

This editorial first appeared in 'Simillimum' (Vol.XV (3), fall 2002), the journal of the Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians (www.healthy.net/library/journals/simillimum) edited by Neil Tessler. It is presented here with kind permission.

In this editorial Neil Tessler, new editor of Simillimum and president of Homeopathic Academy of Naturopathic Physicians expresses his opinion on the current debate on the fundamentals of homeopathy: It's one thing to stay close to the principles of homeopathy, but another to regard homeopathy as a closed revelation and to hide oneself from new developments. A one-sided emphasis of the scientific character of homeopathy suppresses the other more creative and philosophical aspects. One could also be open for the new methods while building upon the basic principles; in this sense he would continue the editorship of "Simillimum".

Neil Tessler ND, DHANP

A Question of Balance

I have often noticed that great songwriters were enthusiastic fans and emulators of some prior musical tradition. One of my personal favorites, Bob Dylan, was steeped in many of the classic forms of American folk music and even today his songs reference to these sources. When Dylan went electric there was a great hue and cry among those who had looked up to him as the captain of an acoustic folk revival. He was literally booed across America. Yet, when we look back, we find it hard to understand this misapprehension of Dylan's musical evolution.

In some talented individuals, the intensity of their natural genius moves them to develop their own creative voice on the foundation of what has come before. As students and practitioners of homeopathy, why demonize or recoil from the new insights of brilliant thinkers in our field? We may at first react skeptically; be critical, discerning, and cautious. We might choose to stick to the methods with which we are comfortable. However, new knowledge in homeopathy will continue to arise and must be allowed to prove itself.

It is one thing to cleave close to the principles that define homeopathy, quite another to turn homeopathy into a closed revelation. Hahnemann's development of homeopathy occurred by following a kind of natural logic that revealed itself purely through observation and subsequent reflection. He did not have to construct homeopathy, as much as to simply *see* it. The meaning of Hering's statement on the continuing importance of inductive logic for homeopathy is that only in this way, through observation and reflection, can the clarity and integrity of homeopathic science be sustained. This is at the root of the vigor with which the defense of "pure Hahnemannian" homeopathy is prosecuted. Yet, it is observation and reflection that is at the root of the teachings of the contemporary homeopaths who are the cause of criticism in some quarters.

In the meantime, the incessant use of the term "science" by the most conservative homeopaths, as if it is their exclusive province, suggests that purity casts a shadow. To emphasize the scientific aspect of Hahnemannian homeopathy is grounding and right for any number of reasons, however to appropriate it to an exclusivist point of view, surely invites allegations of dogmatism. Homeopathy, while built upon fixed principles, is an evolving science.

Also, there is more to homeopathy than its scientific aspect. Homeopathy lends itself to diverse insights of a philosophical nature, leading to new perspectives on practice and on life. It is unfortunate when the promotion of the scientific is accompanied by suppression of the

creative, artistic and philosophical. I would think most homeopaths discover that working with a system encompassing the person as a whole, leads to an awareness of relationships spreading out in many directions. Besides a healing system, homeopathy leads to a healing perspective, where boundaries blur between science, art and philosophy. Thinking homeopathically, a unitary, accommodating view of life is gained.

While some homeopathic conservatives resent the occasional characterization of their arguments as ‘theological’, it is hard to escape consideration of the metaphor. The very use of the term “pure” reinforces the impression of an elite wishing to preserve homeopathy against heresy practiced in its name. While we can appreciate that this is a valuable role, the tone of arguments has suggested close parallels to the perennial struggles between priest and prophet; the keepers of cherished tradition versus those available to fresh revelation.

Drs. Sheppherd and Saine, have asserted that ordering systems such as kingdoms are theoretical structures, rather than pure observations of nature. In part this is true, yet it is also true that these theories are insights derived from erudite reflection on verified materia medica, supported by careful study of the repertory. Moreover, as Sankaran has pointed out, classification systems are a means to an end. Having formulated a hypothesis that the study of materia medica by kingdom might reveal patterns useful in the homeopathic process, Sankaran continues to offer practical information many have found of great clinical value. Scholten, Mangialavori, Morrison, Shore, Herrick and Hershoff, to name those I am aware of, have all done valuable, sometimes remarkable work in this area of growing interest.

While some trends may have practical, clinical value, there are others that play on the edges of the homeopathic paradigm, without adding anything substantive to the profession. Group provings that include persons not taking remedies, remedy-under-the-pillow dream provings, the introduction of remedies such as “Berlin Wall”, are sure to create sweaty palms for those who long for some kind of rapprochement between homeopathy, and western medicine and science.

How is the practitioner to regard materia medica derived in this way or from these sources? Are “Great Wall of China”, or “Wailing Wall”, or “Stonehenge” to be next? Will every object with symbolic character become a medicine? Are symptoms from individuals who never actually took a proving dose to enter the materia medica?

Its very hard to see how such things advance the profession and rather easy to imagine how they may do damage. However, there is little point in hoping that such notions will not continue to arise or that they should not arise. The extremes and the center are a fixture of existence. It may also be true that there are diverse values to be found among differing attitudes and explorations.

Simillimum and the HANP represent practitioners with various influences and methods. Our journal should shepherd discussion in an atmosphere respectful of these differences. Over the last several years, the Simillimum masthead, “dedicated to the practice of homeopathy as formulated by Samuel Hahnemann in the *Organon of Medicine*”, was used to justify the assumption of the intellectual property of the journal by highly conservative opinion. It was this situation that I wished to address when initiating discussion with the membership in the spring of this year.

As an organ for the homeopathic profession, sponsored by a fairly small fraternity of practitioners, many of long experience; having gone through the rigors of university, naturopathic college, and clinical practice, we have a collective expectation for a homeopathic journal of high standard. Specifically, this means a journal offering good learning, stimulating thought, practical insights, founded in thorough clinical work, well considered, grounded and presented.

However, to achieve these goals, I hold steadfastly to the view that a generally more open approach, rather than a more closed one, better serves the homeopathic profession in several specific ways.

First it creates an atmosphere where homeopathic practitioners feel welcome to share their experiences on a common platform. We should strive for a results and reflection based conversation across disputed philosophic waters. In this way, all practitioners can find interest and benefit from the differing points of view.

Second, a more open policy reflects the choices that are already being made by a significant percentage of homeopathic practitioners. Many report that they are having valuable successes with new materia medica and methodologies. I often feel that their voice of experience has not been heard. There seems to be an assumption that majority tastes are not to be trusted. I prefer to respect the integrity of the many hard working homeopaths, not as doctrinaire as some, but committed and growing in knowledge and experience.

Finally, a more open position is more balanced, and dynamic balance is health. Vithoulkas nourished all of us when he defined health as “freedom”. This brought the idea of ‘resilience’ as a core trait of the healthy organism. Long ago, Dunham used the term “elasticity” to express the same idea. We can cultivate a dynamic balance between innovative methods and traditional homeopathic values in an open-minded journal striving for a high standard of presentation.

The tension from the dialogue of the spring, culminated in a succession of resignations from the board and of the Simillimum editors. There is no doubt this was very hard on the group and the people involved. With falling subscriptions and faltering confidence in our purpose as an organization, there was a wisp of fatal doubt in the wind.

Personally, I regarded these occurrences as an opportunity for renewal, revitalization of the organization and its organs, and bridge mending with many good individuals who had previously felt alienated. Indeed, the signs of renewed vigor are quite evident. Where there was growing ennui, there is a reconnection with our purpose and putting our shoulders to the common wheel.

As a vocal recent critic of the direction Simillimum had taken, I felt obliged to offer my services to help carry the journal forward during the interim. Through engaging the process, my perspective has changed and I find myself excited by the challenge of working with future issues. I would like to thank Peter Wright for his helpful cooperation in smoothing the transition. I would also like to thank the board, the review panel, and the HANP/Simillimum staff for working together with me towards our common goals.

We extend a warm invitation to our readers to submit cases that offer a learning opportunity, to send your letters and your essays for consideration. Communicate your experiences.

The theme of this issue is the balance of foundational principles and methods of homeopathy, with the developing modern insights that have grown from this base. We are fortunate to have a majority of articles that shed light on this subject.

I wish to thank a local friend, my technical collaborator, Jason McMillan, for his fine work on design and layout of the journal. As a young and contemporary musician and artist, he brought a modern taste to the graphic development.

On behalf of the board and the journal, I would like to extend our gratitude to our readers as well as our advertisers for their perseverance through this difficult period. I sincerely hope you continue to find Simillimum an enjoyable, practical and thought provoking addition to your homeopathic reading.

