



Abstract Book



The 64th Congress
of
Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis

26 - 30 August 2009, Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw, Poland

The notion of health – in the history of medicine, in the writings of Hahnemann, and in homeopathy

Priv. Doz. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Josef M. Schmidt

Ideas and options of how we can conceive the notion of health are not infinite. In the history of medicine we can only find a number of different concepts or paradigmatic ideas of health, though in a variety of references and combinations. Health was seen as 1. harmonious balance between principles or entities, 2. result of a struggle against opposing forces, 3. continuous dialectical process, 4. hierarchy of components or functions, 5. potential to perform and to develop, 6. transcendence towards higher levels of being, 7. result of conscious autonomous action, 8. optimal causal functioning, or 9. public task and responsibility.

Hahnemann's personal view of health, as reflected in his writings, utilized virtually all of these elements. They reappear e.g. as 1. harmonious tuning of the life force, 2. defeat of pathogenetic influences, 3. admittance of aggravations, 4. autocracy of the spirit-like life principle, 5. reference to a higher goal of human existence, 6. perfecting character of medical service, 7. concern about dietetics and life style, 8. utilization of causality and natural science, and 9. appealing to governmental provisions and medical police.

At all times these paradigms were repeatedly recombined and applied in an eclectic way. Theory of medicine is the attempt to analyze, adjust, and develop adequate concepts that meet the demand of contemporary medical practice. The realm of medical theory, however, lies between the fields of observable facts and metaphysical convictions, respectively. Hence, theorizing – e.g. on homeopathy and salutogenesis – may be necessary, important, and rewarding, but can never claim to grasp anything like absolute truth. In assessing the relationship between homeopathy and health, one should be careful to keep the balance between rationalism and romanticism, traditionalism and progressionalism, or science and metaphysics.