

Homeopathy

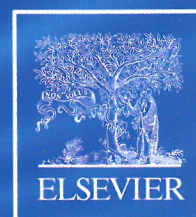
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- Systematic review of homeopathy in depression
- Plumbum and proving reproducibility
- Homeopathy and dry mouth
- Infection, vaccination and atopy
- The colour of improvement
- Vaccine reactions and vaccinosis
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Homeopathy

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Homeopathy

Aims and Scope *Homeopathy* is published quarterly. It is an international journal aimed at improving the understanding and clinical practice of homeopathy by publishing high quality articles on clinical and basic research, clinical audit, evidence-based practice of homeopathy and reflective case reports. It also promotes debate and reviews the homeopathic literature.

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SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL

Hahnemann's legacy in a new light— A systematic approach to the Organon of Medicine[☆]

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The sixth edition of Samuel Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* is an obligatory work of reference for homeopathy. Nevertheless, its philosophy can be questioned with constructivistic and historic objections. Three levels of content may be distinguished:

- (1) practical directions and maxims,**
- (2) theoretical explanations and hypotheses,**
- (3) conceptual foundations and premises.**

Ideally, these levels should be considered, studied, and taught separately and gradually. My new German edition of the *Organon*, published in 2003, tries to meet these demands. It contains:

- (A) a complete version of Hahnemann's original text, in the original order of paragraphs, but in modern German with section headings, summary boxes, etc added,**
- (B) another full version of its content, organized in three levels, as indicated above,**
- (C) a glossary of about 400 problematic terms.** *Homeopathy* (2005) 94, 202–206.

Keywords: Samuel Hahnemann; *Organon of Medicine*; sixth edition; new German edition; history of homeopathy

Introduction

The homeopathic consensus

In spite of numerous differences between schools of homeopathy there always was, is, and will be an unifying consensus among all parties: It was Samuel Hahnemann who founded this system of therapeutics based on the principle of similars. It was Hahnemann who, through his deviation from and criticism of the old allopathic approach, inaugurated the new homeopathic school; and he is the undisputed ancestor and ultimate authority on homeopathy. His famous work

'*Organon of Medicine*', has sometimes been described as the Bible of homeopathy. Hence, contrary to conventional scientific medicine where new theories and hypotheses have to be tested (ideally) by independent researchers in clinical studies or the like, in homeopathy a quotation from the *Organon* is still commonly accepted as an argument. Today almost every textbook on homeopathy—at least in chapters of justification and explanation of the homeopathic approach in general—refers to the *Organon*.

The status and relevance of the *Organon*

This view of Hahnemann's legacy as a divine revelation of eternal truths, analogous to sacred words of prophets can be challenged by the objection that Hahnemann—like any physician at any place or time—was a child of his time. Accordingly, in his reasoning he was likely to have been influenced and limited by the state of the art of contemporary science, philosophy etc. Even if he transgressed and shifted

[☆] Revised version of a paper presented at the 59th Congress of the Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 19 October 2004.

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paradigms, in order to communicate his ideas he had to resort to the language and patterns of thinking of his readers and listeners. In fact, in order to make his points as clear and plausible as possible, in the *Organon* Hahnemann not only provided precise methodological directions for therapeutic practice, but also considerable theoretical explanations and philosophical speculations. The theories and concepts he used for this purpose, however, were obviously those of his time. As such they were within the grasp of his pupils and patients, but today may be difficult or impossible to understand, and may therefore be questioned, supplemented, or even replaced by reflections in modern terms. But taken to its extreme this argument for deconstructing, relativizing, and dissolving Hahnemann's system of rational therapeutics may deprive the modern homeopath of his/her roots and expose him/her defenselessly to human rat-catchers (gurus).

Clearly, to claim to be a true Hahnemannian or a classical homeopath would not make much sense without familiarity with the *Organon* and its practical rules and principles. But is it necessary to share Hahnemann's metaphysical opinions as well? Pragmatically speaking, to secure a certain standard of practice within a group of therapists it should be sufficient to operationalize all basic steps of the procedure and oblige all participants to comply to a specific set of guidelines. From the viewpoint of practice, it should make no difference what religious or philosophical background an individual physician may have or according to what belief or 'insight' he/she may be motivated to practice homeopathy. As long as he/she follows the same practical directions the collective results of treatment should be comparable and he/she should be considered a full member of the respective community—disregarding national, cultural, spiritual, or personal idiosyncrasies. Criteria for being a 'real' homeopath can therefore only be derived from compliance with a well-defined set of practical rules. In any case, there is no point to demanding from modern people from different continents to subscribe to medical concepts which were current in Germany 200 years ago.

Nevertheless, to understand the genesis and development of homeopathy or to achieve a position from which one may be entitled to modify some of Hahnemann's practical directions, however, it is crucial to understand Hahnemann's time, problem, approach, etc. as well, in other words, study his philosophy.

A graduated approach to the Organon

According to different students' or researchers' purposes, ranging from concrete practical to abstract theoretical interests, three main levels of contents may be distinguished in the *Organon* (see Table 1):

(1) practical directions and maxims,

Table 1 A graduated approach to the Organon

(1) <i>Practical directions</i>
eg how to take the patient's history, prove drugs, prescribe the most similar remedy, consider different classes of diseases, follow up chronic cases, etc
(2) <i>Theoretical explanations</i>
eg how the mechanism of cure by similars, potentization, psora, etc can be understood
(3) <i>Metaphysical conceptions</i>
eg life force, dynamic influence, notion of health, disease, healing, action of remedies, views on science, medicine, religion, ethics, etc

(2) theoretical explanations and hypotheses,
(3) conceptual foundations and premises.

Most homeopaths are interested almost exclusively in the first level and may be satisfied by a basic knowledge of it, while philosophers or historians of medicine may be particularly concerned with the second or third. Although it is mandatory for every homeopath to know the professional instructions given by Hahnemann it is optional for explorers and developers of homeopathy to embrace his reflections on the causes and implications of his practical tenets. So from a didactic point of view, it seems sensible to offer to students of homeopathy a graduated introduction and step-wise access to the *Organon*.

Being primarily a book on practical therapeutics, the first and most relevant step of becoming acquainted with Hahnemann's teaching should be a structured compilation of his directions on how to proceed in practice: from taking the patient's history, proving drugs on healthy volunteers, to prescribing the most similar remedy, considering different classes of diseases, following up chronic cases, etc. As long as, led by these instructions, everything works well in practice, there is apparently no need to go further. Curiosity or failure, however, may drive a student to continue his/her study to a second level of theories and reasons. Eventually, this might lead him/her to think of a modification of the theory and thus open up new therapeutic possibilities. Finally, for those who are dissatisfied with technical instructions and rational explanations, Hahnemann's metaphysical assumptions and conceptions, such as his idea of life force and dynamic influence, his notion of health, disease, healing, and action of remedies, and his views on science, medicine, religion, ethics etc should be presented.

Understanding the Organon

Until recently the *Organon* had, for most people, been a book with seven seals. Due to its almost inextricable mix of objective observations, practical recommendations, subjective polemics, sophistic rhetoric, ethical admonitions, and philosophical speculations only two extreme attitudes towards it seemed to

Table 2 History of publication of the 6th edition of the *Organon of Medicine*

English editions

1922 first translation by William Boericke (Philadelphia)
1983 new translation by Jost Künzli *et al* (London, Los Angeles)
1996 new translation by Steven Decker, edited by Wenda O'Reilly (Washington)

German editions

1921 first publication by Richard Haehl, based on a handwritten transcript of the original manuscript (Leipzig)
1992 text-critical edition by Josef M Schmidt, based on the original manuscript (Heidelberg)
1996 standard edition by Josef M Schmidt, based on the original manuscript (Heidelberg)
2003 new edition, based on the original manuscript, with additional systematic and glossary by Josef M Schmidt (München)

French editions

1952 first translation from German by Pierre Schmidt (Paris)
1984 new translation from German by Renée-Claire Roy

Spanish editions

1929 first translation from English by Rafael Romero (Mérida/Mexico)
1936 translation with commentaries by León Simon, translated from French by Segura y Pesado (Guadalajara/Mexico)
1967 translation from German by Luis Fernandez Molina (Buenos Aires/Argentina)
1984 new translation from English by Jorge Torrent (Porrúa/Mexico)

be possible: The majority of homeopaths did not take it too seriously, they did not read it at all, resorting instead to secondary literature and thoughtless repetition of presumably correct quotations. On the other hand, a minority of zealots took every word of it faithfully and uncritically for absolute truth.

The lack of interest in the original writings of Hahnemann was and is one of the main reasons why even today most members of the homeopathic community know very little about the history of the *Organon of Medicine*. Few homeopaths for instance are aware that it was 80 years after Hahnemann had finished the manuscript of the sixth edition (1842) that the first English translation was published by William Boericke (1922), followed by new translations by Jost Kuenzli and others (1983) and by Steven Decker, edited by Wenda O'Reilly (1996). Ironically, in Germany, the homeland of homeopathy, it took even longer to achieve an authentic publication. While Richard Haehl's first publication of the sixth edition (1921) was based on a handwritten transcript of Hahnemann's manuscript provided by Hahnemann's widow Mélanie in 1865, it was only 150 years after the completion of the manuscript that the first text-critical edition of the original was published (1992). The German standard edition (1996) is based on this. Translations into other languages have hitherto all derived either from Boericke's English translation or from Haehl's German edition. The two French editions by Pierre Schmidt (1952) and Renée-Claire Roy (1984) were both translated from Haehl's edition. Spanish translations were based on Haehl's German edition or English or French translations (see Table 2).

Are Germans to be envied for possessing the most authentic text? Not really! Unlike the English, French and Spanish translations of the *Organon* which were written in 20th century language, the German original text of 1842 today seems to cause more problems than advantages. The form and style of academic publications as well as educational background and social

class of the scientific public have changed significantly in the last 160 years. Modern consumers of fast facts expect from a medical text what they are used to in up-to-date books or journals: concise and clear-cut statements with a maximum size of a few lines each; rather than enjoying Hahnemann's demanding grammatical constructions, playing with several layers of sentences with a length of up to nearly a page. Indeed, because of their difficulty in reading and understanding old-fashioned German medical texts, more and more Germans prefer to study the *Organon* in English! In other words, in order to preserve the relevance of Hahnemann's unique work to the German speaking world, it was high time for a comprehensive revision.

A new German edition of the *Organon*

My new German edition of Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine*, published in 2003, tries to meet the (partially conflicting) demands outlined above. To accomplish this, the publication has been organized into three parts:

- (A) the basic text of the *Organon*, in Hahnemann's original order, but converted to modern German,
- (B) a new systematic arrangement of the content of the *Organon*, according to the three levels mentioned above,
- (C) a glossary of unfamiliar or problematic terms (see Table 3).

(A) The first part of the new edition (220 pages) contains the complete original text of Hahnemann's manuscript converted to modern German. This text comprises Hahnemann's preface, table of contents, introduction, and the 291 sections or 'paragraphs', in their original order (see Table 4). To make the text easier to navigate, about 60 section headings and text summary boxes are inserted at the beginning of each new chapter. Historic terms are substituted by current expressions, long and complicated sentences are

Table 3 The new German edition of the Organon (2003)

(A) <i>The basic text</i> Complete version of the original manuscript, full text in Hahnemann's order, but converted to modern German
(B) <i>Systematic arrangement</i> Complete version of the original content, in a new arrangement of the topics, according to three graduated levels (practice, theory, metaphysics)
(C) <i>Glossary</i> Explanation of some 400 unfamiliar or problematic terms, including Hahnemann's usage of them in different contexts

Table 4 The basic text of the Organon (A)

Preface
Table of contents
Introduction
Main part (Sections 1–291)
(I) <i>Theoretical part</i> (Sections 1–70) The physician's tasks (Sections 1–4) (1) Knowledge of the disease (Sections 5–18) (2) Knowledge of the medicinal forces (Sections 19–21) (3) Selection of the indicated remedy (Sections 22–69) Summary (Section 70)
(II) <i>Practical part</i> (Sections 71–291) Overview (Section 71) (1) Case taking (Sections 72–104) (2) Remedy proving (Sections 105–145) (3) Application of the remedies (Sections 146–285) Proceeding in particular forms of diseases (Sections 172–244) Treatment through remedies (Sections 245–285) Non-medicinal forms of treatment (Sections 286–291)

broken up into shorter and easier ones, expletives and rhetorical or polemical phrases are reduced to a minimum, and orthography and punctuation are adjusted to the standard of today. Alterations of Hahnemann's language were made in moderation in order to preserve his style as far as possible. To keep changes of terms transparent to the reader, the old words which were substituted by modern ones and the words and phrases which were omitted are listed in an appendix. Where possible, long paragraphs were divided up into several sentences using bullet points. For example, in paragraph 38, one long paragraph provides more than ten examples of new, dissimilar diseases suspending but not curing older diseases. The new edition separates each example so they are easier to read. These editorial elements structure the Organon as a modern text. It now offers to modern German students of homeopathy an easier and yet reliable approach to Hahnemann's original text.

(B) The second part of the new edition (70 pages) addresses the didactic challenge indicated above offering a graduated approach to the different levels of the Organon. Actually, this is another complete version of the factual contents of the Organon, without suppressing any significant thought or argument, in modern language, but with a completely new arrangement of the topics, which allows considerable reduc-

Table 5 Systematic arrangement of the Organon (B)

(I) <i>Practical directions and maxims</i> The physician's tasks (1) Prevention, dietetics, surgery (2) Treatment of internal diseases (2.1) Non-medicinal treatment (2.2) Medicinal treatment according to the principle of contraries (2.3) Medicinal treatment according to the principle of similars (2.3.1) Case taking (2.3.2) Drug proving on healthy humans (2.3.3) Prescription of the homeopathic remedy (2.3.4) Particulars in certain diseases (2.3.5) Application of remedies (2.3.6) Follow up and therapeutic rules
(II) <i>Theoretical explanations and hypotheses</i> The physician's tasks (1) Prophylactics, dietetics, surgery (2) Treatment of internal diseases (2.1) Non-medicinal treatment (2.2) Medicinal treatment according to the principle of contraries (2.3) Medicinal treatment according to the principle of similars (2.3.1) Case taking (2.3.2) Drug proving on healthy humans (2.3.3) The principle of similars (2.3.4) Classes of diseases (2.3.5) The action of remedies (2.3.6) Follow up
(III) <i>Conceptual foundations and premises</i> (1) Specific concepts of homeopathy (1.1) Life force (1.2) Dynamic influence (1.3) Organism (1.4) Health (1.5) Disease (1.6) Healing (1.7) Action of remedies (2) General historical and philosophical background (2.1) Contemporary concepts (2.2) Medicine, science (2.3) Theology, teleology (2.4) Ethics, morality (2.5) Rhetoric, polemics

tion of redundancy. Hahnemann's statements are allotted to three categories:

- (1) practical directions and maxims,
- (2) theoretical explanations and hypotheses,
- (3) conceptual foundations and premises.

Each category is in turn structured according to the logical necessity of its contents (see Table 5). The first two levels, ie the practical directions and theoretical explanations, are arranged in a parallel manner, starting from the physician's tasks which consist in prevention, dietetics and surgery on the one hand and treatment of internal diseases on the other. The last may be distinguished into non-medicinal and medicinal treatment, the last again into treatment according to the principle of contraries and according to the principle of similars. To all of these topics Hahnemann gave practical directions as well as theoretical explanations but in a scattered fashion.

At a third level Hahnemann's specific concepts of homeopathy are listed, his idea of a life force, dynamic influence, organism, health, disease, healing, and

action of remedies, and finally his more general views on contemporary concepts, medicine, science, religion, philosophy and ethics, mirroring his historical and philosophical background. Characteristic examples of rhetoric and polemics devoid of therapeutic value are collected and listed here.

The systematic editing makes it possible to find at a glance, for instance Hahnemann's directions regarding potentization of remedies, his explanation for the working of the principle of similars, the properties he attributed to the life force etc. Every thought of Hahnemann expressed in the *Organon* has been assigned a place in the systematic arrangement. Since the listings of topics are complete, ie they comprise everything that Hahnemann wrote about the issue in the *Organon*, they allow negative inferences: if a topic is not listed, the *Organon* really does not contain relevant statements. To check the quotations or to shift to the original, at the end of every argument the original paragraph is indicated.

(C) The third part of my new edition (150 pages) is a glossary which explains the meaning of more than 400 unfamiliar or problematic historical terms in modern language. These terms are also followed up through the *Organon*, Hahnemann's usage of them is displayed in different contexts.

Conclusion

Due to a series of particular difficulties in Germany it took a somewhat longer way to bring about an authentic as well as practically useful German edition of Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine*. Bigger challenges, however, in the long run sometimes also provoke bigger responses. My new German edition of the *Organon* published in 2003 seems to meet more demands from various perspectives than past editions did—warranting authenticity of contents as well as modernity of form, scientific accuracy as well as user-friendliness.

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