

THE RELATIONSHIP OF NATURE TO MAN

The problem posed by the phenomena of the action of remedies is part of the general problem of the relationship of Nature to Man. This is particularly the case in Homœopathy where the remedies have their source in the Kingdoms of Nature and not, as so often the case in modern medicine, in the laboratories of the chemist. These latter present different problems, the implications of which may well be found to be detrimental to human health.

The conceptions of the relationship between Man and the three Kingdoms of Nature have undergone radical changes since Hahnemann's day and although there is little evidence of Hahnemann's views on these subjects it would be dangerous to attempt a full assessment of his work separated from the context of the general world views of his time. Particular moments in history have an organic unity and it is as false to separate one item from its historical context as to separate one symptom from the whole picture in clinical medicine. It may well be found that some of the difficulties with which homœopaths are faced are not special to Homœopathy but are shared by a whole approach to Nature which appeared in Hahnemann's time but which became submerged by the avalanche of 19th-century materialism.

It is just one hundred years since Wallace and Darwin read their paper on the discovery of the principle of Natural Selection and precipitated the land-slide. Why was this event so important? It was important because it seemed to overcome the barrier against the scientific conquest of nature. Kant had maintained that Living Nature was not explainable in the strict scientific sense but that only the inorganic realm was subject to that strict mathematical method which alone he characterized as scientific. The vital principle, the purposiveness displayed in the forms of Nature, the perfection of adaptation of organ to its function, could not be explained by the scientific method. Then came Darwin and apparently explained how from

chance variations acted on by the blind force of Natural Selection forms apparently purposively designed could come about. What the purposive interference of the farmer does in selective breeding was handed over to the blind force of Natural Selection. The movement which from Copernicus through Galileo and Newton had expelled the Gods from astronomy and physics here brought about an invasion of the realm of the living, and of the human kingdom itself; these were to be explained as only the result of chance and the struggles of Natural Selection. Since then this movement has invaded in psychoanalysis the sanctuary of the human soul itself. For what seems like an historical eternity it has felt and feels as if there were only matter and the blind laws of statistical chance, not only in physics but in biology and psychology too. Out of this stems the deep pessimism, the almost suicidal depression, the hopeless impotence of our Western culture with its compensatory, symptomatic, merely technological conquests.

When, in the consciousness of this modern world which reaches a certain *reductio ad absurdum* in logical positivism, one picks up Homœopathy, how strange it feels.

There were in fact in Hahnemann's day two contrasting streams in biological thinking. There was a stream of mechanistic interpretation stemming from Descartes. The body was a machine understandable in the same way as any other machine, it was entirely material and however subtle and complex it was nevertheless a mere mechanical puppet. This view has, of course, survived and is the basis of practically all modern scientific research. Modern medicine almost unanimously adopts it. Consciousness is an epiphenomenon, the soul is conceived purely subjectively. The relationship between a purely subjective soul and a purely objective body remains obscure because on this basis the unique relation to one's own body is inexplicable.

There was also a strong movement of philosophical interpretation of Nature. In the 18th century it was strongly represented in particular by Stahl, Swedenborg and Caspar Wolff, and at the beginning of the 19th century there flourished in Germany and Scandinavia the school of Naturphilosophie. This

is today usually regarded as a Romantic deviation or lunacy. It is associated with the names of Lorenz Oken, the philosopher Schelling, C. G. Carus, Alexander Humboldt, the poet Goethe and many others. Its influence on biology was immense until, with Darwinism, it vanished and was laughed to scorn. Today, when one picks up any of these works, they too seem to belong to another world of fancy and dream.

Vitalistic and animistic systems have not fared well since then. The tendency of their supporters to escape into mystical assertions incapable of exact verification has repelled most scientific workers.

The value of the mechanistic interpretation is obvious. It has led to the most meticulous observation and to the most clever examinations of the mechanisms of Nature. It has found how to interfere into these delicate mechanisms. With modern concepts of feed-back circuits it is seeking to penetrate the apparently wisdom-directed regulating devices of physiology.

And yet it leaves one with a meaningless picture of Nature and Man. It seeks under the guise of Truth to impose a new myth—the myth that all is only measurable and mechanical, including ourselves.

The myth of the organic is the myth of wholes. The myth of the mechanical is the myth of parts. Meaning is found in the relation of parts to the whole.

Hahnemann himself held philosophy in highest esteem. It is evident that he was frankly anti-materialistic. His system is a vitalistic one. We know also that Goethe was favourably impressed with Homœopathy. Hahnemann also seems to have been well disposed to Schelling and the Naturphilosophie, whilst wishing for a more practical application, his own work being so intensely directed to the practical tasks of medicine. Certainly one can discern an inner concordance between Hahnemann's work and that of the natural philosophy of his day, but there seems little evidence of any close collaboration or mutual cross-fertilization. Later in the century through Garth Wilkinson and Kent a fruitful synthesis of Hahnemann and Swedenborg arose. Enough has been said to indicate the possibility that the opposition to Hahnemann's Homœopathy is part of

the opposition to the whole philosophical-scientific movement of which it was representative.

From the mechanical point of view the same principle holds good throughout all Nature; all is therefore of equal or no significance. Disease can only be regarded quantitatively and as a breakdown in the machine. The deeper riddles of the meaning of disease and death are outside its ken. In fact, disease is not really graspable as it is only another mechanism, as such equal in validity to the healthy mechanism. To say that it does not serve the purpose of life is to introduce the impermissible teleological notion.

Lorenz Oken, the contemporary of Hahnemann, understood the animal kingdom as analysis and man as synthesis. Man is the whole to which only the whole of Nature is equivalent. Man is not another animal, he is the synthesis of all animals and of the whole Nature. From this he formulated that what occurs in man as disease occurs in animals as health. Animal physiology is equivalent to human pathology. He understood that in human disease some process is tending to fall out of synthesis and pursue an independent course. In this way a rich inner content of conflicting tendencies is found as the content of the whole which is no longer a mere empty abstraction, and the system of these polar tendencies is also open to study.

From this point of view it follows that mechanistic science can only observe and study the disease processes. The healing forces, the forces by which the whole re-synthesizes that which is becoming analysed, are beyond its range. Homœopathy has always been more concerned with healing than with disease because its spirit is synthetic and wholesome.

Is there any point in such considerations, or are they just more words, mere words? We are often faced today with difficult judgments in the treatment of patients, involving the choice between homœopathic and modern scientific methods. Our judgments are too often dependent on instinctive feeling, obstinate preconception or expediency. Only if we can penetrate beyond mere dogmatic principles to a real understanding of the processes involved shall we be in a position to reach sound judgments. This implies being able to see the problem

whole and from all points of view. After over a century of quarrel between the two schools it would be a positive advance if the ground were shifted from head-on conflict to the position of complementary processes of analysis and synthesis. It would then be seen that the great triumphs of scientific medicine arise from the analytic method. This can understand only parts and mechanistic details, that is, Nature. When a purely natural process tends to occur within the human organism, one is faced with disease. Scientific methods demand to be complemented by a view which is able to synthesize and order the innumerable facts within the dialectic organic system of truth. To the study of disease, and the anatomy of the corpse of all living, must be added the practice of healing, the reconciling of quarrels and the right statement of differences. The healing impulse and practice that is enshrined in Homœopathy could blossom and be fulfilled, and the great and dangerous richness of modern medical science could find its redemption within this reconciliation in which modern psychology will play its welcome part.

In the difficult tasks of such an endeavour a patient tolerance, an ability to withhold final judgments, a willingness to admit different views from one's own will be necessary, together with enthusiasm for healing and making whole that which is divided.

"Philosophy represents the highest ideal towards which the human mind is imbued with a desire to struggle. Philosophy is not only the highest of all sciences, it is also the basis and the fundamentals of all of them. No science can exist without philosophy for without its help it falls to the level of handicraft or at any rate of a subsidiary subject. This is true above all of medicine."

—*Brit. Homœo. Journal*, 1958—Editorial
