

Steve An Xue

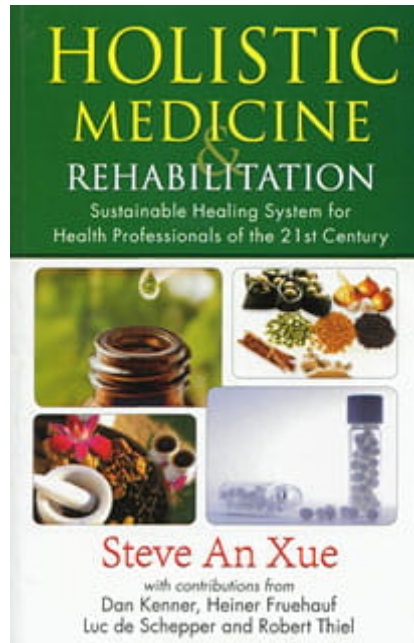
Holistic Medicine & Rehabilitation

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Classical Homeopathy: A Holistic Model Integrating Body, Mind and Spirit

—Luc de Schepper

—Steve An Xue

Homeopathy: A Holistic Medical System

Homeopathy, the holistic mode of treatment that the German doctor Samuel Hahnemann first formulated at the end of the eighteenth century, has been the jewel of individualized medicines that resonate heartily with the holistic healing traditions across all cultures. Discovering a new technique for ascertaining the curative powers of medicinal substances the 'proving' he applied traditional empirical concepts to a new and intellectually powerful therapeutic doctrine which has more than withstood the challenge of time. The rapid flourish and development of Homeopathy, in West and East, also represents the return of medical practice to the basic roots of Hippocratic doctrine and the ancient wisdom of the Yellow Emperor.

The key doctrine of homeopathy can be found in Hahnemann's espousal of vitalism vs. reductionism's mechanistic or chemical understanding of the living organism. The term 'Vitalism' signifies recognition that the laws governing the living organisms differ from those of lifeless matter. It is strikingly similar to the 'Qi', the life

force fueled by delicate balancing of the two polarities of Yin and Yang energies in TCM. The organism is reactive, at all times coping with, and attempting to overcome, the stresses which impinge upon it from outside. The patterns of this reactive power are made visible in the patients' symptoms. As Coulter (1994) described, the patterns of this reactive power are made visible in the patient's symptoms which, however subjectively disagreeable or painful, are nonetheless beneficial manifestations of the organisms' effort to overcome the disease. They are signs of a curative, not a morbid, process. The laws which the organism renders visible by its patterns of behavior in sickness and health are the laws of vitality. These are the laws which the physician must seek out and apply in therapeutics.

On the contrary, reductionistic medical thinkers have denied the existence of a 'vital force' or 'Qi' apart from, and superior to, the organism's physicochemical constituents. While conventional (reductionistic) medical science can, of course, obtain knowledge of physiological, biochemical, and other internal processes in general, the information cannot be applied with precision and reliability to any patient in particular. The modern history of Reductionistic therapeutics is largely the story of man's efforts to analyze in chemical terms the workings of medicines and their connections with the pathophysiology of the body. As Vithoulkas (1991) outlined, since the eighteenth century, the reductionistic medicine considered body as a machine, thus any imbalance in the machine was considered the effect of a singular causative agent; e.g., a single type of bacterium causing an infectious disease. This theory was called the Koch model. Later, this model was replaced with a less superficial theory that tended to explain disease as the result of a defect in cellular and molecular functioning. This defect was believed to be caused by an external agent or by a fault in the intrinsic machinery of the cell or in the structure of the molecule. This theory was known as Virchow's functional model. To reductionism, the body is not a reactive entity but a mechanism obeying the laws of such disciplines as chemistry, physics, and mechanics. All symptoms are intrinsically harmful to the

emanation or external manifestation of a structurally defined disease that must be suppressed. Thus reductionism downplayed the patients' 'peculiar' symptoms but view the 'common' symptoms as more significant because they point to the causal entity inside. To treat a patient, who is considered the representative of a larger 'disease', 'contrary' remedies were applied to bypass the host organism and act directly on the internal causal entity. Patients' powers of resistance, or vitality, or 'Qi' can not be readily analyzed in physical or chemical terms, therefore 'disease' is more important than the host organism.

By the 1940s organized homeopathy had sharply declined in the United States and other countries as the inevitable suppression of an 'unscientific' medicine by 'science.' In Western industrial societies, the monopoly of reductionistic medicine is protected by law. The resulting absence of competition has caused a rapid increase in costs which, if the trend continues, will eventually lead to medical services consuming the whole of society's surplus wealth (Halvorson & Isham, 2003). Since 1960's, holistic therapeutics, championed by homeopathy, experienced a powerful resurgence. The ongoing renaissance of medical holism promises to continue well into the twenty-first century.

The study of homeopathy is a significantly meaningful, if not absolutely necessary, work for us to fully reveal and rectify the inherent flaws of the dominating reductionistic medicine.

Hahnemann, the Founder of Homeopathy

Homeopathy is the brain child of Samuel Hahnemann, M.D. We know the saying, 'A hero is not appreciated till he passes away.' It was certainly no different with the founder of homeopathy. Born in April 11, 1755 in a small East German town, Hahnemann came from a poor family that could barely pay for his education. In spite of being physically weak, he showed an exceptional talent for study. By the age of 12, he was employed to teach others Greek and Latin.

His rule in studying was to 'read little, but correctly,' and then 'to digest' what one reads.

At the age of 20, Hahnemann began his studies of medicine. With very little money, Hahnemann left for Leipzig, Germany in the spring of 1755 to study medicine. He supported himself by giving private lessons in French and German as well as translating treatises on medicine, botany and chemistry, a work he would continue for the next 20 years. One of his professors, Dr Bergrath, was so impressed with the young student that he obtained for Hahnemann the privilege of attending lectures for free. Not satisfied with the dull book-knowledge that this university had to offer (they had no hospital of their own), he soon moved to Vienna, Austria.

Wandering from one location to another was to become a major theme in Hahnemann's life. From Vienna he went to Hermanstadt (now Sibiu, Romania), where another benefactor Dr Quarin, helped him find a job. He finally completed his medical school in Erlangen, Germany. After receiving his degree in 1779, Hahnemann settled down to practice medicine in various small villages in Germany. Within five years he had given up his practice, candidly admitting that his patients would do better without his help. In the mean time he had married Johanna Leopoldine Henriette Kuchler, an apothecary's daughter, in 1782. He supported his growing family exclusively with writing and chemistry from 1785 till 1789.

Hahnemann published many works on chemistry, the most celebrated being a treatise on arsenic poisoning. Some of the critics would later say that Hahnemann would have been a great chemist had he not turned into a 'quack.' Hahnemann was Renaissance genius who was gifted in many fields. He was a master pharmacist who developed procedures still used in pharmacy today, a skilled linguistic and translator who was fluent in seven languages, and the forerunner of today's natural healers who promote a natural diet and healthy life style. He could also be called the first psychiatrist, because he was the first person in modern times to promote in Europe the humane treatment of the mentally ill in addition to curing them with the remedies. Decades before Koch

and Pasteur, he understood the principles of contagious illnesses and successfully treated the deadly epidemics which ravaged Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. Hahnemann could even be considered a pioneer of modern public health and sanitation measures. His greatest contribution was the founding of the system of homeopathy, an unparalleled achievement. So far as we know, Hahnemann is the only person in history to have envisioned an entire system of medicine and then fully developed it into a powerful and practical tool within the span of a single life time. Allopathic medicine has barely begun to incorporate an understanding of the mind-body connection (contrary to Traditional Chinese Medicine) which Hahnemann delineated nearly two centuries ago.

In 1789, Hahnemann moved again to Leipzig and he published a treatise on syphilis, remarkable for its description of a new preparation of mercury which he had developed and which is still known to chemists as Hahnemanniann soluble mercury. Hahnemann's writing and chemistry provided only a meager income for his family, and they lacked the bare necessities for survival.

Hahnemann began attacking the medical practices of his time as early as 1784, attracting notoriety, ridicule and rejection by his colleagues. Emperor Leopold of Austria died unexpectedly in 1792 after having been bled four times in 24 hours for a high fever and abdominal distension. Hahnemann publicly criticized the emperor's physicians and continued to speak out strongly against bloodletting, although he himself was denounced as a murderer because he denied his patients the 'benefits' of bleeding. Hahnemann was already concerned with hygiene and diet at this point, advocating the consumption of as little meat as possible and encouraging the use of goat's and sheep's milk rather than cow's milk.

The year 1791, marked a turning point in the development of his thought. Up to that point he could see the limitations, even the dangers, of the medicine he had been trained in, but he had no good alternative to offer. In 1791 Hahnemann had a remarkable insight while translating Cullen's *Materia Medica*. Cullen attributed the anti-malarial properties of the Peruvian Chincona bark (from

which quinine is made) to its bitter and astringent properties, but Hahnemann knew that other bitter herbs were not active against malaria. He began a practice which he would continue throughout his life and which demonstrated his great integrity and love of knowledge: he experimented on himself. He found that Chincona bark (from which the homeopathic remedy *China officinalis* is made) could induce in him, a healthy person, the same symptoms it would cure in the sick person. This discovery led to the first law of homeopathy: the Law of Similars, or 'Like Cures Like.'

It was mainly out of financial need he moved again from one village to another, violently attacked by doctors and pharmacists. His practice of making his own medicines aroused their jealousy, and the pharmacies brought action against him for interfering with their privileges. In 1800, a scarlet fever epidemic gave Hahnemann the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new type of medicine he was researching, based not only on the Law of Similars but also on the concept of highly diluted, potentized doses. Hahnemann created a sensation when he successfully used *Belladonna* in homeopathic doses as a cure and preventive for the epidemic.

In 1810, Hahnemann published the first edition of the 'Organon of the Healing Art', his most important work. This book laid out the foundation of his new approach to healing, including the law of Similars, the principle of using a single medicine which has been potentized, administering it in the smallest possible dose, and only giving remedies which has been proven on healthy people. In the next few years Hahnemann proved many remedies on himself and his family members, and from 1814 on, he expanded the group to include his closest friends and associates.

Success was again achieved in 1833 when Hahnemann used homeopathy to treat an epidemic of typhus which affected Napoleon's soldiers after their invasion of Russia. Even Napoleon himself was successfully treated with a homeopathic remedy for a case of phthiriasis. Soon the epidemic spread to Germany, where Hahnemann cured the first stages of typhus. Chased away again

by his jealous prosecutors, he was rescued by Duke Ferdinand of Anhalt-Kochern who provided him with a place to practice and live in peace. Patients traveled from all over Europe to see him. His wife Johanna, who had borne eleven children, died in 1830. During this time Hahnemann developed the next stage of his understanding of chronic diseases, the concept of miasms. He published his discovery in 1828 in the first edition of 'Chronic Diseases'.

In 1831, homeopathy triumphed again, this time over the cholera epidemic which spread westward from Russia, while allopathic medicine was helpless against the virulent disease. The remedies Hahnemann used at that time—Camphor, Cuprum and Veratrum album—would still be among the top remedies used in a cholera epidemic today.

In 1834, a beautiful Parisienne, Melanie d'Herville-Gohier, undertook the lengthy journey to consult Hahnemann in Germany, for the treatment of her neuralgic pains. This young woman (32 years old) swept the 80 year-old widower off his feet, and they were married only three months after their first meeting. He followed his new wife to Paris, France where many members of the French nobility and high society came to see him for treatment. Hahnemann had great fame and success in France and completed his 'most complete and best method' described in the sixth edition of the Organon. Hahnemann died at the matured old age of 89 in Paris where one can visit his grave in Montmartre, on which the epitaph is written, 'He did not live in vain.'

It is obvious that homeopathy triumphed in the nineteenth century, buoyed by its success in the great epidemic diseases of typhus, cholera, malaria, etc. Even more, Hahnemann successfully treated syphilis and gonorrhea, and was the first one, decades ahead of Pasteur and Neisser, to claim that they were two different diseases, not the same. Homeopathy had its greatest period from 1850 till 1920 when the first 'miracle' drug, Salvarsan was discovered by Ehrlich. The temporary downfall of homeopathy in Europe and the US was not only due to these new medicines who could now be patented, but also due to sloppy instruction and the

fact that physicians could not practice medicine in the US, if they were to practice homeopathy.

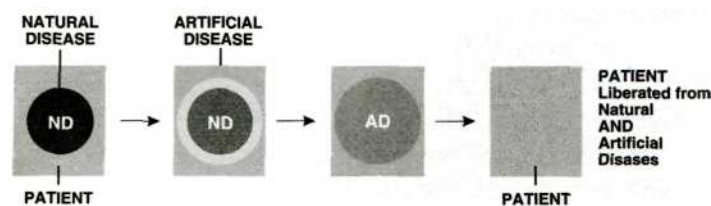
Laws and Principles of Homeopathy

Every medical modality is a mixture of art and science. However, before understanding the art of homeopathy, the student must study the science—it's infallible Laws of Nature upon which it is founded. Although, often rejected by allopathic medicine as a modality that has no foundation, there is hardly any medical modality that is founded on such well proven and often natural laws. Although almost 200 years old, these laws are still valid today. These rules act as a guide to the well-trained practitioner, approaching the patient as a whole, not parts, contrary to allopathic medicine. It pays to know these Laws and Principles of homeopathy and how they follow common sense and work with Nature, not against Nature.

First Law: Like Cures Like

This was not necessarily Hahnemann's brainchild. Hippocrates, considered the father of modern medicine, himself understood that a sick person cannot be considered apart from his environment and that illness is a condition of the whole patient.

What does like cures like mean? What is the action of the homeopathic remedy? How does it cure? Hahnemann gives us the answers to these questions in his textbook, the Organon in which he says that 'the curative power of a homeopathic remedy is based on symptom similarity of the potentized remedy, which creates a disorder stronger than the natural disease.'

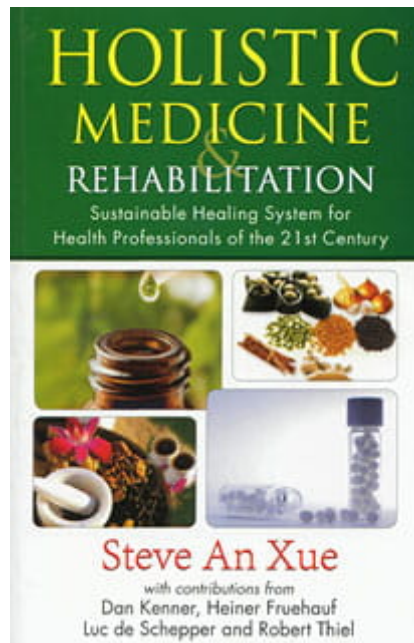


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