed revision—the assumption that if a little does a little good then more will do more good. This notion was leading cases from bad to worse. Hahnemann himself had encountered so much of this in his own early practices and in his own immediate family that he had given up being a doctor at all. But one of his eminent talents was in the field of chemistry, and he had been captivated by what could be done with infinitesimal subdivision of matter. He had pulverized a metal, that would not go into solution by dissolving, until it became soluble. He would now do something like this with medicines and see what happened.

Quite to his surprise, infinitely subdivided medicines seemed to take on new powers. Also they seemed to sharpen—to drop off some of their after-effects and over-effects and to retain their medicinal characters in nicer purity. Now, the scientist observes trends, but he also seeks to measure them. Hahnemann did his subdividing by uniform steps, adopting for convenience the scale of one to nine, so that as he went on he evolved a series of one-tenths, easy to reckon, easy to write, easy to keep track of. At each step the amount of medicine in the alcohol or milk sugar, the non-medicinal carrier, became one-tenth of what it was at the step before. And then another factor arose. Such a progression of steps would not go far before the original medicine would disappear completely and could not be found as a substance by any kind of analysis, and what would happen then? The way to find that out was to make every step as destructive as possible of the original substance, so the process of succussion was employed as well as the process of subdivision at every step of the way, deliberately to divest the substance of its material mass and to liberate whatever energy might be locked within it. What happened was precisely what had surprised Hahnemann at the outset, only more of it. Over-effects and after-effects dropped out more and more as the steps proceeded; the medicinal character of the substance continued step by step to purify and sublimate; the medicine progressively took on higher power to alter the state of the human being.

Seeking to explain what his researches revealed, Hahnemann said, *Das milde macht ist gross*—"The gentle force is great"—a fresh and priceless concept. Standing in the nation's capital across the street from the new shining headquarters of the American Association for the Advancement of

Science is the Hahnemann Monument, the enshrinement of a great master, given to the nation by the American Institute of Homoeopathy sixty-two years ago. It says among other things in carved letters, *Das milde macht ist gross*. The scientist who wants to fit with the truth of today and the science of tomorrow does well if he stands before that inscription in thought and allows it to sink in.

THE IMPACT

For what is perhaps the most accurate appraisal of this accomplishment by Hahnemann, consider a few paragraphs from *The Principles and Art of Cure by Homoeopathy*, second edition (1942) by Herbert A. Roberts:

"So Hahnemann, setting out simply to reduce the quantity of his doses, discovered potentization, an entirely new principle in posology, a wonderful development in the world of therapeutics, without which the law of cure would have been forgotten. This is the principle which gives life and power to the system of medicine which Hahnemann developed and this is the third great step in the evolution of the law of cure.

"As Morgan says:

"To Hahnemann alone is due imperishable honour and renown for discovering, first, the existence of an universal law of cure; and second, that the specific properties of drugs could be developed, transmitted and utilized by potentization."

"With the discovery of potentization, or dynamization, began the first practical tests of the newly-discovered law of cure.

"Crude drugs have three grades of action: mechanical, chemical, and dynamic. The first two grades are of little comparative note in Homoeopathy. This is demonstrated by the fact that their provings in crude form produce comparatively little of worth, whereas in those provings made from the thirtieth and above we obtain more complete provings because of the dynamic action. The full power of the drug in its dynamic action is brought out in the potency, whereas the grosser material elements by their very crudity develop no fine individualities in their provings. Entirely new activities are developed, liberated, and may be transmitted and changed into the potentizing medium (cf. *Organon*, 269). This is shown by the potentization of the inert substances like Carbo veg., Lycopodium and Silica.

"The knowledge of potentization was of gradual growth, and indeed, the last word is not yet said; but this discovery ranks among the highest of Hahnemann's work and makes the question of the use of these potencies the one great thing that is due to Hahnemann's mind alone, and will be his greatest lasting contribution in the evolution of this system of applying drugs to the cure of disease.

"It has remained so far unexplainable, but a fact. The effect is manifest to all, but in its mode of action it is a mystery. The principle of similars was of little practical use until the principles of the dynamic use of drugs and the

minimum dose were discovered to complete the trinity; then all three angles were complete, each equally important, yet each supporting the other to make a complete system of cure; then, and only then, Homoeopathy became practicable.

"Were it not for the knowledge of the dynamics of drugs and the minimum dose, Homoeopathy would have sunk back with the memory of Hahnemann's provings of a few drugs, as it did after the work of Hippocrates, Haller and Stahl. This is where the great genius of Hahnemann shines forth and will continue to shed lustre more and more as time goes on."

THE DYNAMIS

In *The Principles and Art of Cure by Homoeopathy*, Roberts refers to paragraph 269 of the *Organon*, and this is what Hahnemann wrote in that paragraph: "The homoeopathic system of medicine develops for its use, to a hitherto unheard-of degree, the spirit-like medicinal powers of the crude substances by means of a process peculiar to it and which has hitherto never been tried, whereby only they all become penetratingly efficacious and remedial, even those that in the crude state give no evidence of the slightest medicinal power on the human body".

"Roberts joins with Hahnemann and with all other genuine students of the nature of medicines in speaking of such a thing as the "spirit-like" medicinal powers revealed and released by potentization and of each medicine as having a "dynamis". It is the dynamis that works medicinally. It is not the molecules or atoms; it is not the chemistry. Every living thing grows from an inner force, its life force. This life force was there before growth and structure began. By its life force every detail of form, color and character is molded, and every feature of individuality. Mankind is a multitude of individual living persons. The sick man is in morbid disorder, first in the life force and then in body and body function. Homoeopathy developed the only way of bringing forth from matter its own latent medicinal force, of a kind with life force and able to influence life force. Thus the potentized substance, with its dynamis released, furnishes the necessary implement by which sickness in man may be cured, for on test it turns out that every substance of every kind from every natural source shows its own peculiar individual character when correctly potentized.

PHARMACOLOGY

Compare all this with the recent address before the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Denver by retiring President Chauncey D. Leake, Professor of Pharmacology, Ohio State University. (*Science*, December 29, 1961). His title is: "The Scientific Status of Pharmacology". His definition is: "Pharmacology is the study of the interaction of chemical agents (drugs) with living material, whether the

action is good or bad for the living material, or whether the living material is plant or animal in origin".

Having set out by definition to ignore every consideration of a dynamis, he scatters through his discourse signals that this is indeed his fixed view of the field. Tracing what he takes as the history of the subject, he says at one point: "Sertuerner's discovery stimulated the development of a new scientific approach to pharmacology; with chemicals of constant physical properties available for the first time, dosage could be measured accurately in terms of mass of chemical per mass of living tissue, and the concept of a quantitative relationship between drug dosage and biological effect could be developed. Practically, this is important in medicinal practice, but physicians were slow to grasp its significance".

Again, outlining procedure, he says: "The steps in a characteristic pharmacological sequence are as follows: (i) the recognition of the biological activity of a crude preparation, from which (ii) the biologically active substance is eventually isolated in chemically pure form, free from all contaminating material, so that its physical properties are constant and determinable; then, (iii) the establishment, painfully, of the chemical structure of the substance; next, (iv) the synthesis of its chemical relatives; then, (v) the laborious pharmacological appraisal of all the related compounds; and then finally, (vi) the choice of the one best suited for the particular application one has in mind".

A large part of the address discusses the 'mechanisms' of chemicals acting upon living cells. The language is involved and full of elaborate technical terms. But it all centers on such things as molecules, cells, tissues, avenues by which chemicals enter living cells, separation of active fractions of a substance to obtain chemical purity—but never a mention of a fundamental power or a latent dynamis. The authorities cited are such men as Claude Bernard, Francois Magendie, James Blake, R. Buchheim, John J. Abel among many others, all of whom followed the mechanistic line, and such authorities as Stahl of Denmark, Halle of Switzerland, and Hahnemann of Germany, who were not mechanicians, are left out of consideration.

SCIENTIFIC CONSEQUENCES

Whether the glaring omissions are from innocence or design, they stamp the work incomplete and misleading. If the omissions would, if included, change the tenor and the significance of the work, enormous harm can result for the future of medicine and the health of the people. If the omissions are things not known to the author, a professor of pharmacology, it would seem to be his business to have got familiar with them. If on trial and study he found something wrong about the part of his field that he omitted, it would seem to be his business to show this. Too much is at stake to allow of keeping anything dark. If all of therapeutics were to be limited to biochemical mechanics without benefit of laws relating to life force and dynamis, man-

kind would totally lack the chance of health through medicine.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science could furnish means of making known the law of similars together with the potentization of medicines. Since the entire matter derives from scientific experiment; since the means of checking it are at hand to anyone repeating the original experiments; since it is open to scientific checking both in theory and in clinical practice; since potentized medicines do things beyond possibility otherwise; the Association fails its very name when it does not equip to further a truer pharmacology than it publishes.

—*The Layman Speaks*, November 1974

CONCOMITANT

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It is the 'subsidiary symptom' that is termed by Boenninghausen as 'concomitants' and of these again, it is the '*unreasonable attendants*' (*ibid* p. 27, para 1) which become characteristic concomitants, guiding to the *similimum* (all italics ours).

2. Most of these symptoms instanced by the author, can be shown to be physically or pathologically related; so they cannot deserve to be recognised as 'unreasonable attendants' or guiding concomitants. Even pain in rectum will not deserve that merit, if it is already congested or inflamed and the pain is brought about, by the increased intra-abdominal pressure caused by contraction of the diaphragm during coughing. But it is very difficult to imagine any pain in legs during coughing as a 'reasonable attendant' so this pain may be given the value of a guiding concomitant.

HOMOEOTHERAPEUTICS AND THE CURRENT MEDICAL SCENE

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3. Guttentag, Otto E.; Homoeopathy in the Light of Modern Pharmacology, *Clin. pharm. & Therap.* 7:425, 1966.
4. Mintz, Morton: *The Therapeutic Nightmare*.

—*The Layman Speaks*, October 1974
