

Social and historical

Hahnemann's perspective of healing

GERMÁN GUAJARDO BERNAL

A careful review of Hahnemann's *Chronic Diseases* makes us wonder at the relevance of his preface to the 4th volume: 'Inquiry into the process of homoeopathic healing'.¹ This document represents a landmark or turning point in his perception of disease, and presents the break-through proposition that could decide future trends in homoeopathic methodology.

Before this chapter was conceived by Hahnemann, he presented homoeopathy as a closed and complete system, with the vital force passively affected by the disease (miasm) and the homoeopathic medicines directly responsible for the cure (antimiasmatic). For Hahnemann, nothing more could be ascertained, as the vital dynamis (force, principle or energy) was occult and forever unreachable by human research. Initially he reasoned that if homoeopathic dynamizations were of a spirit-like dynamic nature and only they could cure diseases directly—in an otherwise passive organism—then diseases had to share this ethereal trait of the medicine; the only possible conclusion was that diseases were a disorder of spiritual–dynamic nature, a disorder or imbalance of something as immaterial, the vital force.

At this first stage, Hahnemann reasoned that a passive vital force would imply a vulnerable vital force if under the influence of a chronic miasm (by contagion or heredity) and when this happened we would need an antimiasmatic substance that operated to eliminate the pathogenic miasm. The concept was thus complete: if disease was of an acute miasmatic nature, enter the necessary acute antimiasmatic; if a chronic miasm, then a chronic antimiasmatic. The system was closed, disease and healing were clarified and explained (to try and go deeper or know more was a waste of time and effort, given the dynamic spiritual level of the disorder). That being done, it only remained to apply the method correctly and cure suffering humanity once and for all.

But this conception changed radically when Hahnemann himself introduced the concept of organismic reaction, and revised the old scheme. In the new view, the vital force was no longer passive. Now it could act curatively in psychological, emotional, biodynamic diseases, as in diseases of organic, somatic or genetic nature. So this reactive vital power theoretically would have no limitations in its sphere of action, whereas there had been limitations with the initial notion that antimiasmatic medicines could only operate in the limited, closed universe of miasmatic pathology. Hahnemann systematically rejected any other proposition in the evolving knowledge of pathology. Curiously this posture is still maintained at some congresses, where only a couple of miasms are held responsible for all pathology, discarding any notion of disease other than in such miasmatic terms. When he conceived controlling functions in the organism itself, accepting that it was capable of determining the direction of cure, Hahnemann opened homoeopathy to study, knowledge and learning, to advances in research on pathology.

If homoeopathic medicines were no longer antimiasmatic, not direct curative agents, then the possibility arises to accept that other forms of pathology, besides the miasmatic, could also be cured by homoeopathy.

The system was no longer closed, homoeopathy was open to a universe of discovery, understanding and explanation, thus sharing the findings and the thrill of discovery with the rest of the medical disciplines (the term 'allopathic' has lost its meaning, and they have become plain medical disciplines or specialties). With the new perspective, homoeopathy can develop as a part of medical science and be prepared to assimilate the discoveries of biomedical research. In the new Hahnemannian conception, it does not matter that there are no more antimiasmatics, we have a more intense healing source, more biological and

complete, now that we can count on the organism itself. Hahnemann was the first to detect this. In this view, the discovery of more and more physiopathological directions in pathology is viable, because the possibilities of cure with the help of this instinctively reactive organism have also expanded, more even than with the circumscribed notion of 'antimiasmatic drugs'.

Under this new perspective, we can conceive purely organic, local, tissue or cellular pathology. In other words, other forms of local or somatic pathology can coexist with a pathology of biodynamic, constitutional nature and the holistic notion of totality. Diseases can have a merely biochemical or physicochemical part, such as the endocrine dysfunctions of stress, or the defective loci in genetic diseases. Several origins for pathology can be thus surmised with the concept of biological reaction, because none would be unreachable to the homoeopathic treatment once it triggers the organism's reactive potential, capable of reaching all levels of the human body.

With the new Hahnemannian concept, the idea that we cannot ever penetrate the ultimate causes of disease, they will remain unknown also disappeared; homoeopathy can now accept research into the objective and real nature of disease, because it is no longer a closed limited system, stimulated by an open understanding of physiopathology and therapeutics.

Hahnemann composed the first score of this symphony in homoeopathy. Researchers must now work in teams, using interdisciplinary approaches to define the nature of this amazing reactive potential, capable of devising strategies in the long, medium and short terms.

The historic sequence is as follows.

R.E. Dudgeon stated in his revision of the 6 editions of *Organon* that:

The attempt of an explanation of the process by which the homoeopathic remedy effects a cure is first made in the second edition, and differs considerably from that given in the last editions.²

In the 2nd and 3rd editions of the *Organon* Hahnemann wrote:

This depends on the following homoeopathic law of nature which was sometimes, indeed, vaguely surmised but not hitherto fully recognized, and to which is due every

real cure that has ever taken place: A weaker dynamic affection is permanently extinguished in the living organism by a stronger one, if the latter (whilst differing in kind) is very similar to the former in its manifestations.³

The idea is further developed in subsequent editions as follows in paragraphs 28 and 29:

As this natural law of cure manifests itself in every pure experiment and every true observation in the world, the fact is consequently established; it matters little what may be the scientific explanation of how it takes place; and I do not attach much importance to the attempts made to explain it. But the following view seems to commend itself as the most probable one, as it is founded on premises derived from experience.

As every disease (not entirely surgical) consists only in a special, morbid, dynamic alteration of the vital energy (the principle of life) manifested in sensation and motion, so in every homoeopathic cure this principle of life dynamically altered by natural disease is on administration of a medicinal potency selected exactly according to symptom similarity seized by a somewhat stronger, similar artificial disease manifestation. By this, the feeling of the natural (weaker) dynamic disease manifestation ceases and disappears. This disease manifestation no longer exists for the vital principle of life which is now occupied and governed merely by the stronger, artificial disease manifestation. This artificial disease manifestation has soon spent its force and leaves the patient free from disease, cured. The dynamis, thus freed, can now continue to carry life on in health.⁴

Once Hahnemann published this tentative hypothesis of cure some of his colleagues argued against making the organism a mere passive spectator in the healing process. Notably Jahr stated:

The principle which, according to our views, and conformable to the basis of our science, should lead to a view of the question in its true aspect is, that true, durable and radical cures are never effected by the direct action of a medicine, but by a

reaction of nature excited by it.⁵ (emphasis by Jahr)

Listening to his colleagues and reconsidering the matter, Hahnemann offered a new appreciation of the *modus operandi* in the preface to volume 4 of his *Chronic Diseases* entitled 'Inquiry into the process of homoeopathic healing':

These physicians have made many objections to the explanation I have given, and they would have preferred to reject the whole homoeopathic method of curing (the only one possible) merely because they were not satisfied with my efforts at explaining the mode of procedure which takes place in the interiors of man during a homoeopathic cure.

I write the present lines, not in order to satisfy those critics, but in order that I may present to myself and to my successors, the genuine practical homoeopaths, another and more probable attempt of this kind toward an explanation. This I present, because the human mind feels within it their resistible, harmless and praiseworthy impulse to give some account of itself as to the mode in which man accomplishes good by its actions.

It is the organic vital force of our body which cures natural diseases of every kind directly and without any sacrifices, as soon as it is enabled by means of the correct (homoeopathic) remedies to win the victory... Of itself this vital principle, being only an organic vital force intended to preserve an undisturbed health, opposes only a weak resistance to the invading morbid enemy; as the disease grows and increases, it opposes a greater resistance, but at best, it is only an equal resistance; with weakly patients it is not even equal, but weaker.

But if we physicians are able to present and oppose to this instinctive vital force its morbid enemy, as it were magnified through the action of homoeopathic medicines—even if it should be enlarged every time only a little—if in this way the image of the morbid foe be magnified to the apprehension of the vital principle through homoeopathic medicines, we gradually cause and compel this instinctive vital

force to increase its energies by degrees and to increase them more and more, and at last to such a degree that it becomes far more powerful than the original disease. The consequence of this is, that the vital force again becomes sovereign in its domain, can again hold and direct the reins of sanitary progress, while the apparent increase of the disease caused by homoeopathic medicines, disappears of itself, as soon as we, seeing the preponderance of the restored vital force, i.e. of the restored health, cease to use these remedies.⁶

Dudgeon put the date of this preface at 1838, commenting:

Some years later Hahnemann saw fit to offer a different explanation of the mode in which the homoeopathic remedy effects the cure of a disease, which would have probably been the one he would have adopted had he lived to publish another edition of his work, and which I think it right to insert in this place, not because the truth of the grand therapeutic rule we owe to his genius can be at all affected by the validity of his explanation of it, but in order that the reader may have the very latest ideas of the illustrious founder of homoeopathy on the subject.⁷

But in 1833 and 1842 Hahnemann presented the preface to the two last editions of the *Organon* stating that

Homoeopathy knows that a cure can only take place by the reaction of the vital force against the rightly chosen remedy that has been ingested, and that the cure will be certain and rapid in proportion to the strength with which the vital force still prevails in the patient.⁸

This organic, instinctive biological energy reacts to restore health. But it reacts against the medicine, as clearly expressed by Hahnemann in 1842. Quite 2 different matters that a medicine cures directly (antimiasmatic) or that the organism cures directly by reacting against the medicine. Hahnemann let the idea of reaction ripen from the 5th edition of *Organon* (1833), expressly dedicating an analysis of his discovery in 1838 with a long dissertation and reflection in the preface to his *Chronic Diseases*.

References

- 1 Hahnemann S. *The Chronic Diseases*. Preface to volume 4. New Delhi: Jain 1980.
- 2 Hahnemann S. Transl. R.E. Dudgeon. *Organon of Medicine* New Delhi: Jain 1975.
- 3 Hahnemann S. *Ibid.* 40.
- 4 Hahnemann S. *Ibid.* 41.
- 5 Jahr. *New Manual or Symptom Codex*. New York: William Radde 1848.
- 6 Hahnemann S. *The Chronic Diseases*. Op. cit. 17-18
- 7 Hahnemann S. *Organon of Medicine*. Op. cit. 189.
- 8 Hahnemann S. *Ibid.* p. xxi.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Germán Guajardo Bernal
PO Box 3702
Calexico, CA 92232, USA