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## New approaches within the history and theory of medicine and its relevance for Homeopathy

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### Introduction

Since its founding by Samuel Hahnemann some two hundred years ago, homeopathy has accomplished many impressive achievements, such as innumerable curing of diseases, individually as well as in epidemics, popularity among millions of patients all over the world, political successes, professionalization and institutionalization, and scientific research, from case studies and clinical trials to basic laboratory research. Nevertheless, recognition and full appreciation by conventional medicine is still lacking.

How can this *paradox* be explained, how can it be resolved? The thesis I am suggesting in my presentation is that conventional medicine's rejection of homeopathy's claim of being a scientific medicine stems mainly from an inaccurate understanding of the scope, prospects, and limits of science and its appropriate status in our lives. On the other hand, if we actually take the sciences as tools for cognition and practice, rather than as authorities forcing us to subdue ourselves under an all-embracing world-view that they are supporting, and if we radicalize their approach to the point where they have to reveal their own presuppositions and restricted validity, we may regain a fresh and uncaged look upon reality.

### Theory of medicine

Let us start with the most certain and undisputed fact among homeopaths. Homeopaths are *practicing homeopathy*, are they not? But what does this mean, what are they actually doing?

The usual answer given by *conventional medicine*, the science closest and yet most uncomprehending towards homeopathy, reads like this: homeopaths are not using material medical substances, but ultramolecular dilutions instead, they do not prescribe according to conventional diagnoses based on objectifying technologies, but according to subjective complaints and patients' idiosyncrasies, and instead of trying to remove material causes of diseases, they treat according to the principle of similars, which cannot be considered scientific. Since clinical trials conforming with the gold standards of evidence based medicine, such as randomized double-blind studies, generally do not show a significant difference between homeopathic treatment and placebo therapy, conventional medical science simply concludes that homeopaths are practicing placebo therapy.

This statement, however, cannot be considered scientific, as long as it conceals its own *presuppositions* and *limiting framework*. Correctly stated it should read: Under the premise of materialism and the quantitative statistical method, neither homeopathy nor placebo therapy can adequately be assessed and understood, because obviously they are phenomena escaping the conventional set of scientific categories.

This rebuke of ungrounded claims and pretensions by conventional medicine, however, should not be misunderstood as a refusal of the *modern scientific method* at large. The method of systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses, as it is successfully performed in physics, chemistry, as well as in medicine, proves to be very efficient and nobody would like to abandon their achievements. The only, but crucial problem is that these positives become undermined by a dark and threatening side for humanity, when its instrumental function is forgotten and the whole world, including our lives, would be considered to be nothing more than what scientists can measure and show us on their tables.

In *quantum physics*, the most sophisticated and consistent branch of natural sciences, the scientific approach has long ago arrived at the point where the basic assumptions of modern sciences, their naive realism, objectivism, and materialism, have proved to be untenable. Instead of still hoping to find out whether "reality" essentially consists of particles or waves, scientists can show that the act of measurement, rather than detecting allegedly objective entities, leads to a collapse of the system as a whole and constitutes and fixes not more than a man-made image of the world. If the scientist asks nature particle questions, she provides him with particle data, if he asks wave questions, her wave responses will induce him to create a wave-based view of the world, etc.



The same scientific insight, relativizing conventional science and putting it in its proper place, can be found in modern *biology*, in the form of *radical constructivism*. Perception is no longer deemed a passive reception of data coming to us through the senses from an allegedly objective world outside, but rather a reconstruction process run by the subject, depending on its disposition, interest, history, etc. Accordingly, dogmatic concepts, such as truth, reality, or objectivity, are replaced here by the pragmatic criterion of viability, i.e. the test, if an idea or conception actually works in practice or not.

Modern *theory of science* addresses these issues in a more general but equally uncompromising way. While positivism, critical rationalism (Popper), and general constraints of methodology have been effectively refuted (Feyerabend), in *mathematics*, for example, the establishment of the incompleteness theorems demonstrated the inherent limitation of all axiomatic systems (Goedel), and within *philosophical logic* it could be shown that any science rests on presuppositions that cannot rationally be derived by itself (Collingwood). Pioneered by the elaboration of "thought styles" and "thought collectives" underlying any so-called scientific fact (Fleck), in *epistemology* today it is widely accepted that science is basically a social process, operating successfully within the scope of certain paradigms, which, however, have no absolute validity but can be and in fact were changed from time to time, as can be shown in the *history of science* (Kuhn).

*Theory of medicine*, inspired by these insights, has emerged and developed significantly during the second half of the last century. Contrary to the conventional assessment of medicine as nothing but an applied natural science, it has now become cogent that medicine has to be considered as a practical science in its own right, corresponding to the traditional concept of an art of healing. Since medicine is primarily centered around the assignment of the physician to help the patient, i.e. around his duty to act or to give advice, acquisition of knowledge can never be a detached goal in itself, but has a secondary status, as a means to facilitate the primary aim of beneficent action.

Apart from the analysis of its current status, modern *theory of medicine* has also developed concrete models to broaden its approach, and the comprehension of its genuine object, the human being. To that end the suggestion has been made to introduce the concept of subjectivity, i.e. the human subject, into medicine (Weizsäcker). Along these new lines of thinking, the *biopsychosocial model* of man (Uexkuell) was expounded as a possibility to perceive and to treat the patient as a unity of physiological, mental, and social levels of existence, as well as of a human subject and his individual environment. Contrary to the conventional reification of man as a mechanistic physico-chemical machine, here, life, illness, and healing of the patient are understood in terms of processes of meaning, functional cycles, situational cycles (as I explained in my paper presented at the European Congress of Homeopathy, in Riga, Latvia, in May of this year).

By means of this dynamic model of man, which today in the science of *theory of medicine* is considered to be one of the most sophisticated and consistent, the practice of homeopaths may be described and understood in a most suitable and illuminative way. Instead of taking material entities, such as human bodies, diseased organs, and medical substances, as a basis of thinking, the functional, cybernetic, and semiotic approach to the phenomena of the living, advocated here, can acknowledge patients as living beings constructing their world and actual state by their performance of attributing and processing meaning. For example, when the patient is in a state requiring a certain remedy, the physician, having figured out this need by means of a semiotic interpretation of his symptoms, offers that remedy and the patient, by performing a functional cycle of processing the remedy's information, ultimately cures himself. Thus, not the remedy heals the patient, but the patient himself (by means of the remedy), because he is the only living actor in this process. And it is not the disease or the symptoms that determine the right remedy, but the physician, because acts, such as finding and choosing a remedy, can only be accomplished by a living being.

The most striking difference of this sound and up-to-date model of man, in comparison to the conventional materialistic one, is that it can represent and explain *what homeopaths are doing* in a scientific way, yet without being handicapped by materialistic objections and skepticism. When processes of meaning are primary in the world of the living, it appears to be absolutely secondary whether information perceived and processed by a sick patient is physical, chemical, or virtual, as long as it exactly represents the meaning upon which the patient is fixated in his current state or process. In addition, the terms and concepts suggested by the biopsychosocial model might provide a valuable tool for homeopaths to scientifically clarify and specify their own understanding.

## History of medicine

But how is it that this most advanced and scientific view of man is nothing like as well known and widespread in the medical community as the conventional, comparatively trivial, materialistic one? To answer this second *paradox*, we have to leave the medical and the natural sciences for a moment and consider the social and moral sciences, the so-called humanities, as well.

From the perspective of *sociology*, humans are social beings, i.e. they associate and socialize, building up societies – in a specific way. While conventional sociology naively used to examine societies, as if they were neutral objects of research for independent

scientific observers, new and critical approaches are stressing the mutual interdependence between individual subjects and society as a whole. Since a society is not an aggregation of material things, but the result of mental processes of meaning, performed both individually and collectively, its form and existence depend on its own reconstruction process by its subjects, who in turn are constituted and influenced by an incessant collective construction and upholding of meanings.

An example from *communication science* may make this point a bit clearer. Exceeding the conventional linguistic approach with its analyses of words and phrases, as if they were objective entities, from an advanced critical perspective, language appears to be a social phenomenon. It needs intersubjectivity, i.e. dialogue partners, and cannot be created or developed by a solipsistic person on a lonely island. Even a hermit can only converse with himself or with his God, if he has learned to speak in a social framework before: in contact with his mother, family, friends, or colleagues. We are actually born into our language, it is first and we are second. That way, it constitutes us as native speakers of German (as in my and Hahnemann's case), or of English, Hindi etc. Language is a process of meaning, whose actuality depends on the performance and participation of its speakers. On the other hand, to understand what language is, one cannot approach it from outside, from an allegedly neutral position, but one has to participate.

Applied to homeopathy, these intermediate results from critical social sciences suggest the conclusion that analogously there can be no way to understand homeopathy without participation, i.e. without truly practicing it. Nevertheless, when language, science, and homeopathy are social processes of meaning, the questions arise: What kind of meaning is being processed, and in what mode and manner?

At first glance, *economic science* does not seem to have anything to do with this issue, but taking a deeper look, it turns out that economy has a tremendous impact on virtually every realm of our lives, from the way we view ourselves to the way we run our sciences.

Conventional economics, as it is taught at universities and business schools, claims to explain economy in terms of scarcity of goods, practical constraints, and money as a medium for exchange, as if commodities, salesmen, and markets have been existing ever since. Egoistic self-interest of people is not scrutinized, but presupposed and thus sanctioned, while economic problems are examined and treated in a way an engineer would analyze and fix a machinery running independently of himself. To be sure, this seemingly objectivistic view serves as a plea for the freedom of the market, as well as does the ideology first suggested by Adam Smith in the 18th century, that a kind of invisible hand would transform the results of selfish economic players into the wealth of nations. Meanwhile, however, financial and economic crises all over the world have sufficiently shown that this is not the case.

Trying to get to the bottom of the issue, however, it turns out that money is not a thing, a substance, or anything owning an intrinsic value, but just a form of thinking, a mode by means of which people socialize in modern capitalistic societies. Just as we always find ourselves in the midst of the language spoken in our country, we always find ourselves in the midst of a specific form of thinking in terms of money. As we cannot learn to speak without participating and thus accepting the language spoken in our infant environment, our mother tongue, we also cannot learn to think and calculate without participating and accepting the logic of money as the origin of our basic logical categories.

Together with the insights of critical sociology, theory of science, constructivism, etc., this means, that our view of the world in which we live is mainly constituted by our thinking in terms of money, since all our thought processes have ever since been infiltrated with money as a form of thinking. It is only because money is nothing more than an abstract form of thinking, that it can actually transform everything it touches into a commodity. Contrary to living beings or physical goods, however, money is free of any qualitative attributes, it is bare abstract quantity, yet can be augmented by smart trading, but also by means of interest. While natural resources cannot be infinitely proliferated, money can or, at least, has the inherent tendency to do so.

Hence, in capitalist civilizations the basic intention pervading all realms of life and culture, the utmost incentive, end, and merit is the turnover and multiplication of money, called economic growth. To that aim, everything and everybody has to be considered to be a means for financial gain. That is why physicians, as well as pharmaceutical companies (if they like it or not), have to use patients as a means to make money, why scientists (if they like it or not) have to deliver results that meet the expectations of their sponsors, and why needs for new products are incessantly created by advertising targeted at the acquisition of new customers. In fact, the gross domestic product, i.e. the grade of monetization of as many areas of life as possible, is considered an indicator of the standard of living in that country. The gross domestic product, however, is only a quantitative measurement, ignoring all the qualitative dimensions life may have.

The predominance of money, however, is not inevitable and is not an anthropological constant or similar. The *science of history* can show that this was not always the case, at least not to this extreme degree. In conventional historiography, as a rule,



greediness for money is imputed to all epochs likewise or ignored entirely. By means of a comparative approach, however, involving the *history of economics* as well, it becomes obvious, how many profound and dramatic cultural and scientific changes had occurred in strict correlation with the rise of modern monetary thinking during the last centuries, up to the present.

Roughly speaking, during the Middle Ages agriculture and subsistence economy prevailed and money, in the form of gold or silver coins, played no prominent role, except at the courts of dukes and kings. The majority of people lived, worked, ate and drank and helped each other mainly without interposing money or financial calculation upon their actions. The sick and invalid were cared for in their families or in hospices of fraternities or monasteries, and healers were payed in kind. As soon as the first stock markets were founded and bank notes printed, however, a hitherto unknown disquietness, agitation, and dynamic emerged, aroused by the incentive to proliferate money and wealth by establishing new trade connections. This resulted in the discovery and conquest of new continents, colonization and slavery, as well as exploitation and contamination of nature.

It was in the wake of these fundamental changes of living, striving, and judging, triggered by the new status of money as the predominate form of thinking, that the *modern natural sciences* emerged, by means of an explicit emancipation from traditional teleological thinking. Since Francis Bacon, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the basic attitude of modern scientists towards nature is no longer respect and the wish to live in harmony with her, but the temptation to prise out her secrets (with screws and clams) and control her, because money can be made with inventions based on knowledge gained in that fashion. Quantification, mathematization, standardization, reproducibility, materialism, positivism, reductionism, etc., i.e. concepts on which *conventional modern science*, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *conventional modern medicine* are essentially founded, would not make sense without the context of the socialization process in terms of money in modern capitalistic societies. To indigenous cultures, these concepts must seem absurd.

Another side effect of the dominance of money, as a form of thinking, was the acceleration and concentration of all activities in life. This can be shown in *cultural studies*, provided they are done critically. After the medieval ban on usury (gombeen) was eroded and finally abandoned, as a factor for earning (or loosing) money by means of interest, the significance of time rose tremendously in public awareness. Eventually, time was actually equated with money. Clocks and watches became omnipresent, physiological time was replaced by chronometry, and clockworks became the paradigm for any kind of scientific mechanism. Besides space, time can also be, and in fact has been, exploited by charging it with ever new opportunities to make money. In a civilization, where consumers are widely saturated with durable material goods, such as refrigerators, cars, or TVs, markets increasingly prompt people to consume ever more in ever less time. For example, simultaneously talking on the phone, using one's computer, listening to the radio, reading a newspaper, having a coffee, etc. This kind of time compression, known under the euphemism "multitasking", is a direct outcome of the dominance of money in capitalist civilizations. Meanwhile, its undesirable effects have also reached medical schools and medical offices.

Not even the science of *philosophy*, i.e. the self-reflection of the mind, is free from the impact of money as a form of thinking. Transcending conventional philosophy as nothing but a history of philosophers, a critical radicalized approach may discover that the term "ratio" derives from the financial accounting of the merchants of the Roman empire. With this insight, however, the concept of rationalism, with its corollaries, such as enlightenment, progress, emancipation, etc., may appear in a new light. To speak of progress, for example, one has to know, where to go or, at least, what is good. In a world dominated by money as the prevailing form of thinking, however, the only answer would be: good is what results in economic growth. Other dimensions of life would be missed. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers were increasingly taken in by concepts of dynamics, progression, enhancement, etc., without realizing their own status as subjects (media) of the spirit of the age rather than creators of new philosophies.

Also the modern concept of autonomy eventually turns out to be a delusion of the modern subject, which was constituted when René Descartes, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, coined the formula "ego cogito, ergo sum" (I think, hence, I am). At a time, when people started to pin their hopes on money rather than on their personal relations with fellow human beings, with the first stock market crashes, the faith in the abstract value of money was always mixed with fear of loss. This existential doubt, pervading modern times in an ever increasing manner, was Descartes's starting point. His conclusion, however, the alleged certainty of his subjectivity, was self-deception, as his imaginary autonomous ego was still dependent on social processes, such as speaking, thinking in terms of money, and calculating. In fact, the concept of an abstract subject thrown back on itself is the very result of a general thinking process in terms of money and its uncertainty.

Even the science of *ethics* is infiltrated by rationality in terms of monetary thinking. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, in utilitarianism it has been argued that an action is ethical when it maximizes the overall good of the greatest number of individuals. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Social Darwinism the fact of struggle for existence, as observed at capitalist markets, was attributed to the animal kingdom, to finally deduce it from there and thus justify unsocial policies. According to modern ethics



committees, in critical situations the interests of all players (economic, financial, social, familial interests) are to be negotiated, according to the paradigm of bargain at the marketplace. In such a framework, however, human dimensions, such as love, faith, duty, guilt, shame, virtues, etc. can only be perceived as factors among others and thus misunderstood and devaluated.

Finally, also in *theology* we can see the global development being reflected. The Christian conceptualization of God as an eternal, unchangeable substance or essence was perfectly plausible (up to the Middle Ages) as long as life on earth conformed and corresponded to it. After economic falls of grace, such as the selling of indulgences, and reformation, i.e. rationalization of religion, in the wake of industrialization and acceleration of life, contemplation was lost and competing individual interests required a new civic moral, including strategies to survive on merciless markets, such as canting and pretending. The concept of truth, and with it its warrantor God, was thus challenged and ultimately abandoned. Friedrich Nietzsche, the seismograph of bourgeois mendacity and prophet of the dawning nihilism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cried out the gruesome diagnosis: "God is dead and we have killed him!"

To bring all these insights from different sciences together to a uniform conclusion, we might say that in the modern age, especially during the last 200 years, the process of socialization in terms of money in capitalistic civilizations has tremendously transformed all realms and dimensions of life, including the sciences, in a way that only material things and quantitative, exploitable relations seem to be accepted as real, while everything else is being neglected, for example qualities, values, or processes of meaning, which are intangible by these categories. This is the reason why within *conventional medicine* the biopsychosocial model of man has no chance to play a significant role and why homeopathy is still assessed from a mechanistic background only, by means of statistics and material measurements.

## Homeopathy

Having affirmed this, as a third *paradox* the question arises, how it is at all possible both to recognize and to free oneself of this all-embracing influence, if it really has infiltrated everybody's mind and logic.

At this point, today's homeopaths are being challenged to ask themselves the question: "What does it mean for me to *practice homeopathy*?" As a matter of fact, it is from this issue that most essential questions may arise, such as: "What am I doing?", and: "Who am I?" Here the *history of homeopathy* may provide the crucial key. To be sure, any investigation about the essence of homeopathy has to consider its founder, Samuel Hahnemann, and his own method of healing. In contrast, conventional modern medicine is ahistorical, constituted, as has been shown, during the last two centuries by a variety of socio-economic conditions, incentives, and interests, and can be practiced without the need of knowing anyone of its historic protagonists by name or character. In comparison, homeopaths practice a system of medicine which was founded by a single human being – not only of flesh and blood, but also with a soul and a spirit. This difference can hardly be overestimated.

In antiquity, the awareness of this difference was still present. Aristotle's answer to the question "What is virtuous?" was: "What a virtuous man is doing!", thus referring to the actual practice of a concrete human being, instead of risking being misled by language, logic, and other fallacies when trying to give an abstract definition. In homeopathy, homeopaths do have a human paradigm who, apart from founding a specific method of healing, lived an exemplary moral life and, what is even more valuable today, still lived before the tremendous impact of rationalization in terms of money had infiltrated all societies, cultures, and sciences, especially modern medicine. While at present everybody is socialized from infancy to a way of thinking whose function is to ensure the expansion of money markets rather than to find anything like truth, delving into Hahnemann's life and work may take the student back to a bygone time and to a personality rarely found nowadays.

Of course, Hahnemann was not a saint. As a man born at the interface of two unequal epochs, he was torn between a conservative metaphysical belief in God, truth, morality, providence, unprejudiced observation, etc., and progressive scientific ambitions to found a rational method of therapeutics, with a vision of healing disease with mathematical certainty. After initial exuberances, however, from 1819 he came back to a well-balanced concept, the art of healing (as I explained in my paper at the Liga congress last year in Los Angeles, California, USA). At the same time, he noticed that an increasing number of the population were not healthy any more, but were in fact in a state of chronic disease. In 1828 he interpreted these observations as infections with a chronic miasm: psora, syphilis, or syphilis. Interestingly, this was the time when the unhealthy effects of industrialization, monetizing, acceleration, etc. were increasingly felt in Saxony (Leipzig, Koethen) as well.

Certainly, the notions and concepts of which Hahnemann could avail himself in this day were limited. But obviously he did his very best to apply them with the aim to advance medical science. In fact, he considered his life's work as "service at the altar of truth" (as he put it). To be sure, without Hahnemann's noble-minded attitude and his high estimation of humanity homeopathy would not have been founded. Hence, homeopaths have a direct human paradigm to follow in terms of righteousness, trustworthiness, and uncompromising quest for truth. When conventional medical doctors today are advised by non-medical

officials, such as laboratory engineers, pharmacists, attorneys, economists, politicians, etc., what to do and what to prescribe, their decisions are almost completely remote-controlled by monetary interests. As a counterweight, homeopaths can still learn from Hahnemann, how it was and how it would be when a doctor dares to think and act on his own account, vouching with his conscience and faith, while thus largely immunizing himself to modern forms of thinking in terms of money and monetizing.

The homeopathic method, on the other hand, provides a powerful corrective for all those whose minds are infiltrated and dominated by money as a form of thinking. All the more homeopaths, knowing that by means of the principle of similars true healings can be accomplished, should be well-disposed to avail themselves of this method, to heal themselves from miasms of any kind, including mental ones.

Eventually, the approach I have presented in this paper, may prove to be homeopathic in a broad sense, resembling the Buddhist or Hindu approach of reducing illusions rather than the causal-analytic one of conventional modern medicine. It rests on the assumption that the late-borne children of a late capitalist era have to start thinking with bewildered minds anyway, just in analogy to psoric patients whose life-force is said to be deranged. If, according to Hahnemann (in a preface to *Chronic Diseases*, 1838), the deranged life-force faces its enemy in the form of a slightly enlarged image, i.e. as potentized remedy, it will be restored, will raise its energy, and the miasm will be defeated. Instead of being dominated any more, it will regain its sovereignty.

Analogously, modern subjects of heteronomy would have to detect their mental miasms, such as thinking in the form of money, and face them, in a condensed form, i.e. brought to the point, and in an uncompromising way, in order to get the chance to rid themselves of them, thus clearing their minds. If this happens, the homeopath will finally be able to also free homeopathy from parasitic economic interests and capitalist schemes, such as incessantly introducing new competing schools, evaluation tools, and marketing strategies, and realize – on a conscious and scientific level – that homeopathy could also be perfectly practiced in subsistence economies, without significant monetary transactions on the market.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, being true to Hahnemann may have more challenging consequences than just prescribing homeopathic remedies. First of all, his righteous and strong character may inspire his followers to dare to think freely and independently. Secondly, a comprehensive interpretation of his principle of similars may lead them to an extensive study – by means of all modern sciences – of the conditions which are limiting and distorting their free and faithful thinking and acting. And thirdly, if they finally recognize them and get rid of them, they free themselves as well as homeopathy, whose core has been unsettled by monetary influences in the past in an exponentially increasing way. As a coherent side-effect, the true Hahnemannian will thus embark on a way leading to the ultimate challenge of life which in ancient Greek philosophy was called: “*gnothi seauton*” (know yourself), corresponding to what in Vedantic Upanishads is considered the utmost wisdom: to realize “*tat twam asi*” (that is you).