

On Pathology

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Abstract: As homeopaths we treat patients holistically and therefore we concentrate on locating and defining what illness is or what is pathological for a human being.

In this article we will investigate the content and the essence of healing and health. We shall see that health is more than the absence of symptoms of illness and that it cannot be determined statistically, or uniformly, or as a generalization.

After twenty years of hunting down the essence of disease, or more precisely of: what it is in people, that is 'ill, it suddenly struck me that as physicians, we have a tendency to overlook the notion of 'health'. However it is of crucial importance to first set our goals, so that we can communicate meaningfully with our colleagues and of course to make realistic prognosis for our patients.

About Disease and Being Ill

From day one in our training that starts with The Organon, we learn that homeopathy treats the person not the illness.¹ In various other aphorisms Hahnemann emphasizes that the illness is situated in the immaterial level, that it is a disturbance of the dynamis or the vital force and that this disturbance is expressed in signs and symptoms in body and mind.²

We are all familiar with *Vithoulkas'* model which shows the correlation and the hierarchy between the symptoms, on a psychical, emotional and physical level. From this we can conclude that suppressing the symptoms on a physical level can lead to an aggravation on the mental or emotional level and that the treatment takes a bad turn. Moreover it does not matter whether or not the suppression happens by allopathic or homeopathic treatment. As a professional in the holistic healing we



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consider the patient as a whole and evaluate the different levels.

Definitions of Health

Aside the famous §9, in which Hahneman defines health³ there is

¹§ 1: The physician's high and only mission is to restore the sick to health, to cure, as it is termed

²§ 11: When a person falls ill, it is only this spiritual, self-acting (automatic) vital force, everywhere present in his organism, that is primarily deranged by the dynamic influence upon it of a morbidic agent inimical to life; it is only the vital principle, deranged to such abnormal state, that can furnish the organism with disagreeable sensations, and incline it to the irregular processes which we call disease (...)

§ 12: It is the morbidly affected vital energy alone that produces disease (...)

§ 16: Our vital force, as a spirit like dynamis, cannot be attacked and infected by injurious influences on the healthy organism caused by the external inimical forces that disturbs the harmonious play of life, otherwise than in a spirit-like (dynamis) way (...)

§ 19: As diseases are nothing more than alterations in the state of health...

§ 29: As every disease consists only in a special, morbid, dynamic alteration of our vital energy (the principle of life) (...)

§ 148: The natural disease is never to be considered as a noxious material situated somewhere within the interior or exterior of man but as one produced by an inimical, spirit-like, conceptual agency which like a kind of infection disturbs the instinctive existence of the spirit-like, conceptual principle of life within the organism, torturing it as an evil spirit and compelling to produce certain ailments and disorders in the regular course of life.

³In the healthy condition of man, the spiritual vital force, the dynamis that animates the material body, rules with unbounded sway and retains all the parts of the organism in admirable, harmonious, vital operation as regards both sensations and functions, so that our indwelling, reason gifted mind can freely employ this living, healthy instrument for the higher purposes of our existence

also Vithoulkas's definition of health. He concludes that health means 'freedom' on all three levels⁴.

This approach is much more comprehensible and sophisticated than the exclusively physical approach of physical pathology in which, due to the extreme specialization, the cohesive image of the patient's total health is lost.

Nevertheless, this model has a few practical imperfections.

Primarily, the definition of health is idealized. It describes a quasi unattainable and un-measurable state. When is one free, how free is one? And can a person become freer or is health the ultimate freedom?

Secondly, the absence of symptoms does not automatically mean health, or vice versa. To make a comparison with psychotherapy — since the 1960's the question has been whether or not one should focus on human potential or on elimination of psycho pathology. It was observed that the absence of a psychopathology doesn't necessarily result in 'happiness' or even in an optimally functional psychological state. Since then, the research into the maximization of the human potential offers an image of creative, self-realizing, successful, achieving, maybe even happy and loving people.

Thirdly, the models indicate in detail how the healing tends either towards cure or deterioration and as such only serves as a type of better/worse barometer. This could lead one to believe that 'getting better' is

the purpose or even the limit of homeopathic treatment.

Every therapist, regardless of the methods he or she uses, will claim that his or her patients do get better. It would be cynical to exercise one's whole professional life if it was not for this. This means that, when we calculate an estimated 40% placebo effect of each treatment, allopathic or homeopathic, we still should be able to demonstrate a substantial percentage of cured patients. Hahneman moreover wrote: "restore the sick to health", and not: "make the sick better". It is noticeable how many homeopaths seem to be satisfied with "making the patients better".

They give a remedy by which the patient improves and then the next remedy by which the patient improves. After some years we have to conclude that the symptoms were touched, but not the patient. It is therefore of primary importance to distinguish between cure and 'getting better'. This is the first distinction a homeopath should be able to make. And the model does not help us with that.

Lastly, the model only indicates the expressions of the disturbance on the different levels, but not the disturbance itself. The danger is that we thus treat those expressions instead of the disturbance.

What is a Vital Disturbance?

The dynamis is a concept that Hahnemann didn't describe more clearly than a force that makes the difference between a living person and a body: in other words, life itself.⁵ But the dynamis is not some-

thing one experiences: the only indication of its existence is in the signs of its disturbance. In that sense, the vital disturbance and the vital sensation are, like it was described by Sankaran, one and the same thing. What it comes down to is to find the vital sensation of the patient, to understand it and to treat it, to alleviate the pathology on all the levels.

The Most Characteristic Throughout the Times

Our prescriptions are based on the most characteristic symptom(s) in a person. In the course of the history of homeopathy this notion evolved: in the beginning the emphasis was on the most characteristic physical symptoms, Kent described typifying behaviors and characteristics, Vithoulkas wrote about the 'essence' of a remedy and Sankaran showed that beyond the physical and emotional expressions of the disturbance, there are unconscious thoughts and believes: the delusions. Since a few years he works with the abstract experience beyond the delusions and he calls this the sensation level. That is where the vital sensation is situated. In the history of homeopathy one can see these different levels of experience reflected.

Ideally in a homeopathic training⁶ one would walk through all those levels⁷. The students should be made familiar with the facts (pathology, modalities and generalities) in the first two years, reflecting level 1 and 2. In the 3rd year practicing on the first cases level 3 can be involved and the 4th and 5th year the future homeopath is familiarized with level 4 and 5 of experiencing.

The basic idea being: pathology

⁴Vithoulkas, George, *The Science of Homeopathy*, pp 45-57

⁵§10: The material organism, without the vital force, is capable of no sensation, no function, no self-preservation; it derives all sensation and performs all functions of life solely by means of the immaterial being (the vital principle) which animates the material organism in health and disease.

⁶See Training: www.ckh.be

⁷Vervarcke Anne: *On Education, Homeopathic Links*, 02/2006 and 03/2006.

on a physical, mental or emotional level is an expression of the vital disturbance. When we treat them homeopathically with a homeopathic remedy, the source of the pathology is gone, the maintaining cause dissolved and there is no longer a reason to produce pathology; that is the theory.

Unsolved Issues in Practice

As homeopaths we are confronted with questions we can not answer, for example: 'Can homeopathy cure pathology x, y, z?' The answer depends on whether or not we can find the similimum, whether or not the patient is ready to heal and whether or not the pathology is 'curable'. It is not always easy to live with these insecurities and still keep faith in the method.

The only element that we more or less can control in the above mentioned is the first. But even after the similimum, people do not always cure; because we do not have control of the other areas. Homeopathy is an utterly refined method of healing with a wonderful potential, but not all patients that consult us, will be cured in the same wonderful way. This will only happen once in a while!

Why is that?

We don't know how homeopathy works: so far this remains a fact, annoying as this may be. This implies that even for an experienced practitioner, there are unknowns in the method.

One exceptionally interesting theory is that of Lionel Milgrom⁸

who explained the effectiveness of the homeopathic therapy and perhaps therapy in general based on quantum entanglement.

Towards a New Description of 'The Healthy Human'

We do not have a clear image of what we want to or can achieve with our patients.

We have to come up with a definition of 'the healthy human', but it should be individually adaptable. In homeopathy everything is individualized: the approach (acute or chronic, constitutional or clinical), the remedy, the potency, the posology. Only the result falls under a generalized description.

We have to individualize our description of health as well.

The same is true for our definition of pathology. That is what we have focused on in the first place.

Our clientele is extremely varied and there is no way to measure suffering. A simple skin complaint can ruin someone's life, seemingly without reason, a person can be stifled by fears or self-loathing, and a therapy resistant cough can be the result of rigorously suppressing other complaints. When a patient is desperate and the doctors with their advanced technology can not detect anomalism, there is strictly speaking no 'pathology'. On the other hand someone can feel healthy as a fish, but the test results indicate alarming blood cholesterol; sugar; liver, kidney etc. dysfunction values.

As homeopaths we try to make and understand the total image of the 'anomalism'. Depending on the style and the method used, one homeopath will emphasize the physical disturbance (clinical approach) and another on the mental/emotional pathology (constitution treatment). The homeopathic diagnosis, that equals the remedy, is an individualized symbol of the coherent pattern that shows the vital sensation throughout the levels⁹. Depending on the awareness and comprehension of those levels of experience the practitioner will be able to recognize these in his patients. And we observe over and again: when a similimum is given, the chances for a deep and lasting cure increases.

This individualized definition of health also includes notion that we do not know what the maximum potential of our patient is. The other important thing which is not for us to know, lest to comment on, is the 'lesson' or the 'mission' with which the patient came into this life. The only thing we are able to measure in what degree the patient seem to be liberated from his vital disturbance: as we observe it releasing its grasp and the patient as a consequence of that, becoming more relax, balanced, undisturbed and joyful, we witness beauty and harmony before our very eyes. Pathology will somehow in the light of that fade into the background.

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⁸Milgrom, Lionel: Journeys in The Country of the Blind: Entanglement Theory and the Effects of Blinding on trials of Homeopathy and Homeopathic proving, eCam 2006, pp 1-10

⁹Milgrom, Lionel: Patient-practitioner-remedy (PPR) entanglement. A Gyroscopic metaphor for the Vital force and its use to illustrate some of the Empirical Laws of Homeopathy. Forsch Komplementarmed Klass Naturheilkd, 2004; 11:212-23.

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