

# Homeopathy in Europe - United in Diversity

Paving the Way for Medical Homeopathy

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the European  
Committee for Homeopathy (ECH)**

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(2015)

## Towards a Critical Edition of the Organon

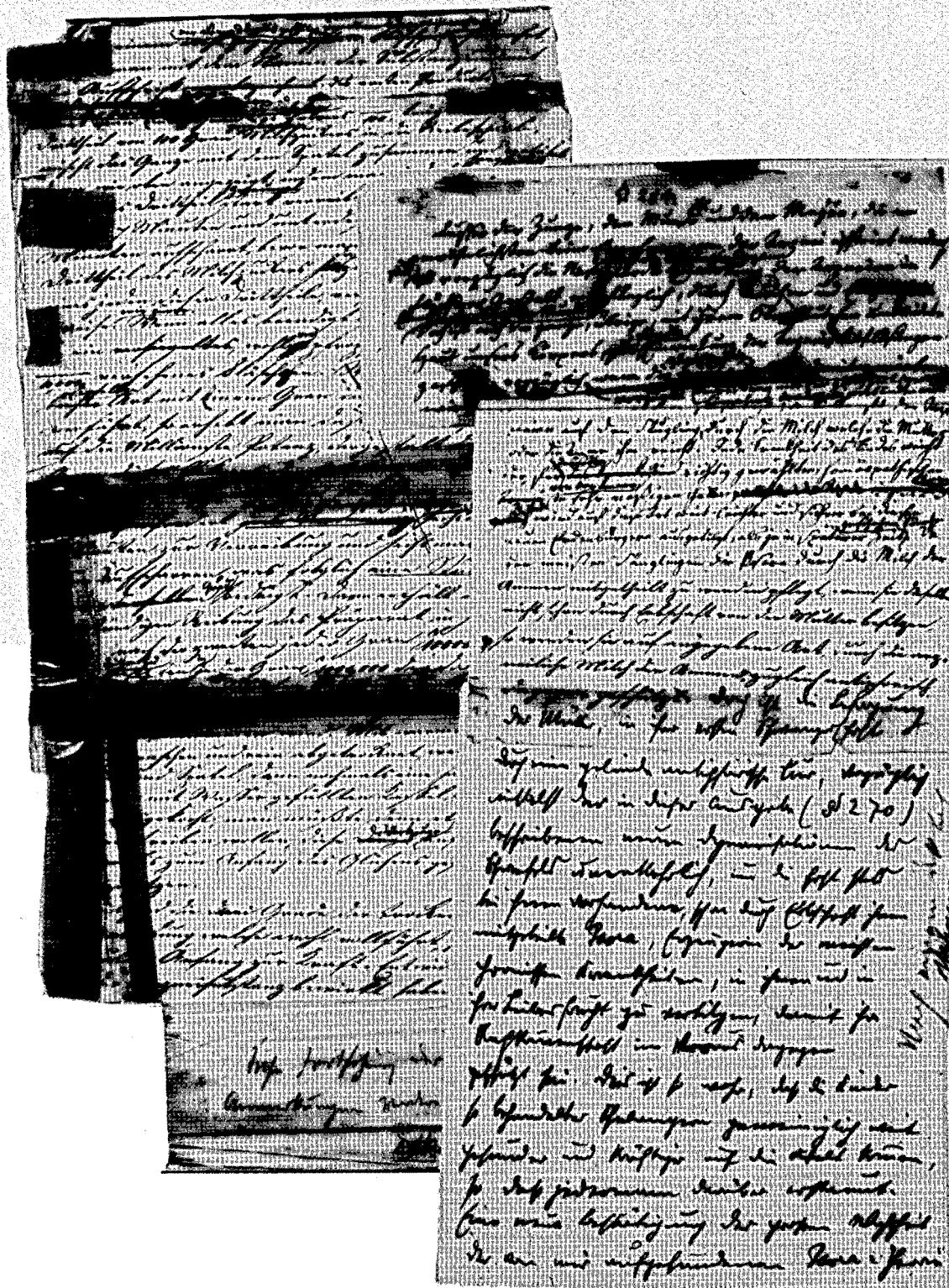
The last 25 years brought several milestones in basic research in the history and theory of homeopathy. Basic research in this context, however, does not mean clinical trials, randomised studies, or laboratory experiments, but advanced scholarship focussed on a revision, improvement, and refinement of the literary tools homeopaths are using. As an artist of healing, the homeopathic practitioner has to rely not only on the quality of his medicines, but also on the authenticity and genuineness of his basic texts and reference books.

When I started my research on Hahnemann's works some 30 years ago, nobody knew exactly how many, and which, writings Hahnemann had published during his lifetime. So first of all, I had to seek, find, and collect all his publications in libraries as well as archives and private repositories, identifying and compiling them in a final and authoritative register. Finally, in 1989, I succeeded in publishing the first complete, authentic, and absolutely reliable bibliography of the works of Samuel Hahnemann. [1]

### Hahnemann's philosophy

On the basis of this preliminary work, in 1990 I completed my PhD thesis on 'The philosophical concepts of Hahnemann when founding homeopathy', drawing on all his early writings – from his valediction from high school in 1775, to the first

edition of his 'Organon of rational therapeutics' in 1810. It comprised and evaluated some 15,000 pages of text published and edited by Hahnemann. [2] In this dissertation it became apparent that, in order to comprehend why and how Hahnemann established a new school of medicine, his philosophical, theological, and ethical background in particular has to be identified, explored, and taken into account. As it turns out, without Hahnemann's personal leaning towards Enlightenment and scientific progress, his deistic concept of God, his teleological conception of man together with his belief in the noble calling of mankind and his upright moral standards, homeopathy would probably never have been created. Evidently, Hahnemann's quest for a rational and beneficial medicine was embedded in a world of anthropological, humanistic, and ethical dimensions and premises of faith. As this is consti-



Pages of Hahnemann's original manuscript of the Organon of Medicine, displaying different handwritings (preserved in the Special Collections of the University of California, San Francisco).

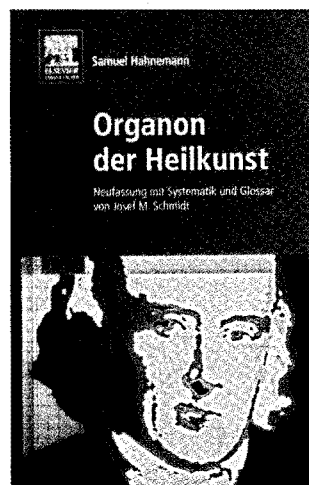
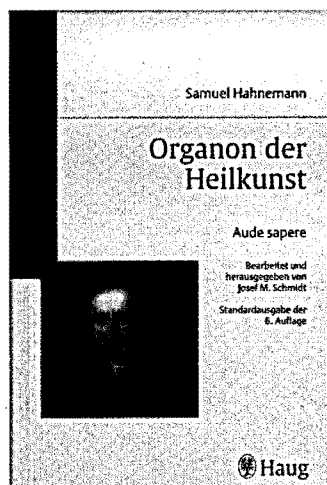
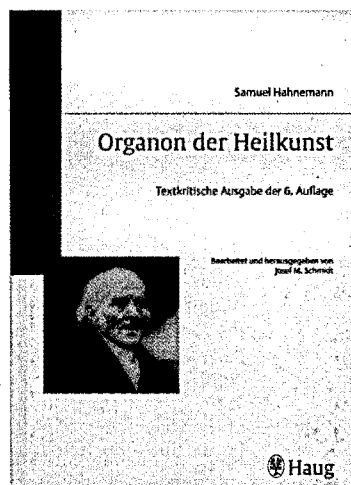
tutive of Hahnemann's homeopathy, it is crucial for Hahnemannians to be at least aware of his moral and philosophical background.

## Hahnemann's lesser writings

Another work based on my Hahnemann bibliography of 1989 was a collection of 'The lesser writings' of Samuel Hahnemann, which I redacted and edited

taining just 38 articles – it is the first complete, accurate, and reliable work of this kind. As a result, all the scattered papers Hahnemann had published in different journals and which were no longer obtainable are now easily accessible by the homeopathic community as well as by external scientists.

However, the textbook of utmost importance for homeopathy both for its practical application and



Organon editions based on Hahnemann's original manuscript: 1. Text-critical edition (1992), 2. Standard edition (1996), 3. New edition (2003).

in 2001, with Daniel Kaiser as co-editor. This 1000-page volume contains transcriptions of more than 225 articles and booklets written by Hahnemann, arranged chronologically and, as in the case of Latin originals, such as Hahnemann's dissertation or habilitation, also translated into German. [3] The publication of this collected volume again set new standards as – compared to the hitherto solely available edition by Ernst Stapf, published in 1829 and con-

for its history of reception, is the 'Organon of Medicine' by Samuel Hahnemann. Since its content is mandatory for every homeopath worldwide regardless of what school he or she may belong to, it has actually been labelled the 'Bible' of homeopathy. In fact, it constitutes and defines what has to be considered to be true and genuine homeopathy. Hence, its acceptance or criticism may also serve as a kind of shibboleth distinguishing those who may be

called pure Hahnemannians from half-homeopaths (in Hahnemann's terms 'bastard-homeopaths').

### **The text-critical edition of the Organon**

In view of its relevance it was strange that up to the 1990s, only one German edition existed of the last, i.e. the sixth, edition of the *Organon*. It was the one Richard Haehl had edited on the basis of a handwritten copy of Hahnemann's manuscript. [4] Thus, in the motherland of homeopathy there was still no authentic, let alone text-critical, edition of the original manuscript, which Hahnemann had completed in 1842 in Paris and which, after his death, travelled to Darup (Westphalia), Stuttgart, New York, and finally to San Francisco in 1921. The English translation, edited by William Boericke in Philadelphia in 1922, was, however, based upon the original manuscript. [5] In 1991–1992 a scholarship by the German Research Association (DFG) brought me to the University of California, San Francisco, to investigate the history of homeopathy in California. Since this was the place where the original manuscript of Hahnemann was stored and I had the opportunity to work with it virtually every day, it was clear to me what needed to be done. After all, such a unique chance would perhaps never again be given to a German-speaking researcher of Hahnemann, let alone be realised with such an intentness and accuracy. So, in February 1992, for the first time in the history of homeopathy I presented to the German-speaking world a complete, authentic and text-critical edition of the sixth edition of the '*Organon of Medicine*' based on the original manuscript that Hahnemann had completed exactly 150 years before, in February 1842. [6]

This manuscript had been kept in San Francisco initially by William Boericke, then by James W. Ward, afterwards by Howard and Elsa Engle, until it had found a safe place in the Special Collections of the University of California, San Francisco, in 1972. When I arrived there in 1991, however, nobody had ever noticed that, since 1969, Hahnemann's manuscript had no longer been complete, that, in fact, one page with Hahnemann's handwriting previously pasted in, was missing. By means of detective-like tracking, I eventually succeeded in finding the missing page in the possession of Elsa Engle's family physician who had died in 1984 and who had been the only person whom she had ever left alone with the *Organon* for several hours. To the delight and relief of the Library of the University, but also of the homeopathic community at large, I finally put it back in its original place in the *Organon*. Hence, since 1992 the original manuscript of the *Organon* is once more complete.

### **The standard edition of the Organon**

Though the text-critical edition of the *Organon* was an exact scientific document, due to its 1,700 footnotes and text-critical remarks, it was not easy to read. When the demand for a smoothed out, so-called standard edition, cleaned of the text-critical apparatus, emerged, I provided the same in 1996, again on the basis of the original manuscript and with the publisher Haug. [7]

In this optically appealing edition, however, the problem continued to exist that Hahnemann's antiquated language and demanding sentence structure no longer corresponded to what modern-day readers of medical literature were used to and thus

expecting: an easily readable text, with short phrases and concise statements, putting the essence in a nutshell. Along these lines I translated the entire Organon, so to say, into modern German, without, of course, changing in any way its content or meaning. This was a huge task laden with responsibility, but nevertheless necessary and overdue. It had to be carried out as neatly and reliably as possible. More and more German students of homeopathy preferred to use the English translation of the Organon rather than struggle through Hahnemann's old German multi-clause periods and participle constructions.

**"The systematics of the new edition of the Organon of Medicine is arranged in three categories: 1. practical directions and maxims, 2. theoretical explanations and hypotheses, and 3. conceptual foundations and premises."**

Josef M. Schmidt

### **The new edition of the Organon**

When, in 2003, I published the new edition of the 'Organon of Medicine' with Elsevier, I supplemented it with a systematics covering the entire content of the work, but in a structured and short-cut way (of course with references to the respective number of paragraph). It is arranged in three categories: 1. practical directions and maxims, 2. theoretical explanations and hypotheses, and 3. conceptual foundations and premises. Assisted by this approach, beginners of homeopathy as well as external in-

vestigators are now able to get an easy overview of what is of primary interest for a practitioner, theorist or historian of medicine, or philosopher for example. In the long run, this new approach should benefit future research, as it helps to objectify the discussion. The same applies to the attached glossary that clarifies more than 400 problematic notions and their application by Hahnemann in the Organon. [8]

### **Relevance of the Organon of Medicine**

Due to a series of particular difficulties, bringing an authentic as well as practical German edition of Hahnemann's 'Organon of Medicine' to Germany was a long and demanding affair. But extraordinary challenges occasionally produce extraordinary responses. With the text-critical edition and formal update comes a newly established quality standard that satisfies all imaginable requirements, warranting authenticity of contents as well as modernity of form, scientific accuracy as well as user-friendliness. This has set a benchmark against which other nations measure their own editions, as demonstrated by a new generation of Organon translations, English by Steven Decker (1996) [9], Polish by Ewa Grott (2004) [10] and Spanish by Gustavo Pirra (2008) [11].

The most important innovation of the sixth edition of the Organon was the change in the method of potentisation and the corresponding changes in dosage and administration. Since every dilution of 1:100 was now followed by a 1:500 dispersion, the new potencies were supposed to have a gentler, more rapid action, so that they could be taken daily, even

over a period of several months. This was in contrast to Hahnemann's instruction in the fifth edition of the *Organon* to give just one dose of a high potency and then wait and not give further doses unless the process of recovery slowed down again. Nevertheless, the older method has been used for almost the entire history of homeopathy, including the Kentian school. Even after Haehl's edition had been published in the 1920s, the new posology was at first completely ignored by the homeopathic community. Only in the 1940s a minority of Swiss homeopaths started to experiment with lm- or q-potencies. But it was not before the text-critical edition of the *Organon*, published in 1992, resolved all doubt regarding Hahnemann's definitive legacy by vouching for its authenticity, that q-potencies started to be prescribed and propagated on a large scale. According to Hahnemann, they represented the most perfect method of pharmacotherapeutics and henceforth guaranteed the 'cito, tuto et iucunde' (Celsus, 1st century AD) as well as 'rapid, gentle and lasting' cures. [12]

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### **Josef M. Schmidt**

Josef M. Schmidt, MD and PhD, is a specialist in general medicine and homeopathy and a professor of the history of medicine at the University of Munich. He graduated in medicine (1980) and philosophy (1990) and habilitated in the history of medicine (2005). From 1991-1992, he was a Research Associate at the Department of the History of Health Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco. Since 1990 he has been lecturing on homeopathy at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich as an Associate Lecturer (1992-2005), Private Lecturer (2005-2013), and Extracurricular Professor (since 2013). Affiliated with the Scientific Society of Homeopathy (WissHom), he has conducted the annual Summer School on the History of Homeopathy in Köthen/Germany since 2006. He is a much sought-after speaker at international congresses on homeopathy. For his contributions to the science of homeopathy he was awarded the Professor Alfons Stiegele Research Award in Homeopathy in 1993 and the Science Award Samuel Hahnemann of the City of Meißen in 2015.

