

The Meaning of Homoeopathy

The four fundamentals of homoeopathy, as stated by its founder Hahnemann in his *Organon*, may be briefly put as follows:

- 1) The proving on healthy persons of substances to be used as medicines.
- 2) The selection and administration of remedies thus proved according to the Law of Similars.
- 3) The single remedy.
- 4) The minimum dose.

Granting that these are the four fundamental tenets of homoeopathy, the question of its status then arises. Is it a system of medicine? Is it a purely sectarian term? Is it a therapeutic specialty? In order to answer this question of status we must get down to simple facts to see, not only how homoeopathy differs from orthodox medicine, but also what they have in common.

We always like to begin with a common basis. What is the object of all conscientious physicians? We would answer, categorically: to cure the sick, to prevent others from becoming ill, and to raise the standard of health in all people. How does modern medicine try to accomplish this? First, by finding out what normality is, through the study of anatomy, physiology, physiological chemistry and so on. Second, by finding out what the varieties of ill health are. Modern medicine emphasizes the fact that many disturbances of health are due to psychic or sociological causative factors. Aside from these it searches for anatomical or physiological changes in the sick person and classifies these changes, when found, under some disease nomenclature. This search is called diagnosis, and modern medicine feels that the possibility of cure depends, in large measure, on the certainty of diagnosis. It defines as pathology the organic structural changes due to ill health which it finds before or after death. It finds that many 'diseases' are accompanied by some variety of bacteria which it considers to be one of the causative factors. In short, modern medicine feels that it must find out all the 'facts' that fit in with its own concept of disease.

To all of this the homoeopath subscribes, but he feels that it is only the beginning of what he must learn about his patient. The spontaneous,

Brief Study Course

characteristic things that each patient longs to tell, be they very general or minutely particular, are of special interest to the homoeopath, for they individualize the case, bringing out that particular patient's reaction to the 'disease' he suffers from. The busy modern doctor feels he does not need to know these salient points, as to him they are not signposts but merely clutter.

At this point modern medicine is ready to try to cure the disease it has diagnosed. What laws of cure does it follow? First, the commonsense principle of rectifying anything mechanically wrong and instituting appropriate hygiene, diet and so on. When it comes to the prescription of actual drugs, those that are given are not uniformly governed by any one law. The intent is to give them on a physiological basis, which means that they are experimented with in laboratories in crude dosage, and mainly on animals. It is more or less expected, by analogy, that what slows the heart in the frog, rabbit or dog will do so in the human.

In addition to laboratory data on animals, many drugs are tried out empirically on patients and pass into general usage in accordance with their success. A few forms of therapy are aimed at the individual as a whole, taken as a type - for instance, endocrine therapy, but the majority of modern drugs are given for a definite physiological effect on one organ or function of the body. They are thus given with no regard to the varying individualities of the patient who may have that organ or function disordered, as for example in the use of cholagogues, digitalis, diuretics and so on. A large part of modern therapy is not even aimed at physiological alteration (the drugs being given according to the law of contraries), nor at chemical antidoting (such as alkalis for acid stomach), but is frankly and only palliative, as in the various analgesics for headaches or neuralgias. Most modern drugging, in short, is aimed at specific symptoms and makes no attempt to get back to the constitutional cause of the disease. The success of this type of therapy is necessarily uneven. Furthermore, much of it is actually suppressive. It is **an** interesting fact that many cases of apparent cure prove to be those in which the drug given on a physiological or symptomatic basis was, unknown to the prescriber, a similar, in the homoeopathic sense, to the case in hand.

It should be clearly stated that homoeopaths need the accepted scientific training and the procedures of diagnosis and laboratory data. Their special technique begins at the moment of starting therapy, although they bring to this crisis of cure a broader philosophy of illness and a special knowledge of each individual patient.

The Meaning of Homoeopathy

Homoeopathic therapy is based on the hypothesis, ancient as Hippocrates, that like cures like (*similia similibus curentur*). The persistent and enlightened practice of homoeopathy can prove that this principle is a basic law of nature. It must also be demonstrable by laboratory technique, but the systematic working out of this has not as yet been done, mainly because homoeopaths are so beguiled by the practical application of it that they have not given suitable attention to the laboratory end. (Only in recent years has there been a significant effort by homoeopaths to carry out controlled studies using homoeopathic methods. — Ed.)

We have sketched modern medicine's approach and attitude and have shown up to what point homoeopathy concurs. It is also appropriate to give briefly here the main points of difference between the two. These are developed more fully in the rest of the course.

- 1) That there is a natural law of cure - like cures like.
- 2) That the basis of therapy is a *vital* rather than a *physiological* one. That is, the vital force must be stimulated to cure the patient and only so can he be really cured, and that any other drug therapy is palliative or suppressive.
- 3) That the single remedy at a time is all that is needed. This follows from statement (1), because there cannot be two things most similar to another. The single remedy has the further advantage that when one thing is given one can evaluate its action, whereas, if four are given you cannot know which helped, or in what proportion.
- 4) That a minimum dose is essential. This is based on the Arndt-Schultz law that small doses stimulate, medium doses paralyze and large doses kill. In other words, that the action of small and very large doses of the same substance on living matter is opposite. Under this heading comes the whole potency question; this is considered by many to be the greatest snag in homoeopathy but is, together with the Law of Similars, the key to the whole matter.
- 5) That the materia medica must, because of the Law of Similars, be composed of the results of remedy experimentation with small doses on relatively healthy humans, that is to say, 'provings'.
- 6) That disease is not an actual entity, but a name given for classification purposes to manifestations of departures from normality in individuals.
- 7) That individualization is essential, i.e. that no two people are exactly alike in sickness or in health, and that while even homoeopaths must classify, they draw vastly finer distinctions. For example, to ordinary medicine there is but one disease pneumonia, though with several

Brief Study Course

sub-types - broncho-, lobar, viral and others; to homoeopathy there are as many types as there are remedy symptom pictures. Any remedy in the homoeopathic materia medica may be called for in pneumonia, although only rarely will one outside of the thirty or forty in frequent use be needed. Theoretically there should be as many types of pneumonia as there are people who have it, but owing to the small number of proved remedies compared to the substances that might be proved, there can only be as many pneumonia types to date as we have remedies for. Homoeopaths, in other words, classify pneumonias as Aconite, Bryonia, Gelsemium, Phosphorus, Tartar Emetic pneumonias, to name but a few.

- 8) That suppression is one of the greatest dangers in medicine.
- 9) That chronic disease is a constitutional matter, and that this has a philosophical bearing of inestimable importance on prescribing. One cannot practise true homoeopathy without a concept of chronic disease.

Having given the main points of contact and difference between homoeopathy and regular medicine, we can now return to our earlier question concerning the status of homoeopathy. It is not a sectarian term, although even a slight study of its history will often show how it has been necessary for it to be considered one, both by its opponents and its adherents. It is a therapeutic specialty and, as such, is more easily grasped by the modern student, but *it is much more than that*. 'System of medicine' is a term which conveys little to my mind; it sounds like somebody's textbook or treatise on one of the minor 'opathies'.

Homoeopathy is not an 'opathy'; it is the first part of the term, the 'homoeo', the similarity, which we must bear in mind. It is a method of cure according to law, based, as all great things are, on a far-reaching philosophy. // *is the central core of medicine*, whether recognized or not, and is thoroughly compatible with the best of modern science.

Bibliography

The Law of Cure, Ridpath.

The Patient's Dilemma, T. M. Dishington.

The Principles of Practice of Homoeopathy, C. E. Wheeler.

'A Symposium on Homoeopathy', *The Homoeopathic Recorder*, Vol. XLIV, May 1929, p. 293.

The Organon of the Art of Healing, Samuel Hahnemann.