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The Origins of Kent's Homeopathy by Francis Treuherz*, MA

Francis Treuherz is a research student in sociology, and a visiting lecturer in Social Science and Administration at the University of London, Goldsmith's College. This paper is part of a larger project on 'The Social Construction of a Rejected Science: Homeopathic Medicine'. (written in 1983)

*Francis Treuherz MA RSHom FSHom is once again editor of *The Homeopath*, (Journal of the Society of Homeopaths, editor 1986-1993). A former Honorary Secretary of the Society of Homeopaths he was a visiting lecturer at the University of Westminster and many other homeopathy schools and conferences in Amsterdam, Chichester, Dublin, Galway Helsinki, London, Manchester, Oxford, Perth, Portland, Prague, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockholm, He worked for 13 years in NHS primary care. He is now in private practice in London and Letchworth. He has written many historical and clinical articles and reviews, a book, and a research report. He has a unique library of some 7500 volumes of homeopathic literature. 2 Exeter Road, London NW24SP.

fran@gn.apc.org, 05/06/07

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Abstract

This is an attempt to show an aspect of the influence of spiritualism on homeopathy. The mid eighteenth century spiritual scientific works of Swedenborg were translated by an English physician, John James Garth Wilkinson, in the 1840's; he then became a homeopath. His translations were distributed through Henry James, Senior to the homeopathic and Swedenborgian community of the USA. James Tyler Kent was a homeopath whose practice and scholarship were indelibly coloured with Swedenborgianism, and whose ideas are - still

valued by modern homeopaths. An overall question and a particular theme is whether a medical practice with such a spiritual inheritance can claim to be a science - and whether the spiritual aspect is essential for effective practice.

It is my intention to explore two main areas: the spiritual influences on homeopathy as evidenced in the role of Swedenborg's writings in the ideas of certain prominent homeopaths, that is, an intellectual history; and the relevance of past or present spiritual connections for the current practice and scientific status of homeopathy.

Although there are not sharply opposing 'camps' or 'schools', one 'spiritual' and the other 'scientific', there is certainly evidence of controversy about the nature and significance of the esoteric in homeopathy.

The discussion centres around lengthy difficult quotations, sometimes in archaic language, and sometimes in technical terms. I consider them essential to the argument, and worth unravelling for an understanding of what may be a different paradigm of medicine, and to extend our understanding of concepts of normal or marginal science.

Case of Exostosis of Right Os Calcis cured by Heclae Lava.

Dr. Garth Wilkinson went once to Iceland for a holiday and observed that the animals which fed in the pastures where the finer ashes of Mount Hecla fell, suffered from immense maxillary and other exostoses. Being an adherent of the scientific system of medicine founded for us by Samuel Hahnemann. He brought some Heclae Lava home with him, and it has already been successfully used to cure affections similar to those which it is capable of causing.

Heclae Lava has been shown to consist of silica, alumina, calcium, and magnesia with some ferric oxide. We are, therefore, not astonished that it can cause and cure exostosis.

Brother allopath, this is science in therapeutics; what have you to take its place? Give absorbents and paint the part with iodine? What guarantee can you give me that your absorbents will not absorb a bit of the pancreas or some small glands in lieu of the exostosis? Or are you also true to your principle: *contraria contrariis curantur*? Then pray tell me what is the contrary of an exostosis?!

This extract from the pen of James Compton Burnett was part of a collection of fifty reasons (based on cases) produced to convince a

doubting allopath, in perusing the erudite and engaging works of Burnett, my attention was caught by this example of Victorian scientific thoroughness. A physician on holiday in Iceland² observes a phenomenon, collects a sample, brings it to England and has the pharmacist Epps, Could, or Nelson run up a potency, and a new remedy is created. Clark cites a more detailed clinical picture in his Dictionary, of how the remedy may be used, suitably individualised, for bony growths and bad teeth, in certain circumstances.³

Garth Wilkinson (1812-1899) was a prolific correspondent, writer, translator and homeopath, and his acquaintance included Blake, Carlyle, Rosette, Browning, Tennyson, Dickens, Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Siddall, Bright, and Henry James, Senior. He was a reluctant physician, following his father's wishes. He qualified in 1834, when the work of a general practitioner was more that of a pharmacist than today. he had to recommend the copious consumption of physic, for it was from physic that he derived profit, but he was described as having a conscience, and a horror of promiscuous drugging.⁴

In the 1830's, Wilkinson began to practice medicine, and having at first few patients he had time for other activities, notably translating Swedenborg from the Latin. In addition to obviously spiritual works like *The Doctrine of Charity* and *Arcana Coelestia*, he translated *Regnum Animalis* (*The Animal Kingdom*), the greatest and noblest work on Human Physiology which has ever appeared in the world, as Wilkinson described it in a letter to his fiancée.⁵ The work took four years to translate, from 1839 to 1843. He wrote a biography of Swedenborg published in 1849 (reissued in 1886). His work came to the attention of Henry James, Sr., the editor of a Fourierist newspaper, *The Harbinger* of New York, a polished writer on theological and metaphysical subjects, father of William James and Henry James. The two became intimate friends and regular, copious and affectionate correspondents.⁶ It was through James that Wilkinson became acquainted with homeopathy. "You more than any other man led me into homeopathy," wrote Wilkinson.⁷ And it was through James that the numerous adherents of the New Church of Swedenborg in the United States became acquainted with the translation of Swedenborg by Wilkinson. He went on to translate *Oeconomia Regni Animalis* (*The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*), with an analytical introduction separately published⁸ and among many other of Swedenborg's writings *The Final Cause of Creation* and *The Intercourse*

between the Soul and the Body A preoccupation with spirituality and formative causation is disclosed, also found in the related ideas of Steiner and Anthroposophy.

Through his friendship with James and Emerson, and the spread of his writings in the United states, Wilkinson has been viewed as a transcendentalist, and there was pressure on him to become a Fourierist. Wilkinson was a friend of Hugh Doherty, chief disciple of Charles Fourier, in England, also a Swedenborgian.

The writings of Charles Fourier which pre-date 1830 were much influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau. The evils of civilisation and the inability of government to remedy them are traced to inequality; but the emphasis has now shifted from politics to economics. The social compact is seen as guaranteeing the rich the enjoyment of their wealth and impunity for their crimes. Fourier's solution was based on new psychological principles in which the passions were more important than the reason. He saw human nature based on a principle of variety, and to cater for this each man should take many jobs, not merely in his life but in each day. Fourier's new society was to be organised in Phalanges - self-contained communities which were to produce, on a principle of co-property, all that they consumed. Alfred Cobban judged, the practical significance of these ideas ... slight. Fourier, like nearly all the socialists or utopians of the period, was not as mad as he sounds, but he was planning for a pre-industrial world",⁹ He influenced Wilkinson's choice and direction of involvement and writing on social issues, and appealed to some of the American Swedenborgians. In America Fourierism became an idealistic, individualistic and also spiritual movement, practised on the eastern seaboard and Brook Farm, a community of which James' paper *The Harbinger* was the quasi-official journal. Wilkinson found Fourier the first worthy historian of the Animal man, and it is possible that Fourier's ideas led to his polemical writings against undue state interference with the individual,¹⁰ including compulsory vaccination¹¹ and state reception of medical qualifications¹² and the registration of prostitutes.¹³

Among Wilkinson's discoveries were two new nosodes, *Glanderine* and *Farcine*¹⁴ (also known as *Hippozaeninum*) and another two delightfully idiosyncratic works on the treatment of insanity with spiritualism, and painting with both hands, also known as stereoscope in art, or bimanual pictures.¹⁵ In 1885 his services to homeopathy

were recognised by his election to the presidency of the Congress.

Wilkinson began to lecture on physiology up and down England in Mechanics' Institutes and the like; the line of thought he pursued led to his *The Human Body and its Connection with Man*,¹⁶ in 1851.

During these years, from the time that Quin introduced homeopathy to England in 1837, and when James drew it to his attention, Wilkinson underwent a gradual conversion - the word conversion with its connotations of religion is used by his biographer. Up to 1850 he was a writer specialising upon theology from a Swedenborgian outlook, who practised physic for a maintenance; from that time forward he was a physician who found time to write upon the old subjects.¹⁷ From the publication of *The Human Body* in 1851, which was very widely read, his homeopathic practice grew and his writings took second place. He practised with great success in the Hampstead and St. John's Wood area of London until his death in 1899. (I have not been able to find details of other English homeopaths of this period who were Swedenborgians, which may have been an unusual phenomenon.)

Wilkinson studied homeopathy in the 1840's, at a time when he was aware that homeopaths were, as his nephew Clement Wilkinson wrote, not only knaves or fools, lucky if they escaped condemnation under both headings but if a patient died under the care of one of their number, it was darkly hinted that the verdict of manslaughter should follow. It needed therefore no slight resolution, no tepid conviction, in the man who professed himself a homeopath in the early 1840's.¹⁸ In 1850 John Epps produced as comprehensive a justification of homeopathy for the lay and medical public as may have been possible in English at that time, offering explanation and apologetics. Fully 83 of the 320 pages are devoted to an examination of coroners' inquests and homeopathy, including details of a manslaughter trial of 1840, and analysis of medical and other witnesses' evidence, and press comment.¹⁹ It is clear that Clement Wilkinson's comment is no exaggeration.

Having been reluctantly pushed into medicine by his father, he was at last discovering good reasons for remaining. He became enthusiastic, even a high dilutionist, using extremely attenuated remedies. He wrote to Henry James:

To what you say about small doses Homeopathic and large doses ditto, I have only one thing to answer, that I find my minute potions do their

work, surely, swiftly and sweetly. If others And bigger things do the same, there is not any quarrel between us. But I do aver and maintain my own position. Everyday's practice confirms me in the thought, if the right remedy is given, the quantity is a secondary affair: though also the quantity in that case by all the rules of causes, may be smaller than in the other case-of inexact skill.²⁰

Ralph Waldo Emerson characterised Wilkinson's style as rhetoric like the armoury of the invincible knights of old,²¹ Another biographer calls it "a style of such generous dignity and gravity that it affects one like great music." Most of the eminently readable homeopathic writings are *materia medica*, so that it is worth fully quoting Wilkinson's spirited defence of the essence of prescribing his high dilutions, for its style, as much as its content. The first paragraph deals with scientific exactness; the second with dilutions, and the "spiritual force;" the third paragraph quoted deals with "odium modicum."

The matter of doses depends upon the fineness of the aim. In everything there is a *punctum saliens* so small that if we could find it out, a pin's point would cover it as with a sky. What is the meaning of that invisible world which is especially versed about organisation, if there be not forces and substances whose minuteness excludes them from our vision? We have not to batter the human body to pieces in order to destroy it, but an artistic prick - a bare bodkin - under the fifth rib, lets out the life entire. Nay, had we neater skill of deadliness, a word would do it. The sum of force brought to bear depends upon precision, and a single shot true to its aim, or at most a succession of a few shots would terminate any battle that ever was fought, by picking off the chiefs. If our gunnery be unscientific, the two armies must pound each other, until chance produces the effects of science, by hitting the leaders; and in this case a prodigious expenditure of ammunition may be requisite; but when the balls are charmed, a handful will finish a war. It is not fair to count weight of metal when science is on the one side, and brute stuff on the other: or to suppose that there is any parallel of well-skilled smallness with ignorance of the most portentous size. The allopathic school is therefore wrong in supposing that our "littles are the fractions of their 'mickles'; the exactness of the aim in giving the former a new direction takes them out of all comparison with the unwieldy stones which the orthodox throw from their catapults.

But again there is another consideration. Fact shows that the attenuation of medicines may go

on to such a point, and yet their curative properties be preserved, nay, heightened, that we are obliged to desert the hypothesis of their material action and to presume that they take rank as dynamical things. A drop of aconite may be put into a glass of spirit, a drop of this latter into another glass of spirit, and so on, to the hundredth or the thousandth time, and still the aconite property shall be available for cure. Here then we enter another field and deal with the spirits of things, which are their potential forms, gradually refining massy drugs, until they are likened to those sightless agents which we know to be the roots of nature, and feel as the most powerful in ourselves. How such delicate monitors be looked at from the old point of view, as assimilated to the violence that is exercised by materialistic physic? if the latter would stir the man, it does it by as much main force as it dares to use; whereas the former moves him by a word through the affinities and likings of his organisation.

There is something unfair in the manner in which the public criticises cases that do not recover under homeopathic treatment, None of our systems will cure every disorder, Nor is it to be expected that an art which is in its infancy can do more than greatly surpass in safety and virtue the Hippocratic medicine of 2000 years' standing. Yet whenever a death occurs under homeopathy, the neighbourhood argues and acts as though homeopathy had invented death, which was a phenomenon unknown until Hahnemann brought it from the infernal regions! Why! The bills of mortality since Hippocrates are the bills of allopathy. And in most cases let the worst that can occur, it is no worse, and no more, than happens daily under that practice. But if the patient dies under allopathy, he dies by precedent, and there is no responsibility; if homeopathy is at his beside, he departs unsanctioned, and the survivors have to answer for him to public and opinion. This must be borne until the battle is further fought, and those who are not prepared to endure it had better not dabble in homeopathy.²²

The main point of interest in Wilkinson's adoption of homeopathy lies not only in his exploratory attitude and discovery of Heclae Lava, nor only in his place in the chain of the transmission of ideas across the Atlantic, but in the similarity which can plainly be seen in his homeopathic medical beliefs and his Swedenborgian theological creed. The doctrine of a correspondence is the working key of the New Church attitude towards God and conduct, in medical matters the correspondence of drug effects and disease effects is the whole of

homeopathic practice.' The similarity was a striking one to Wilkinson, whose attachment to medicine had never been strongly marked. The convinced and enthusiastic followers of Swedenborg found the system of Hahnemann a scientific statement of the doctrine of correspondence, in terms of medicine. ²³

It was the doctrine of correspondences which made and kept Wilkinson a homeopath as a manifestation of the bond between his religious and medical creed, It crops up in his tract Swedenborg 'among the Doctors' ²⁴ written following an encounter with Dr. Robert Cooper, the friend of Dr. John Henry Clarke and Dr. James Compton Burnett. Wilkinson had been invited to meet the Cooper Club of homeopathic physicians to discuss "Swedenborg as a scientist," restricting his conversation to medicine; the guests were informed that theological discussion is especially to be avoided'.²⁵ There must have been polite resistance to spiritualism. Since Wilkinson could not exclude theology from the discussion, he declined the invitation to the meeting and politely contributed a paper instead, combining his views without offending hospitality. He called it 'Swedenborg among the Doctors.' Again Wilkinson's style is accomplished, and the exposition of Swedenborg and Hahnemann is masterful, justifying a lengthy quotation.

To command the country of the soul, that is, the human body, a military intellect, seeing the anarchy and disorder of scientism, its want of a Ruling Soul, could not but discern as a strategic necessity that it was necessary to lay down new ways by which he might be led to such unrecognised Ruler and gain access to her palace, and support and sanction from her power. Every march of humanity requires new roads if there are none laid down already. Hahnemann, coming to empirical and chaotic medicine, found an old disused road in Hippocrates Similia similibus curentur, and following it resolutely, he founded a new medical Kingdom. Our art, homeopathy, is thus by virtue of having a mental highway through it, a stable possession of the rational faculty. Let this instance, familiar to us, show the importance, or rather indispensable necessity, of doctrinal roadmaking, we may say, of iron roads.

Under stress of this, Swedenborg gratified what was then his life's love, the prosecution of the quest of the soul by rational divination of her attributes from her faculties in the body. The new ways in which he must travel are not, however, easy for him to find, He has to "discover, disengage and bring them forth by the most

intense application and study, 'They are new doctrines, for doctrines always lead, guide, and lead on and on to true doctrines, namely, these might always be summed up in the injunction *Similia similibus divinentur* or *interpretentur*. They are the doctrines of forms, of order and degrees, of series and society, of communication and influx, of correspondence and representation and of modification. These doctrines or teachings are the way to a Rational Psychology or approximate knowledge of the soul. 26

This lengthy quotation needs a little exegesis, and some of the terms like degrees, series and correspondences will be referred to again. Some parts of it may be readily understood in the light of an understanding of the fundamental laws of homeopathy. The term animal kingdom in Swedenborg's thought is to be understood as the human body: i.e., the Kingdom of the soul or anima. 27

Wilkinson again tries to explain the idea of degrees:

Among the doctrines measurably revealed to Swedenborg even before his spiritual eyes were opened is the doctrine of Discrete Degrees ... it imports that man's mind is created in RANKS or platforms one above another, each corresponding to the one below it. The will with its affections at the top corresponds to the intellect with its intentions and thoughts in the middle, and the intellect to the plans and actions in the body, possible through the organisation... this doctrine disconcerts the hypothesis of Monism, which regards nature and life as a flat surface. 28

For Wilkinson it is a law of contiguity, not continuity, so that life acts down from singulars, through particulars to generals.

He likens Hahnemannian infinitesimal dilutions from the third to the two hundredth dilution and onwards manifestly potential and healing as they are when correspondentially administered, meet in the diseased body this Doctrine of Degrees, and obeying it by their regulated fineness or finiteneses, act analytically according to the very plan and construction of the body. That the various dilutions at certain steps represent different phases of spiritual effort according to the number, so to speak, of the fibre to which they are level; some representing ends, some causes, and some effects, The highest numbers would touch the brains, and would also act through the formative and ruling brain upon all parts of the body. Hahnemann had himself ... a view that his infinitesimal did put on in some way a spiritual power.'29 He uses the phrase for

the distillation of the microdoses as 'the very penetralia of organ after organ' echoed in Kant's phrase for Swedenborg's contact with 'the very penetralia of the spirit world.'30 The microdoses, by their smallness, enlarged nature and were mental-spiritual creations.

The statement towards the end of Wilkinson's life, prepared for the Cooper Club, provides a synthesis of his views after half a century of homeopathic practice,

... I remind you that Hahnemann is the providential author of a system of correspondences. This rationale of treatment is nothing else. In this he legitimately came after Swedenborg. And his treatment by infinitesimals immediately resulting from the touch of similar diseases by similar diseases is a marriage of power and benignity of the highest origin. If I recollect aright, it is in Malpighi that I first met the axiom *Deus est maximus in minimis*, Swedenborg enlarges this declaration - *Deus est maximus in minimis et minimus in maximis*. Dimension here perishes. God's infinity is the same in the least things and in the greatest. In the maxim *similia similibus curentur*, Hahnemann, by turning this subtilisation to wide practical use, is more than the second father of it; and as it is a declaration of a modern use of the knowledge of correspondence, this great German reformer hails from the spiritual age of mankind when intellect was born; and when, after the celestial age to which love was a revelation in man, the knowledge of correspondences was still the knowledge of knowledges. *Scientia correspondentarium*. So our Hahnemann teste Swedenborg supplies the thirst of healing with the waters of a divine tradition flowing to us from the earliest academic age.31

This doctrine of correspondences appealed to homeopaths as a parallel to the law of similars, a philosophic bridge from signature to similar, based on Wilkinson's interpretation of Swedenborg's physiology, and at the same time a philosophic bridge from physical to psychological, a correspondence between soul, brain, and body.

1. We find in the body that there are already two movements which we will designate the systemic and the sub-systemic; the movement of the respiration is the systemic, that of the pulse the sub-systemic. The breathing of the lungs is the largest revolution of organic life that the body executes; the beating of the heart is but a satellital motion freely included within the former. And if organic life or motion be concentric, a strong presumption already arises

that the "animations" of the brain, according to the statement of Swedenborg, are coincident with the respiration of the lungs. Moreover, we have already seen that when the lungs 'inspire,' the brain has an invitation to 'expire;' it receives an admonition and pressure to contract. if the brain be impressible at all, and if its motion be physical, it can hardly fail to move with these opportune times.³²

It has been suggested that in his physiological writings Swedenborg wrote mainly as a commentator or interpreter rather than as an original worker. His descriptions are based on the authorities of his day-Eustachius, Malpighi, Harvey, Morgagni and others. 'Swedenborg's aim was different from that of his contemporaries. He was investigating the body in order to reformulate the Aristotelian doctrine of causes with the soul as final or first cause.'³³

Swedenborg made a thorough study of human anatomy and physiology, with special attention to the blood and the brain. He had been interested in anatomical matters ever since his youth, but now this study became a real passion. The title indicates that Swedenborg was not studying the human body as a subject per se but as the 'kingdom of the soul,' his intention being to prove the immortality of the soul to the senses themselves. He believed the soul to be the inmost life of the blood, 29 and elsewhere, as and considered the seat of the soul to be the cortex of the brain, a pure spirituous fluid permeating all the body tissues, He pressed a correspondence between his notion of three spheres of the universe as a spiral of causation, and the soul, the body, and the rational mind or will. 'The three higher faculties of Man's mind are represented by three spheres in the brain. In the highest lives the soul as the ideal and principle of its universe. in the second sphere ... are the rational mind and will; and in the third ... are the imagination, desires and memory.'³⁴ This division has a practical significance in connection with the hierarchy of symptoms and repertorisation of Kent.

In his physiological investigations-part of a prolific and chaotic production of ideas-Swedenborg was occupied with a problem of universal language. He complained about the lack of linguistic instruments capable of describing psychic phenomena with mathematical exactitude. (Swedenborg's preoccupation with the psychic and hypnogogic and hypnopompic states has led London University Library to lock up his works in a special collection for the arcane, the esoteric and

the occult. Dingwall refers to Swedenborg's opus as a vast hallucinatory system. 35

In the beginning of the 1740's, he made several attempts at a universal language based on the model of Descartes and Leibnitz, but at last he made up his mind to present a substitute for it. This substitute was the doctrine of correspondence. This was Swedenborg's vision of the universe as a system of symbols permeated by divine light in different degrees.³⁶ He wanted to demonstrate how to transform propositions from the natural sphere into its correspondence in the spiritual sphere. This doctrine was given a very wide range, a kind of universal symbolism according to which everything outward and visible in nature had an inward spiritual equivalent.

Swedenborg's account of the relation of the spiritual to the natural world is a philosophy not for the materialist; it is essentially teleological and demands the admission of purpose in creation, that is a notion of formative causation.

For Swedenborg, matter consisted of particles that are indefinitely divisible and in constant vertical (swirling) motion, The divisions are in a series of four degrees or stages, the Finites, the Actives, the Magnetic and the Etheric. Their significance is in relation to the earth's planetary system, which he believed sprang from the solar mass, a precursor of the Kent-Laplace nebular theory. Whether there is any correspondence between those ideas and homeopathic notions of the infinitesimal in general, I can find no evidence (but the link with Kent, the practitioner of high dilutions, the deviser of the potencies in a series of degrees, seems a suggestive one). Swedenborg's philosophy involves a descent of the infinite by a series of degrees of modification through the areas of the physical universe. There may be a correspondence between Swedenborg's notion of the infinite and Steiner's notion. One of Steiner's heroes was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a friend of Wilkinson, a Transcendentalist, and a Swedenborgian.³⁷ And Steiner had read Emerson, found inspiration there, and Steiner institutions like Emerson College (a School in Sussex) are named after him.

Emerson wrote that Swedenborg 'saw and showed the connections between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world.'³⁸ As we have seen, Hahnemann spoke of the vital force as a spiritual principles,³⁹ a soul. Religion itself 'has undergone a spiritual revolution since the date of Hahnemann's discovery.'⁴⁰

His nephew and biographer described Wilkinson as a mystic, a Transcendentalist, and a man of great impatience, with a love of travel, and an upholder of freedom for the individual. Emerson wrote of Wilkinson that he had an imagination comparable to that of Bacon,⁴¹ Swedenborg's ideas of 1734 to 1744 were buried in Latin for a century until Wilkinson's translations made their timely arrival, on the eastern seaboard of America, to which we now turn our attention.

The standard Swedenborgian view of allopathy was as wrong. Allopathy was seen as treating the external effects of the disease itself-which accorded with the view of the homeopaths. But the Swedenborgians further based their view on this on what they saw as allopathy's refusal to consider the spiritual dimension. American New Church homeopaths accepted 'natural disease (really the effects of disease) as a sign of spiritual causation and in doing so recognised man as a spiritual being.'⁴²

In the new world in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was much dissatisfaction with the mechanistic universe of materialistic science; allopathy outside Philadelphia and Boston was not generally of a high standard. Homeopathy not only seemed to work against cholera, both in Europe and America, but offered a more predictable universe based on a unified concept of life-as did Swedenborgianism; both were part of a search for a total life view.

The rapid progress of homeopathy in the 1840's, before cholera helped to bring the new system to public attention, was chiefly among those groups of people who found that the philosophical assumptions of homeopathy had a certain affinity with aspects of their own world view. Fourierists as a group were attracted to homeopathy as a medical reform which corresponded to their efforts at social and economic reconstruction.

'The most remarkable identification of any one religious group with homeopathy was that of the Swedenborgians.'⁴³ 'In 1840 there were 850 Swedenborgians in America. By 1870 there were 18,700, according to the census cited by Swank.'⁴⁴ The New Church had a high proportion of doctors in its total membership. 'Nearly all rejected allopathy for some other medical system, and most of those who rebelled chose homeopathy,' And many ministers not only endorsed it but were physicians themselves.⁴⁵

Kett has documented how homeopaths, both patients and practitioners, were attracted in considerable numbers to Swedenborgianism in America in the 1840's and 50's,⁴⁶ Coulter, in his monumental history of medical thought, *Divided Legacy*, overlooked this episode but mentioned it in a footnote in his second edition. 'Members of the New Jerusalem Church were followers of homeopathy almost to a man,' as he put it. He maintained that Wilkinson was a graduate of the Hahnemann College of Philadelphia.⁴⁷

'The significance of the mutual attraction of homeopathy did not lie in the numerical strength of the latter, .. it appealed to many intellectuals but never became a major sect.'⁴⁸ For Emerson there was too much of the cut and dried, the hard and literal, in Swedenborg's mysticism. 'The importance of the Swedenborgian attraction lay in its thrust ... towards an ordered and predictable universe, towards a synthesis of matter and spirit,'⁴⁹ and homeopathy was travelling in the same direction.

Constantine Hering (1800-1880) was a member of the first society of Swedenborgians in Philadelphia. He brought to homeopathy a conviction, resulting from a personal cure of gangrene.^{50,51} As a young doctor in Germany he had been asked to help Dr. Henry Robbi refute homeopathy and found himself unable to do so. His conversion was complete after his cure. Hering went on to Surinam, and it was here that he handled a snake, the Surukuku, from which the first proving of the remedy known as *Lachesis* originated. The story is well known in all the materia medicas. He wrote a manual for missionaries to help them practice what we today would call "barefoot" homeopathy in Surinam. It became very popular in America as a 'domestic physician,'⁵³ Hering had been born into a Moravian family in 1800, a dissenting Christian sect with a strong intellectual tradition-a good start for his future career. His *Guiding Symptoms* in 10 volumes are still in use today.⁵⁴ He personally proved seventy-two drugs. He founded the first homeopathic medical school near Philadelphia; Hering's Law of Cure is fundamental in homeopathic practice.

Hans Burch Gram of New York first brought homeopathy to America in 1825; Otis Clapp was the first homeopathic pharmacist and publisher in New England in 1840; John Ellis was the first pharmacist in Michigan in 1850; Boericke and Tafel were the foremost pharmacists and publishers of Philadelphia (and later San Francisco). All were devout and active Swedenborgians.⁵⁵

Swedenborgianism had its demagogues, preachers and pamphleteers, like any other social movement which tries to change the world. Rev. Richard De Charus, with no medical qualification, wrote:

It is not that one disease is cast out by another similar disease.... This is not the Theory of the Cure; the theory is that the evil spirits of hell, who are exciting disease in the human economy, by flowing into human poisons corresponding to them which sin has generated therein, are derived, drawn down, from that economy by presenting to them a more grateful field for their infernal activity: namely, those similar poisons which correspond to the hells of those spirits in the animal, vegetable and universal Kingdoms which lie beneath man.⁵⁶

A historian of the New Church, writing in 1932, thought that the resemblance between the theories of Hahnemann and Swedenborg was based on disease as a matter of spirit: 'Psora as a miasm, or evil spirit, which pervaded the body, finally manifesting as a irruption.' (Sic)⁵⁷

Charles Hempel, a well-known homeopath, wrote major Swedenborgian theological and ecclesiastic texts.⁵⁸ Another famous homeopath, who established himself as the leading homeopath in the Southwest and New Orleans between 1852 and 1893, was William Henry Holcombe. Coulter discusses his conversion to homeopathy,⁵⁹ and Kett shows how Swedenborgianism followed soon afterwards.⁶⁰

Holcombe 'wanted a medical system which connected physiology with the other scientific branches, which brought vitality into the realm of Faraday's identical forces, so he embraced Swedenborgianism because he could not imagine a natural body being suddenly transformed into a spiritual one.'⁶¹

Homeopathy, Transcendentalism, Swedenborgianism, temperance, jacotism, phalanstery, social reform, mesmerism, hydropathy, Fourierism, animal magnetism and phrenology all occur in the lives of intelligentsia of the eastern seaboard at this time, and most of them in the life of the celebrated homeopath, William Wesselhoeft. He came to homeopathy because 'there are occult relations between the imponderable forces that difference the various substances that compose the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms and the various organs and functions of the human body'.⁶²

James Tyler Kent (1849-1916) began his medical career as an Eclectic, and became a professor in

an Eclectic medical college in Cincinnati. At the age of 28, when a homeopath cured his sick wife, he embraced homeopathy. He did not turn to Swedenborg, according to his pupil Pierre Schmidt, until his wife died, at a time when he was already Dean of the Philadelphia Postgraduate School of Homeopathy, between 1888 and 1899.⁶³ Another commentator suggests that his second wife, Clara, a patient and a physician, who was a leading figure in the Swedenborgian Church of Philadelphia, brought him to Swedenborg.⁶⁴ There is no mention other than the temptation of probability that Kent actually read Wilkinson's translations of Swedenborg.

The ultimate homeopath of the period when homeopathy flourished in America was Kent. Ultimate for his use of high dilutions, for his meticulous scholarship in the creation of his repertory, for his descriptions of remedies in his lectures on *Materia Medica*, for his lectures on the *Organon*, for his Philosophy and for his reputation as a prescriber, using his art to bring his scholarship to bear on his patient.⁶⁵ Of varied quality but of great interest are his *Lesser Writings*, and it is there that he reveals himself as a Swedenborgian. There has been a consequence of immense practical value of the belief in Swedenborg's ideas and their transmission by Wilkinson to the homeopathic community of America and beyond. And that is the adoption by Kent of what he has called the octaves in the series of degrees of potencies 30c, 200c, 1M, 1OM, 50M, CM, DM, and MM. He discovered that a careful raising of the potency during long-term treatment of chronic diseases was more efficacious than continuing to ply the patient with the same potency.⁶⁶

This is particularly useful with deep-acting remedies; patients were able to identify later the particular powder that had the medicine in it.

I have often had physicians tell me that it was due to suggestion that my medicines acted so well; but my answer to this is, that I suggest just as strongly with my wrong remedy as with the right one, and my patients improve only when they have received the similar or correct remedy.⁶⁷

An interesting way to dispose of the placebo issue.

And this apparently applied to potency as much as to remedy selection:

After long observation in the range of potencies going up and going down, I have settled upon the

octaves in the series of degrees.... Many of my patients' records indicate that the patient has greatly improved after each potency, to the highest, with symptoms becoming fainter and he himself growing stronger, mentally and physically.⁶⁸

Hering first introduced his Law of Cure, the law of the direction of the symptoms, from within out, from above downward, from the more important to the less important organ and in reverse order of their appearance, often abbreviated simply to Hering's Law. ⁶⁹

Kent applies this in a peculiarly Swedenborgian fashion:

the innermost man consists of will, understanding, memory; and these are extended outward through the general physical organism. This idea belongs here in consideration of the direction of the symptoms - from the innermost to the outermost.⁷⁰ And this idea is applied in a practical sense of a hierarchy of symptoms to be repertorised.⁷¹

The knowledge of the correspondence of organs, 'this relation to the innermost and the outermost,' is needed to interpret the account of the patient after treatment, to know whether the patient is better or worse.

'The physical organs correspond to internal man, to the will and understanding,'⁷² so that if during cure from a mental illness, stomach or intestinal disorders appear, or during relapse of a kidney disorder if a mental aggravation appears, an antidote is called for. The correspondences are precise; for example, heart and liver are affected during a cure of affections of the will.

Kent is explicit in linking these correspondences to divine revelation and to Swedenborg-one of the places where he professes directly "through familiarity with Swedenborg, I have found the correspondences wrought out from the Word of God harmonious with all that I have learnt...⁷³ For Kent, this knowledge enabled him to overcome not only acute conditions but 'old chronic suppressed conditions: gonorrhoea, itch, eruptions, and syphilis.'

'Hahnemann could not know these things and without them no man can do what Hahnemann said could not be done.'⁷⁴ And again, eulogised by a former pupil:

For his ability to further unfold and advance the science of homeopathy, Doctor Kent was confessedly indebted to another mastermind,

Emmanuel Swedenborg.... created certain new doctrines ... among those were ... series and degrees. Not once but many times Doctor Kent has said to me substantially these words: 'All my teaching is founded on that of Hahnemann and of Swedenborg; their teachings correspond perfectly.'⁷⁵

Schmidt's biography of Kent is as much hagiography as biography. Kent is referred to as the Master, and his second wife, herself a homeopath, as 'an inspiring helpmate,' and it was with her help that he was able to give the world his masterly works.⁷⁶ A more recent disciple has travelled to Kent's burial place and produced an imaginary dialogue with the deceased Master!⁷⁷

The Aphorisms and Precepts contained in the Lesser Writings are quite different: forty eight pages of proverb (in the biblical sense), sententiousness (like Samuel Johnson), and uncalled-for homily (like Polonius), sometimes couched in a manner which assumes obeisance.⁷⁸ There is something in the transmission of ideas in homeopathy which demands reverence to the authority of a great predecessor, a Master, a Guru, a Prophet. This is of relevance elsewhere to a discussion of the reliability of the evidence of provings. In this case it appears likely from the introduction to the book that the collection was made posthumously. Kent has had a share of reverence; the Thorson's reprint of Philosophy,⁷⁹ contains no less than nine eulogies, not unlike Starkey's, for example:

'All hail James Tyler Kent, to all endeared when as their chief his pupils proudly claim in ages yet unborn shall be revered '⁸⁰

and
'can anyone say Kent is dead!' Kent is laid away amid the snow-capped mountains of Montana! Kent never died! The earthly shrine of his immortal mind returns to dust amid the western mountains - Kent still lives....'⁸¹

The aphorisms begin with a quotation from Swedenborg and include many references to his terminology, such as:

If the primitive substance is normal, that which it creates is normal. Disease, which flows into the body, comes from within by influx through the primitive substance.⁸²

We have in the image of the disease an exact representation of the image of a remedy. Do all things come by chance? Can man meditate and become an atheist? A man who cannot believe in God cannot become a homeopath.⁸³

There are degrees of fineness of the Vital Force. We may think of internal man as possessing finite degrees and of external man as possessing finite degrees.⁸⁴

What reason has man to say that Energy of Force is first? Energy is not energy per se but a powerful substance. The very Esse of God is a scientific study.⁸⁵

Eternal Principles themselves are authority. The Law of Similars is a Divine Law. So soon as you have accepted the Law of Similars, so soon have you accepted Providence, which is law and order.⁸⁶

You must see and feel the internal nature of your patient as the artist sees and feels the picture he is painting. He feels it. study to feel the economy, the life, the soul.⁸⁷

You cannot divorce Medicine and Theology. Man exists all the way down, from his innermost spiritual, to his outermost Natural.⁸⁸

The Lectures on Philosophy are largely exegesis on the Organon; and while they have many references to Divine Providence, they are rarely explicitly based on Swedenborg. They are as much about practice as theory, as are the Lesser Writings.

Taken as a whole, the opus of Kent has been and still is very influential; tracing the influence of Swedenborg is not purely an atavistic exercise. Coulter has documented the controversy between high and low prescribers in America. Frank Bodman has shown how Kent influenced British homeopathy; and the low material doses of Hughes' influence were gradually superseded as John Weir and Margaret Tyler, who studied with Kent, gained more influence between 1902 and 1949.⁸⁹

From what I can read, 'Swedenborg was essentially an optimist and dispensed with the notion of original sin. In his nineteenth lecture, on Psora, Kent seems to equate Psora with the original sin. . . ' and long before the time of Noah's flood, leprosy... was but the result of dreadful profanity which took place during that period... the human race today walking the face of the earth is but little better than a moral leper."⁹⁰ Given the disagreement concerning the concept of miasms, for practical purposes a moral viewpoint like this may make little difference to prescribing according to the indicated symptoms.

Kent's scholarship has been a mainstay of homeopathic practice all over the world, not only in America, England and India (where his works have been reprinted), but in Latin America, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and, more recently, France. For Demarque, Kent's Repertory is irreplaceable in assisting the choice of remedy.

Kent has pushed Hahnemannian thought to the furthest point along the line. The technique of the individualisation of the characteristic symptoms of the most profound personality of each sick person is indispensable to the correct application of the Law of Similars.⁹¹

Coulter's historical scholarship provides evidence of the decline of homeopathy in twentieth-century America, after documenting in detail the disagreements of the 'high' and 'low' dilutionists. The individual doctor could treat more patients more quickly and with less intellectual effort with allopathy. The State and the allopathic American Medical Association took over medical education, and new drugs simplified the allopath's work, ⁹² Coulter's view is essentially economic. Demarque has a further viewpoint, and the preceding account of the influence of Swedenborg tends to support it, as a complement to Coulter's analysis. The 'lows' succumbed more easily to allopathy, because

There was from the outset a large and growing difference between the analytical mentality of the American allopathic physician, with an exaggerated orientation towards specialisation, and a multiplicity of laboratory tests, on the one hand; and the synthesising conception of Kent on the other; for Kent the art of questioning the patient, of validating the characteristic symptoms, and the individual reactions surpassed the diagnosis of the disease. There was also the incorporation by the State of the medical faculties, which came to a head in the absorption of the independent homeopathic colleges into the State facilities.⁹³

So there is no controversy. But Demarque on Swedenborg is something else. Concerning the decline of homeopathy since Kent, Demarque writes:

The fundamental reason [for the decline] seems to me to be the real divorce between the materialist concept of medicine for which all that matters are the army of tissue, quantifiable biological changes, and substantial physico-chemical reactions, on the one hand; and the vitalist Hahnemannian concept, deformed by the incorporation of the Enlightenment (Original French 'illuminisme') of Swedenborg,

Demarque saw no common ground possible between doctors who conducted a detailed laboratory examination of material specimens from the patient, and those for whom matter could be confused with degrees of a spirit of an original substance more or less evanescent, leading to a Divinity, so that one did not know what was matter and what was spirit.

This incorporation of the Enlightenment of Swedenborg into the Hahnemannian doctrine risked disastrous consequences for the future of homeopathy beyond the Atlantic.⁹⁴

Demarque again comments on Kent's philosophy: 'The precious chapters on the examination of the patient, the value of symptoms, the provings ... the exceptional clinical value of the *Materia Medica*, and the rigorous objectivity of the repertory.' But

It is curious that such a remarkable observer was seduced by the Enlightenment... we would have nothing to say if this had rested with his internal life; that which cannot be allowed is the effective transposition by Kent of the ideas of Hahnemann into the language of Swedenborg; the enlightenment of Kent has given homeopathy in the Anglo Saxon world the allure of a religious sect.⁹⁵

Demarque is fierce in his opposition.

Kent professes that there exists in every being, from mineral to humanity, an original or simple substance which originates in God, created out of God's munificent wholeness, extending as an influx, a chain through all living beings. He conceives of this simple substance as 'endowed with formative intelligence, i.e., it intelligently operates and forms the economy of the whole animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom'.⁹⁶ He seems to be confusing Hahnemann's vital principle with a substance, and a Deity. One of Demarque's objections is what he considers a pantheistic confusion of Kent's - to confuse God and substance.

Kentism has everything to gain if it liberates itself from its Theosophic mask, which limits its diffusion and its comprehension by its character of an esoteric cult reserved for a few initiates. It would suffice to return to the true Hahnemannian source, disengaged from all philosophical a priori.⁹⁷

It may not be possible to return directly to Hahnemann, given the accretions of meaning laid particularly on the ninth paragraph of the *Organon* since its first edition in 1810.

An interesting comment on this use of the word 'spiritual' was made by Stuart Close in a collection of his essays originally published between 1901-1913.⁹⁸ Close referred to the generally used Dudgeon translation of Hahnemann's *Organon*, paragraph 9.

In the healthy condition of man, the spiritual Vital Force (autocracy), the dynamis that animates the material body (organism), rules with an 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.⁹⁹

Close suggested that this was a misunderstanding that had led to needless controversy and invective, an assumption that Hahnemann was referring to some mystical 'spiritualist' sort of thing. "Dynamis is a Greek noun meaning 'power of force': the power as principle objectively considered, applied by Hahnemann to the life principle,¹⁰⁰ - which Close suggested is how Hahnemann brought homeopathy into the realms of science.

The modern translations do not take the argument any further.

In the state of health the spirit-like vital force dynamis animating the material human organism reigns in supreme sovereignty.

It maintains the sensations and activities of all the parts of the living organism in a harmony that obliges wonderment. The reasoning spirit who inhabits the organism can thus freely use this healthy living instrument to reach the lofty goal of human existence. ¹⁰¹

Demarque suggests that in the theosophy of Kent, taken from Swedenborg, all distinction between spirit and matter has disappeared. The transition is made by an infinity of degrees from matter to the most subtle incorporeal forms.¹⁰²

In practice, the result of Kent's scholarship is the strict application of the basic laws of Hahnemann: the Law of Similars, the single remedy, and the minimum dose. The minimum dose is taken to mean potencies more profoundly attenuated than were possible or necessary in Hahnemann's time. The principle of individualisation was employed both by the strict application of logic, through the repertory, and of art, through the search for the essence of an

individual through accurate case taking, and the essence of the remedy through *materia medica*. This process is still being taught in a similar fashion today.

Is it possible for modern homeopaths to reject and separate Kent's 'theosophy' and accept his scholarship? Remember that Wilkinson refused to see these as separate when he presented his ideas for Dr. Robert Cooper and colleagues. Kent's hierarchy of symptoms, the very construction of his intellectually rigorous repertory, is based on Swedenborg's notion of the soul, the mind, and the body. Demarque may break out into fierce italics, and even capital letters to denounce.

'THE MASK OF SWEDENBORGIAN OCCULTISM ... THE ALLURE OF SECTARIANISM'¹⁰³ in favour of 'the inductive and experimental spirit of our method;'¹⁰⁴ but to what effect?

Twentyman suggests that 'Kentianism is not thinkable without the Swedenborgian soil in which it grew to maturity, nor has it seemed able to grow and develop any further since it largely lost contact with this nutrient and sustaining environment.'¹⁰⁵

And yet Vithoukas, the most recent writer of a modern text on the philosophy and practice of homeopathy, cites Kent's lecture on simple substance at length, linked with Fritjof Capra and Albert Einstein, but with no mention of his spiritual antecedents!¹⁰⁶

Demarque's insistent refusal to accept Kent's philosophy (while enjoying the fruits of his scholarship) can be viewed in a quite different way.

Marcello Truzzi has suggested that belief systems can be taxonomised along a continuum from normal science at one end to mystical occultism at the other. Here we are confronted with a problem of relativity, given that most doctors do not consider homeopathy plausible at all. Demarque, a homeopath, is trying to persuade his readers (the scientific public) that homeopathy is normal, i.e. scientific. 'Our notions of plausibility and importance are often relative to our membership in particular science subcultures.'¹⁰⁷ Demarque wants to play down the links of homeopathy to spiritualism to make it more palatable to a scientifically minded medical profession.

I have tried to draw a link between an occult or mysterious part of the heritage of homeopathy

and its modern practice. Kent is still being reprinted, sold, and taught, perhaps not despite or because of his origins, but in ignorance of them.

Unfortunately, it is only possible to speculate concerning the influence of Swedenborg on Hahnemann. One writer considered:

There seems to have been no direct influence on Hahnemann himself of the writings of Swedenborg, though it is probable that he was familiar with some of the anatomical works of earlier years. The chief connecting link between them seems to be Paracelsus, of whom both he and Swedenborg were deep students, and whose doctrine of signatures is accountable for much.¹⁰⁸

None of Hahnemann's biographers have mentioned any possibility of a link with Swedenborg, Swank cites no evidence beyond considering that 'the affinity of their basic tenets leads one to wonder just what influence Swedenborg might have had on the formation of Hahnemann's thoughts.'¹⁰⁹

Swank does provide an extra dimension to the discussion in considering whether 'Sectarianism' was a creative experience for Swedenborgianism. Although a chapter of his thesis is devoted to homeopathy, his main theme is the relationship of the different groupings among the Swedenborgians, 'The Academy,' 'The Convention' and 'The Free Spirits.' His question: was the dash of different interpretations a creative experience?

'What was to most Swedenborgians an unwanted-Led controversy and undesirable confusion was in fact a source of strength.' (Until 1870). "Instead of being an Achilles heel, free conscience was its Samson's hair.'¹¹⁰

Swedenborgianism, with unified philosophy as an aspiration, stood for a type of inner freedom and social reform; it lost its edge for reform to patriotism and social conservatism after the Civil War. It became impotent at the peak of its influence, being unable to reconcile the freedom of humanity with the implementation of a program of social redemption.

The existence of this spiritual background to Kent, and the continuing disagreements between high and low prescribers, does not simplify the discussion of whether there is such a concept as 'normal' homeopathy, nor whether it would be a useful conception in this case.

Coulter has shown that the 'highs' (including Kent), when they formed their own association, were the intellectually more rigorous group, and that the 'lows' were the inheritors of what Hahnemann had called the 'half homeopaths.' The highs included the intellectual leaders and survived on into the twentieth century but were numerically decimated. Perhaps their decline is linked to the decline of Swedenborgianism. Perhaps the 'highs and the lows' controversy was not a creative one.

We return to the opposing views of Twentyman, that it is difficult to see a future for Kentian homeopathy divorced from its spiritual origins, and of Demarque, that a future for Kentian homeopathy is only possible if it is divorced from its spiritual origins.

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Note

This has been typed onto a computer many years after it was first published and not yet edited for errors. Would readers please report any errors found. I think that my typist has not embedded the footnotes for which I apologise and will edit this one day. FT 19/01/01.