

The following two letters appeared in 'Simillimum' (Winter 2001, Vol.XIV, No.4, 6-14), the Journal of the Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians (www.healthy.net/library/journals/simillimum) edited by Barbara Osawa and Peter Wright. They are presented here with kind permission.

The following two letters were a reply to André Saine's Article "Homeopathy versus speculative Medicine":

Brent Mathieu, president of the board of the Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians (HANP), asks whether we should rather try new approaches in homeopathy instead of renouncing them. The point of question is, if Hahnemann had been unailing or if he had not only given a fundament which should be developed further. The inductive way of thinking is not the only way, there are also other methods. In spite of the reliability of the principles of homeopathy it is also adequate to doubt her immutability and infallibility.

Peter Wright, also a member of the board of the HANP, contradicts Brent Mathieu and emphasises the immutability of the fundamental principles of homeopathy. Every innovation developed in homeopathy must orient by these principles; only a supplement without a change of the fundamentals is to be permitted. Recent innovations partly don't base on the principles but ignore them.

Brent Mathieu

A reply to André Saine's "Homeopathy vs. Speculative Medicine"

Dear editor,

Dr. Saine, in his treatise "Homeopathy versus Speculative Medicine, A Call to Action" (Simillimum Fall 2001), points out the "responsibility [that] belongs to everyone in a position of authority." As president of the board of the Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians, I am compelled to action.

First, I want to commend Dr. Saine on a scholarly presentation of Hahnemann, Lippe, Lee, and Dunham's views on the importance of pure sources of Materia Medica in order to preserve the effectiveness of Homeopathy as a healing art. This history is a valuable instruction about the principles of Homeopathy, and the roots of past and present differences among its practitioners. The quotes in the article helped clarify my understanding of the issues underlying the concerns expressed by the 21 signers of a letter published in Homeopathy Today (May, 2001), and from individuals in private communications to the HANP Board.

It has been distressing to witness the participants in this difference of thought polarizing into "us vs. them" camps. A number of prominent DHANPs and homeopaths have dropped their subscriptions to Simillimum in protest because of the standards for author guidelines in that publication, controversy about presentations at the last HANP Case Conference, and the tone and content of recent issues. Individuals from both sides have used inflammatory and divisive terms such as "fundamentalism" to describe the positions of advocates of pure Hahnemannian Homeopathy, and the avant-garde teachings charged as being "false doctrines" that are "speculative" and "misrepresentations."

After reading Dr. Saine's essay, it is apparent much of this divisiveness stems from the attitudes of Hahnemann and his disciples. Hahnemann is quoted denouncing "false doctrines" as "treachery and degeneracy" that must be "branded and avoided." Lippe speaks of Homeopathy guided by "fundamental and infallible" and "fixed, immutable principles." Such words set the historical stage for our present drama. They document Hahnemann's intolerance of dissent and departure from the principles he delineated in the Organon, and the fervor of his disciples in defending his ideas as sacrosanct. One wonders whether Hahnemann and Lippe, if they were alive today, would burn the books by Scholten,

Vithoukias, Morrison, and Sankaran on *materia medica* for their alleged impurity? Or would they be engaged in scientific inquiry to either verify or negate their hypotheses? Is it our duty as Hahnemannian homeopaths to “denounce their misrepresentation and false teachings” as Dr. Saine states, and perhaps censor their articles and boycott their books and seminars, or rather should we experiment and test what is true and effective in Homeopathy today?

Lippe’s scorn for “the advocates of unlimited liberty” that “pervert Homeopathy into Eclecticism” stings especially. The Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians is the child of the marriage of Homeopathy and naturopathic medicine that descended historically from the Eclectic Medicine of the late 1800s. Our diplomates graduate from naturopathic medical schools where they are trained to integrate Homeopathy with other therapies that respect and work with the vital force. Some of us, myself included, have a confusion of identity about whether we are homeopaths or naturopaths, and whether we can be both. To protect the reputation and purity of Homeopathy, shall we propose that the HANP require from its DHANPs a pledge of allegiance to pure, Classical Homeopathy, signed in blood?

Dr. Saine questions whether the 21 signers of a letter are “promoting a false doctrine.” Rather, let us as homeopaths debate the core question of how do we “know” the medicinal action of homeopathic drugs. In other words, let us ask ourselves as physicians and scientists, what is reliable and “pure” *materia medica*? Hahnemann’s assertion is that only *materia medica* derived from experimentation on healthy humans is pure, and may be relied upon to treat the sick. To abbreviate and paraphrase one of Hahnemann’s quotes from Dr. Saine’s article: “The homeopathic healing art administers no medicine before testing experimentally their pure effects. Thus alone can the power of medicines on human health be known.” Other methods are speculative, in Hahnemann’s opinion. Is he correct? Is it ethical for us to prescribe a relatively unproven remedy based on theory or intuition?

Another question: because of Hahnemann’s great genius, brilliant scientific experimentation and inductive reasoning, are the principles for healing in the *Organon* infallible and immutable, free from error for all time? Or are they a firm foundation and a sure guide for further inquiry and progress, as in the case of Newtonian physics leading to quantum mechanics and string theory? How shall we advance and progress our science of healing? Dr. Saine in his essay admirably outlines one course. Does this mean we must reject and denounce the premises of Electroacupuncture by Voll, radionics, medical psychics, Jung, Whitmont, shamans, and Rife as folly and quackery? Or can these aid us to deepen our understanding of vital force, susceptibility, miasms and the curative action of drugs beyond Hahnemann’s conclusions?

Dr. Saine quotes Hahnemann’s admission, “...it is certain that the *materia medica* can and must be the daughter of experience,” tempered with his warning about it giving way to “dreamy hypotheses.” *Materia medicas* such as *Lectures on the Homeopathic Materia Medica*, *The Soul of Remedies*, *Materia Medica Viva*, and *The Desktop Guide to Keynote Prescribing*, are based on their authors’ extensive clinical experience.

Hahnemann is quoted in Dr. Saine’s article as asserting “...it is impossible to divine the healing powers of medicines according to a chemical hypothesis,” thus discounting the value of chemistry in homeopathic pharmacodynamics, not to mention quantum physics. Yet in many published cases as demonstrated by Scholten and Sankaran, successful prescriptions were made of a combination salt such as *Natrum arsenicum* based on the indications of its constituent elements, rather than its recorded provings. How is this not inductive reasoning similar to that of Hahnemann? Nature, the order of the universe, is a great teacher and revealer of the essential qualities of substances. Inductive reasoning is one valid way of knowledge. It is not the only one.

Hahnemann indeed provided us a true compass to find our way in healing humanity. Though the principles of Homeopathy he expounded are not broken and are still reliable, it is appropriate to question their immutability and infallibility. Our understanding of the principles of healing, and the reliability of our materia medica and repertories, can be improved through scientific inquiry and innovation. We must be able to question Hahnemann's authority, and go beyond his work in a search for truth, and our mission to heal the sick.

I thank Dr. Saine for his provocative paper, and join him in the call for reflection and action on the direction of Homeopathy.

Julian Winston, editor of Homeopathy Today, quoted the poet Rilke in its September 2001 issue: "Community is held together by the power of the grace of great things." May the grace and power of Homeopathy bless our community to hold together, even as we disagree.

Tolerance in the search for truth needs to balance the vigilance required to preserve liberty and science.

Brent Mathieu ND, DHANP

Peter Wright responds:

I appreciate the good intentions in Dr. Mathieu's letter, and as a fellow HANP board member I very much appreciate his fine work for the organization. With the permission of Dr. Saine and Simillimum executive editor Barbara Osawa, I would like to respond in a collegial spirit to some of the points he has raised.

Dr. Mathieu's letter is very welcome in continuing the exchange, and I expect that the concerns he brings up are widely shared. I want to emphasize, as André did in his message, that there are absolutely no issues of malice, disrespect, or moral judgement involved here. This is a discussion of principles, not personalities.

We need to talk

The existence of differing views, and the sometimes abrasive tone of the discussion, seems to concern Dr. Mathieu as much as the issues themselves, and yet the language of his letter risks heightening the polarization that he deplors. I would suggest that forthright dialogue about essential issues should not be cause for alarm or distress.

He speaks of book-burning, censorship, boycotts, intolerance, quackery, and blood oaths. Totalitarian dictators and dogmatic priests claim the authority to burn books and prevent the dissemination of ideas they condemn. Clinicians, scholars, and scientists selectively challenge, test, confirm, verify, disprove, criticize, or ignore publications in their fields, depending on how they rate the merits of the work. As editors, teachers, readers, and prescribers, we must all make choices, based on our assessment of the value of each offering. This is not the same as intolerance, censorship, or boycotts. When old ideas which are antithetical to Homeopathy (as defined by its founder) are promoted as the latest developments in the art, leaders like Dr. Saine may well feel obliged to speak up.

He wonders, "...rather should we experiment and test what is true and effective in Homeopathy today?" I can't resist responding to this question with another question: has something about disease and healing so fundamentally changed that today's Homeopathy must be different from that of previous eras? What was this event, when did the change occur, and how must Homeopathy therefore change?

He asks, "how do we 'know' the medicinal action of homeopathic drugs?" and whether the Organon's principles remain verifiably true. Dr. Mathieu seems to be unclear about the

meaning and importance of Hahnemann's inductive logic, relative to "other ways of knowledge." The implication is that these principles are simply one man's ideas, to be tested and improved in the course of time, along with the ideas of many other theorists and thinkers. I would respectfully suggest that these concerns show a failure to grasp the true stature of this man and his work, and the extent to which recorded experience has long since verified his teachings.

Inductive logic makes Homeopathy unique

Inductive methods are indeed valued over others in Homeopathy, due to Hahnemann's awareness of the long history of false hopes and dead ends in medical approaches which relied on other sources of knowledge such as deduction and intuition. The very relentlessness that makes his chastisements sound so harsh also drove him to painstakingly work out an inductive approach to healing which differs in logical type from any other before or since. This fundamental distinction is the basis of its superiority over the standard medicine of his day (and of our own), and the reason that repeated attempts to amend it, lacking the inductive foundation, have never been acceptable as extensions of his work.

Dr. Mathieu asks whether "...we must reject and denounce the premises of Electroacupuncture by Voll, radionics, medical psychics, Jung, Whitmont, shamans, and Rife as folly and quackery?" I think the best response here is to quote Jesus: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Many traditions and individuals have touched on certain aspects of the territory, and of course conventional medicine has accumulated masses of fragmentary data. Homeopathy, however, offers us something qualitatively unique: a comprehensive map including a system of principles that illuminates the energetic basis of disease and health, sets out an effective method of removing illness, provides a way to understand the process, and applies to every curable case.

200 years after Hahnemann's discoveries, persistent and skillful application of homeopathic principles will still lead to genuine cures. If we know and understand the value of this system, if our work is Homeopathy, we are ethically obliged to rely on the principles, and on trustworthy information derived from them, rather than on intuition or hypothesis. Judges are bound to follow the law and the principles of justice, navigators must use the compass and map, and homeopaths must apply the truths of the

Organon

The "advances" and "innovations" in question do not build on the principles, but ignore and contradict them. Hahnemann was well-acquainted with the medical hypotheses of his day, which included the doctrine of signatures and the use of compound chemical medicines chosen for the presumed activity of their constituents. He clearly repudiated both of these ideas as clinically unreliable and logically inconsistent with the empirical foundations of Homeopathy. This is not string theory, nor rocket science—it is more like trying to use mud and thatch to build a new wing onto a structure made of marble and granite.

"...in many published cases as demonstrated by Scholten and Sankaran, successful prescriptions were made of a combination salt such as Natrum arsenicum based on the indications of its constituent elements, rather than its recorded provings. How is this not inductive reasoning similar to that of Hahnemann?" This is an example, rather, of deduction—attempting to deduce the properties an unknown remedy from those of two others which have been proven, rather than building step by step on observation, from the ground up, as required by the inductive method Hahnemann taught. For instance, *Calcarea sulphuricum* and *Hepar sulph.* are both remedies containing sulphur and calcium; we know about their respective medicinal properties only through provings. "Synthetic prescribing" was unsound

when Kent proposed it 100 years ago, and it is still an instance of putting the theoretical cart before the empirical horse.

“Hahnemann indeed provided us a true compass to find our way in healing humanity. Though the principles of Homeopathy he expounded are not broken and are still reliable, it is appropriate to question their immutability and infallibility.” This passage strikes me as contradictory. Either the principles are reliable and fully proven, or not. How does one see it—“broke,” or “don’t need fixing”? Does the compass need to be verified again at each use, or can we count on it tomorrow, as we did yesterday?

The lure of novelty

Why has Homeopathy’s history been so marked by recurring conflicts between strict Hahnemannians and those who wish to redefine and transform the discipline? I suspect that there are three major factors which motivate the advocates of transformation: the search for short cuts, the creative urge, and self-promotion. None of these motivations are evil or unusual, but each puts “the physician’s high and only mission” at grave risk. Better education for homeopaths, grounded in the principles and promoting critical thinking and high standards, is urgently needed to act as a restraining influence on these natural tendencies.

As a culture, we are entranced with newness. We confuse novelty with significance, knowledge and cleverness with understanding. We expect constant updates and revisions, the periodic appearance of revolutionary new paradigms replacing all that came before. The impact of this obsession is at least as problematic for Homeopathy as for other areas of science, technology, and the arts.

While the data of Homeopathy will continue to be updated and revised, its foundation of essential principles is deeply rooted in the bedrock of Creation. The law of similars, proving of medicines, potentization, single remedy, minimum dose, hierarchy of symptoms, miasmatic basis of disease—there’s very little need to revisit these points. We can count on them.

André’s article on Aloe, the second part of which appears in this issue, is an excellent example of a contribution to the data which is fully informed by the principles. Adding to the edifice of Homeopathy in this manner is far humbler than setting out to renovate the entire structure or add a fancy new tower, but the quality of the material and the attention to detail ensure its usefulness and durability.

Necessary distinctions

There is an essential conflict here over the meaning and ownership of a word. The uses of potentized substances are many and varied, and some people seriously argue that they are all varieties of something very broad and nebulous called Homeopathy. The truth is that Hahnemann meant something very specific by the term: a system that he discovered and developed as a complete, coherent method through the exercise of incredibly rigorous logic and inspiration. His challenge to the physicians of his own day still stands—to either use and refine the amazing instrument he named Homeopathy, or to pursue other paths based on other models of healing, and to call them by other names.

For instance, in the early part of the 20th century, Rudolph Steiner developed a system he named Anthroposophical Medicine. Practitioners of this method often use potentized medicines, frequently the same remedies as homeopaths prescribe. They analyze cases and prescribe medicines (including many we are quite familiar with) in a way that is quite unlike Homeopathy. There is no controversy I know of between them and homeopaths, however, because they do not call their work Homeopathy.

The ferocity of Hahnemann and his followers, in responding to those who would innovate in the name of Homeopathy without retaining the rigor of the original work, may often strike us as harsh. We are too accustomed to a bland, postmodern, neutral discourse of “niceness” and mutual back-scratching. We may see our community of nonconventional medical practitioners as being so marginalized that we can’t risk open conflict and strongly expressed opinions. We may assume that objectivity means “looking at both sides of the question,” regardless of the issue. We are more comfortable with the idea of closing our eyes and submerging our differences in a nice smoochy New Age hug.

This kind of tolerance is appropriate for a polite discussion of religion, where verification is not readily available, or necessary. It is not satisfactory for matters where standards of logic and proof are applicable, and where real suffering can result from our choices.

Naturopath, homeopath, or both?

The anxiety about confronting our differences is especially characteristic of naturopathic physicians. We are exposed to many methods and concepts in school. We can’t practice all of them; we certainly can’t become expert in all of them; logically, we can’t really even accept all of them together, as they often contradict each other if examined closely. We maintain a semblance of unity as a profession by overlooking these contradictions, and individually finding a method (or a combination or synthesis of methods) that we wish to pursue. If we don’t criticize the work of our peers, they won’t criticize ours, and we can all share the legal umbrella of our professional affiliation.

We overlook our differences not just for the sake of unity, but because the field of naturopathy is broad, nebulous, and inclusive from its very inception. The name itself betrays the nature of the profession as a fusion, a sort of chimera. The vitalistic rhetoric of naturopathy was largely borrowed from Homeopathy in the first place, and is reflected very inconsistently in the treatments included in the ND’s array.

The premises of many “natural therapies” are entirely allopathic. Today’s naturopathy, as the heir to Eclecticism, employs some of the same botanical pharmacy as the 19th century Eclectics, but little of their rationale for prescribing the herbs. As in conventional medicine, there are no real Eclectic or naturopathic principles to compare with the principles of Homeopathy, only tactics for specific diseases—“whatever works,” which is not a principle at all. One settles for defining clinical success simply as short-term improvement in the disease diagnosis, without regard to the whole person, the long term, or the consequences of suppression.

Wholism, uniformed by a unifying model like Hahnemann’s, usually just means offering multiple treatments for multiple problems. While naturopathy is multiple and diverse by nature (appropriate for the successor to Eclecticism), and by definition excludes only what is “unnatural,” Homeopathy, by contrast, is a well-defined and internally consistent system.

Yes, we can certainly be both naturopaths and homeopaths! We each make choices about what we want to do for our patients, based on our predilections and preferences, as well as our clinical experience. We needn’t adopt every practice on the list, or attempt to revive Eclecticism, to be “real naturopaths.” Choosing to specialize principally or exclusively in Homeopathy is a perfectly valid option. No one need feel “stung” when homeopaths distinguish between their art and other approaches within the ND’s scope of practice. All therapies, natural or otherwise, are not equal.

History: learn or repeat

I urge my colleagues to reread and consider well the implications of the history André cites. Despite the fierce defense of Homeopathy's integrity by Hahnemann, Lippe, and others, the neglect of fundamental principles in homeopathic education was the primary factor which brought Homeopathy to the very brink of oblivion in the US, within several decades of its introduction here. As extreme as Hahnemann's attacks on the "half-homeopaths" may now appear to our tolerant eyes, his concern for the purity of the art proved to be all too well-founded.

The real dynamite in André's article, perhaps, is his statement that some teachers "have gone as far as falsifying follow-ups, to demonstrate the cleverness of their prescribing." This indicates an alarmingly advanced pathology affecting our community, one which threatens to seriously undermine the integrity of the essential data base we share. Hygienic treatment is needed—the sunshine, fresh air, and cleansing effects of close scrutiny and vigorous discussion. It is time to fearlessly confront fantasy, pretense, self-promotion, wishful thinking, and falsehood in all forms.

In view of the history, it is appropriate and important to rectify our language, to insist on calling a spade a spade. There are few boundaries in naturopathy and wholistic healing; one must rely on personal judgement. Practitioners are free to use symbolism, omens, astrology, blood types, Voll machines, aura reading, etc., to guide their prescriptions. Natural medicine offers many options for ways to practice, many areas for creative innovation, many opportunities to market products, services, and ideas. But let those who part ways with Hahnemann be honest enough to call their work something else—naturopathy, energy healing, archetype therapy—any term that doesn't already have a distinct meaning assigned to it. I believe that it's entirely fair to reserve the term Homeopathy for the methods of Hahnemann and his direct successors, and to maintain the original vision of the HANP as an organization for NDs practicing Hahnemann's art.