

A COMMENT ON "HAHNEMANN'S PREVISION OF
BACTERIOLOGY—A MISCONCEPTION"

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We have gone through Dr. Dirghangi's paper. We are constrained to remark that we did find therein neither sense nor science nor philosophy nor historical exactitude of knowledge about Medicine in the west. To us it appeared a tissue of confused ideas, unprovable assertions and theories long exploded. We would not have wasted time and energy to step into a wordy duel with him if it was not known to us that he represents a type amongst our profession who hold such confused ideas about the fundamental concepts of Homœopathy.

Now we will take up the salient points in Dr. Dirghangi's paper:—

(1) Dr. Dirghangi claims that Hahnemann did never repeat or confirm by his subsequent writings what he wrote in 1831 regarding Cholera.

It is not a fact. The second edition of Hahnemann's "Chronic Diseases" was published by parts between 1835 to 1838. In that edition Hahnemann retained those passages in the body of his book, which refer to "the parasitic existence" of Chronic miasms (vide p. 9, para 2, Chronic Disease, Second Edition 1835) and not merely the very suggestive foot-notes which I quoted in my paper.

In the sixth edition of Organon (the manuscript of which he was supposed to have completed in 1843 or in February 1842, according to Haehl) in a foot-note to sec. 80 he refers the readers to the above-mentioned 2nd edition of "Chronic Disease". This shows that what he conceived of the nature of miasms was maintained by him till his death.

During the Cholera Epidemic years of 1831 and 1832 Hahnemann was a resolute, clear thinking man of seventy-six. So his writings during this period came out of a mature brain and were not of "lesser" importance just

because his scattered articles were collected and published in a book form by Dr. Dudgeon under the name "Lesser Writings".

(2) Dr. Dirghangi takes exception to the words "most probably" used by Hahnemann in his said article on Cholera.

In answer to this we like to point out that Hahnemann was a cautious scientist. How could he write otherwise in absence of positive ocular demonstration? But his intuition and clear logic led him to hint about the invisible living beings which had something to do with incidence and spread of the Cholera disease in an epidemic form.

Here a bit of medical history will clarify the situation. Long before Hahnemann's birth microscope was invented. The researches of Kircher, Malphigii, Leewenhoek, Hooker etc. (during 1626-1651) established the existence of microbes. But till Hahnemann's time it was not definitely known whether *pathogenic micro-organisms* did exist or in the event of their existence whether they had any causal relation with the human organism in the production of diseases. The idea of infection by micro-organisms was also hinted at by G. Fracastoro when he published his book "De Contagione" in 1546 after the great plague epidemic in Europe. Hahnemann was a scholar and a voracious reader. He must have known about Fracastoro's writings. During the Cholera epidemic the people and medical men were confronted with the same problems of checking the spread of the disease as during the previous plague period. Though Hahnemann, in the beginning was against all classification and nomenclature of diseases, the epidemic diseases where many persons were simultaneously attacked with a very similar type of disease set him thinking furiously and led him to conclude about the existence of "fixed miasms"—proofs of which are before our eyes in his writings of Sec. 73 (*Organon*, 6th Ed.). I have attempted to show in my articles how Hahnemann came to fix the nature of these "fixed miasms" as living micro-organisms.

Dr. Dirghangi has entirely misunderstood the entire significance of Hahnemann's writings during the Cholera period in 1831. He wrote four letters concerning Cholera during June to October in 1831—where he not only gave clear hints about the nature of the causative agents, their mode of transmission, their curative treatment but also about the preventive steps to be taken to check the spread of that terrible disease. He wrote about sterilising the infected clothes with a heat of about 80°C; and certainly Hahnemann did not think of sterilising "immaterial, conceptual, spirit-like dynamic forces" with heat. (vide Haehl's Biography of Hahnemann).

The then medical profession including the great Dr. Hufeland stood for the atmospheric-telluric theory for the cholera epidemic and decried the preventive measures suggested by Hahnemann. It was Hahnemann alone who stood for the microbic nature of infection which, has been proved up to the hilt by systematic researches of Pasteur and Koch. That Hahnemann was cornered by Hufeland in certain points proves nothing but the fact that the full and precise knowledge about transmission of infecting organisms was not known to the former. But it is not a small cause for our pride that our Master through sheer intuition and clear logic and correct observations anticipated their works.

That Hahnemann meant by "miasm" what we mean by microbes is established beyond any doubt. Dr. Dirghangi has confused the miasms with their "modus operandi."

So we come to his next point.

(3) He claims that bacteria etc., cannot have dynamic influence.

Why not? I have explained in my papers what is meant by dynamic action. Negatively it is an action other than mechanical, physical or chemical. Positively it is a qualitative action. If the drugs can possess dynamic action, if the human organism can exert dynamic action, why not the living micro-organisms—no matter whether they are

visible or invisible? Dr. Dirghangi has failed to understand the difference in view-points between Homœopathy and the so-called Allopathy. Allopathy tries to explain the modus operandi of the process of infection by the interaction of the chemistry of the body with the toxins secreted by the microbes. Hahnemann, on the other hand, claims that the chemico-physical processes just fall short of the total and complex living phenomena. As the drugs act on the living body through their essential qualities besides their physico-chemical properties, so the living microbes can also act through their essential qualities (possessed by their life-force) to change the qualitative state of the organism. That's all, where is the difficulty to understand this simple thing? During Hahnemann's time the word "miasm" was used loosely to express many things *viz.*, morbidic emanations from putrescent organic matter, animal or vegetable, and sometimes the effluvia arising from the bodies of those affected by certain diseases, some of which were regarded as infectious and others not. I have tried to show how Hahnemann fixed the connotation and denotation of this vaguely used word miasm. From *Organon* it can be clearly proved that Hahnemann included physical, psychic and these biological causes under the general name of morbidic noxious agents. But all these agents act on the living organism through dynamic (*i.e.*, qualitative) actions and interactions to alter the state of health of the organism. The inclusion of biological agents *i.e.*, miasms (in old terminology) or microbes (in modern terminology) in the list of the morbidic noxious agents *i.e.*, "contagium Vivum" is the greatest contribution of Hahnemann in the field of medical thought. Dynamis means force and force is always invisible and imperceptible to our senses but their existence is inferred through their workings. The immaterial force must have a material vehicle. As substantial entity of a drug is the vehicle and carrier of its dynamic property so the microbic body is the vehicle and carrier of their dynamic property. Where is the difficulty to understand

this? Dr. Dirghangi has confused the process with the agent. The agent may belong to any plane of existence but while altering the state of the organism they do so qualitatively. That is all. Hahnemann talked about "Dynamic influences of morbid agents"—and we tried to establish the identity of one group of the morbid agents.

(4) So Dr. Dirghangi's statement that "to drag him (Hahnemann) down to the material plane of Bacteriology is a sin which every thinking rational Homœopath should avoid religiously"—is meaningless and misleading. Homœopathy is no religion it is a rule of practice. This is the view we strongly oppose. This is what is known as confusion of categories. Bacteria etc., are living beings and not material substances. Bacteria belong to the group of fission-fungi of the plant kingdom. Hahnemann could not possibly know that but surmised that they must be living beings. He used the word "animated".

(5) Re: Dr. Dirghangi's statements:

- (a) Miasms primarily affect immaterial vital force, the mind etc., whereas parasites can affect the material parts of men because they are themselves material.
- (b) Hahnemann's miasms are immaterial and invisible but bacteria and parasites are material though microscopical.
- (c) When the immaterial miasm of Hahnemann attacks and overpowers the vital force *i.e.*, during the incubation period there are no bacilli, bacteria or parasites etc.

There is neither sense nor science in these statements. The trouble with Dr. Dirghangi and men of his type is that they live psychologically in the middle ages and refuse to move with the Time-spirit. To-day it would be impossible to revive, even in a mild degree, the bitter controversies that raged in the nineteenth century between the

vitalists and the materialists. When they were in full blast, the vitalists accused their opponents—the materialists—of degrading organisms to the level of “mere machines”; the materialists, on their side, accused the vitalists of offering a meaningless word as a solution of the problem of life. The last echoes of their battles have died away; the animate and the inanimate are now separated as one branch of science is separated from another. Our human organism is an integrated indivisible whole of mentalised living matter. It presents different aspects—material, vital and mental—which we take as distinctive entities for the facilitation of our comprehension (vide sec. 15 of *Organon* 6th Ed.), but which are not so in factual reality. Here, again, we give credit to Hahnemann for anticipating the psycho-somatic conception of modern times.

The truth is that the human organism is neither a machine nor a chemical factory nor a vital or psychic being, each to the exclusion of all others but it is a whole including all aspects and at the same transcending them all. But towards the end of his life Hahnemann leaned more and more to the pure vitalistic school whereas the rapid advances in the knowledge of physical sciences tipped the balance on the side of the materialistic school. History reveals that he was more influenced by the theories of Skahl, Barthez and Hoffmann—who all belonged to the animistic and vitalistic school though he tried to keep away from the irrational parts of their theories. A comparative study of the successive editions of *Organon* shows that this allusion to “vital force” occurs first in the 5th Edition (1833) as “vital force” has often been substituted for the words “Organism”, body, state of health of the previous edition. In the 6th edition he came to believe in the substantial entity of the vital principle. But this trenchant division into rival schools of thought have lost its significance as the latest development in the knowledge of physical sciences has served to dematerialise matter and found mass and energy to be convertible terms and as

theoretical physics pushed to its extremes is on the point of losing itself in the misty realms of metaphysics. We feel a contradiction and conflict in Hahnemann's ideas if we read secs. 11, 12, 13 with section 15 of Organon, (6th edition). In sec. 15 we read the body-life as a complex indivisible whole, although "in thought our mind separates this unity into two distinct conceptions for the sake of easy comprehension. Here the factual reality is that the body and life are not two entirely separate substantial entities; whereas in Secs. 11, 12, 13 we are given to understand that it is only the vital principle which is primarily affected in disease and which leads to subsequent disorders in the material body. There is a mechanical view of cause and effect implicit behind this statement which Hahnemann shared with the sixteenth and the seventeenth century physicians that the living body did not work itself but it was tenanted by a principle that made it "live", something immaterial that used the body as a craftsman uses a tool. Darwin with his epoch making discovery of the theory of Evolution appeared on the scene in 1859 just a few years after the passing of our Master. The creative evolutionary cause is not the same thing as the notion of mechanical view of causation. Life evolves from matter and due to a process of integration we find living matter, the organism and with the further evolution of mind from life and its integration we find the mentalised living matter which goes to form the human organism. But if life and body are inseparable and one cannot exist without the other what happen when a man dies? Surely something which kept the organism alive is missing and the vitalistic school pounced upon this phenomena and asserted the independent existence of the life-principle. Neither the science nor the philosophy of the West could explain this apparently anomalous phenomenon. For an explanation we have to delve deep in the realm of metaphysics which is just the thing Hahnemann wanted us to avoid. That is why in a footnote to sec. 31 he wrote that he did not wish to give a

hyper-physical (i.e., metaphysical) explanation of the internal nature of the disease or the essential nature of life-force in healthy or unhealthy condition. To him disease is just a state of alteration in health i.e., a qualitative change comprising sensational and functional changes which are perceptible to our senses. The human organism has a material part (body) which is also liable to change but it is the qualitative change which the patient feels and suffers therefrom. But here Hahnemann apparently forgets his body-life integration and like a *pure vitalist* asserts that this qualitative change is absolutely independent of physico-chemical alterations of the physical body. This statement has served to make confusion worse confounded. The real truth is that though life can never be adequately explained through physico-chemical processes it is as futile and untrue to say that life does not consist of chemico-physical processes as to say that poetry does not consist of words. A little metaphysical light may illumine this dark problem. In our *Surface-existence* mind, life and body are integrated into an indivisible whole. To our senses are perceptible the phenomena of physical mind and physical life which do not exist apart from the material body. But the true mind and true life can exist apart from the body which go away in the event of death. *All diseases with which we medical men are concerned belong to our physical nature, whether in the gross physical or vital-physical or the mental-physical level.* We do not treat mind and life as such but as mentalised living body. For in this world of matter everything is manifested through it. We do not see Life or mind existing by itself but always as embodied life and embodied mind. How the mind or life has come to be embodied is a metaphysical problem beyond our ordinary mental conception. Hahnemann referred to this fact in his foot-note No. 8 to sec. 12 of *Organon*, 6th Edition. Hahnemann did not, could not and wanted not to delve into these metaphysical questions. He stuck to the plane of phenomena on which he could tread with surer steps and

he was satisfied to deduce only those conceptions which were warranted from his observations. Still he was a child of his times and leaned to vitalistic school in his later years. That is why Hughes regarded Hahnemann's vital theory as a physiological hypothesis.

(6) Dr. Dirghangi writes: To inaugurate the bacteria theory and infuse it into the minds of innocent students instead of susceptibility or vital weakness as cause of disease as said by Hahnemann is simply to axe out Hahnemannian Homœopathy.

This is another gross misstatement. In sec. 31 of Organon, 6th Edition Hahnemann writes that the action of drugs on the living organism is almost unconditional whereas the miasmatic infection is very much conditional, the susceptibility of the organism being a prior condition. As it takes two hands to produce a clap so we require the living body's susceptibility on the one hand and the miasm, on the other for eventual production of disease. Leaving the miasm or microbe out of consideration and talking about the production of diseases only with the living body's susceptibility is one-sided and incomplete. This distorted view axes out the Hahnemannian Homœopathy. Hahnemann perfectly anticipated that the miasms (microbes) were not the absolute cause but only a conditioned cause in the production of diseases.

It appears to us that Dr. Dirghangi's repugnance to the acceptance of bacteria theory seems to lie in the fact that it will lead to the dictum "Kill the bacteria and cure the disease". No—we say; but we do admit that killing the bacteria when they are still outside our body will prevent the occurrence of some type of diseases. Bacteriology has solved the problem to a great extent of prevention of acute diseases, whether sporadic or epidemic; and Bacteriology has rounded off the theory of chronic diseases as propounded by Hahnemann. Whatever may be Hahnemann's conception of the nature of the morbid agents his approach to the therapeutic problem is different from

that of the Allopathic School. Nobody disputes that. Dr. Dirghangi seems to be obsessed with the idea that the acceptance of bacteriology somehow nullifies the basic conceptions of Homœopathy. But it is nothing of the sort.

(7) Dr. Dirghangi exclaims "Is it at all desirable to make the defects of Hahnemann's writings loom large before the eyes of students before they are thoroughly acquainted with the truth of Homœopathy as being done by our new friends ?

Why not ? Truth never cramps anyone's mind ; rather ready reception of truth leads to further mental expansion. Organon is a critique of medical philosophy for all times. If we fail to rouse the critical mental attitude of a Homœopathic student, our very purpose of teaching Organon is defeated.

(8) Dr. Dirghangi still sticks to the theory of spontaneous generation of living beings from inanimate matter. Here he follows Dr. Kent but this theory has long been exploded. It is only life that begets life.

A proper and faithful study of Hahnemann's writing will never lead to difficulty but on the other hand will serve to clear away many misconceptions that have accumulated round the Homœopathic philosophy. We fully agree with G. Boericke when he writes "The Organon loses nothing when viewed in the light of modern medicine, but interpretation is needed etc." That my views are accepted by the British School of Homœopathy is proved by the fact that my article "Hahnemann the Bacteriologist" was published in the British Homœopathic journal, July 1939, Vol. XXIX. No. 3.

I would request Dr. Dirghangi to go through the whole series of my articles once again—with an unprejudiced mind but not with a mind like "tabula rasa" free from all sense of logic, science, philosophy and of historical perspective.

B. K. S.
