STEINER AND THE SIMILIMUM
Homeopathic and anthroposophic medicine: the relationship of the ideas of Hahnemann, Goethe and Steiner
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Abstract
This is an examination of the interlocking ideas and lives of Hahnemann and Goethe, who never met, although the latter was influenced by the former.

Goethe was the major inspiration for Steiner and so for anthroposophical medicine. Anthroposophy and homeopathy seem to be inextricably linked through the writings and practice of a number of physicians, including European refugees to Britain.

Anthroposophy has had a major influence on British homeopathy since World War II. The two practices and philosophies are compared and contrasted. Anthroposophy may be a divergence from normal homeopathy, valuing a simpler and yet more spiritual practice. An overall question, and a particular theme, is whether a medical practice with such a spiritual inheritance can claim to be a science.

Goethe and Hahnemann
This was the medicine; the patients died, And no one thought of asking who recovered.
So ‘mongst these hills and vales our hell-broths wrought
More havoc, brought more victims to the grave
By many man the pestilence had brought.
To thousands I myself the poison gave:
They pined and perished; I live on to hear
Their reckless murderer’s praises far and near.

Goethe’s description of medicine through the medium of Faustus, if judged as accurate, provides one background picture against which to view Hahnemann’s ideas. They were close contemporaries; Goethe lived from 1749 to 1832 and Hahnemann from 1755 to 1843. It is difficult now from the evidence of biographies to judge how much they influenced each other, and even to be certain whether they met. But it is important for an understanding of homeopathy to examine and analyse their relationship, because their intellectual descendants are in a controversy, which did not exist between Goethe and Hahnemann. This will help both to illuminate the central ideas of homeopathy and to extend our understanding of concepts of normal and marginal science. Homeopathy has its own version of orthodoxy, and its boundaries can be tested by seeing what may be on the margins.

I propose to bring contemporary evidence of any relationship between Goethe and Hahnemann, the persons themselves and their ideas, as developed by their followers. In particular I shall consider the ideas and influence of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the editor of Goethe’s scientific writings and originator of the term Anthroposophy.

In 1820 Hahnemann was treating Prince Schwarzenberg, the General Officer commanding the allied armies against Napoleon. “The patient’s condition improved extraordinarily well under the homeopathic treatment and this, of course, aroused still more the vexation and jealousy of Hahnemann’s colleagues.” The Prince did not desist from his gluttonous habits, nor his allopathic physicians from phlebotomising him, probably contributing to his early death from a stroke.

Goethe wrote of both the rejection of Hahnemann’s ideas and the Prince’s interest:

In this place a curious game is played by refusing and damming up innovations of every kind, eg. ... nobody is allowed to practice by Hahnemann’s method.... But now Prince Schwarzenberg, very ill and probably incurable, has confidence in this new Theophrastus Paracelsus and begs leave of absence from the Emperor to seek a cure across the border.

Later he made a rather laboured joke - which demonstrated his understanding of one aspect of homeopathy, the minimum dose, when presented with an amulet containing a very small gold ornament:

The jewellers of Frankfurt must have heard of the Leipzig Dr. Hahnemann’s theory - now a world-famous physician - and taken the best of it for their own purposes. This man’s doctrine is that the millionth part of any given potent drug will produce the most perfect effect and will restore any man at once to complete heath. The goldsmiths have worked according to this principle in their treatment of the middle jewel, and now I believe more than ever in this wonderful doctor’s theory, as I have experienced and continue to experience so clearly the efficacy of a very small administration.... If it should benefit Prince Schwarzenberg just now staying in Leipzig for this very cure, as much as me, the doctor’s fame and reward will not by any means suffer.

1 J W Von Goethe, Faust

In a letter written the following day it becomes clear that Goethe was impressed. "You will receive herewith concise confession of faith of a Hahmannian disciple," by which Goethe means himself.\(^5\)

It is clear from another letter in the same period that for a time Goethe had borrowed and, it could be assumed, read a manuscript of Hahmann’s\(^6\) and followed his dietary prescriptions.

Husemann shows how Goethe was well acquainted with Hippocrates, Aesculapius, Paracelsus, Boerhaave, and other medical authorities, but does not mention Hahmann. During an illness in 1823 Goethe took Arnica, a well-known remedy for shock and bruising, colloquially “wallkraut” but he took it in a decoction prescribed for weakness, with no mention of a homoeopathic remedy selection or potentisation.\(^7\)

Not only by correspondence did Goethe profess to be a supporter of the new theory, but by means of Mephistopheles: “He hurled such severe criticism at the contemporary state of therapeutic science,”\(^8\) and also in the second part of the drama where he says: “To like thinks like, whatever one may ail; there’s certain help.”\(^9\)

Hobhouse\(^10\) suggests that Hufeland was a friend of Goethe’s; Hufeland was known as a great philanthropic physician, a true friend of the human race. He was open-minded and reconciled himself to Hahmann’s criticism of venesections, which he recognised to be both justified and well-intentioned—although he regarded it as a sin of omission. Hufeland’s journal was continually open to Hahmann’s pen. But again there is no evidence that Hufeland brought Goethe and Hahmann together.\(^11\)

Hobhouse describes in some detail a relationship and correspondence between Hahmann and a young patient, Jenny Papenheim, whose family were friends of Goethe’s.\(^12\) This is the only fresh reference to Goethe, which Hobhouse makes, other than quotations from Hahl. Hers is a more popular but nevertheless scholarly and well-informed biography. A more recent popular biography which emphasises the historical and domestic context of Hahmann’s life is by Cook\(^13\) and sheds no further light on the possible relationship between Hahmann and Goethe. A popular German biography of Hahmann by Martin Gumpert is based on reference to thirty-three of Hahmann’s works, and another forty German sources, including Schlegel, but does not mention Goethe at all.\(^14\)

Despite his Lutheran family, Hahmann followed Freemasonry during his stay with Baron Von Bruckental. Little is known of the depth of his convictions or of the influence of this initiation and participation on his ideas.\(^15\) \(^16\)

It has been suggested that Hahmann’s knowledge of alchemy and of Paracelsus could have been acquired through his participation in Freemasonry;\(^17\) \(^18\) similarly this could have been an influence on Goethe of what has been called the Western esoteric tradition.\(^19\)

Demarque suggests that Hahmann and Goethe had the spiritual bond of Freemasonry in common and that they had friendly relations, but the source for this information\(^20\) is not mentioned. Demarque has published the most comprehensive historical study in French of homoeopathy. He makes dear his critical viewpoint in relation to the anthroposophists and the occult,\(^21\) and he cites the sources of Steiner’s homeopathy in Goethe and Paracelsus. But he does not connect Hahmann directly with Goethe. The other two references by Demarque to Goethe also are unclear.\(^22\)

\(^6\) Richard Haehl: op. cit., p.113
\(^7\) Richard Haehl: op. cit., p.114
\(^8\) Richard Haehl: ibid. p.271
\(^10\) Richard Haehl: ibid. p.170
\(^11\) Richard Haehl: ibid. p.234
\(^12\) Rose Hobhouse: “The Life of Christian Samuel Hahmann”, C.W. Daniel, 1933 p.80
\(^13\) Richard Haehl: op. cit. p.59
\(^14\) Rose Hobhouse: op. cit. P.232.

\(^15\) Trevor Cook: Samuel Hahmann, Thorsons, 1981. P.139
\(^16\) Martin Gumpert: Hahmann. The Adventurous Career of a Medical Rebel, Fischer. 1945.
\(^20\) H. Silberer: The Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy and the occult Arts, 1917
\(^21\) Eugen Lennhoff and Oskar Posner: op. cit.
\(^24\) Denis Demarque: op. cit., 1968 Ch XXI. Les Masques d’Homéopathie.
\(^25\) Denis Demarque: 1968, pp.144 & 238. e.g. “les causes, cet immense probleme des Meres.”
Despite Goethe’s professed belief in homeopathy, Haehl reports that after a severe haemorrhage in his eighty-second year, Goethe was bled to the extent of two pounds of blood. “Broussais was the fashion and everybody ran after him…”

What is noticeable is how many references to Hahnemann of the dangers of venesection thirty years earlier. Broussais, a former army surgeon, derided by some as a medical Robespierre, was widely popular in Germany.27

Goethe was a student at Leipzig five years before Hahnemann, one of many references to the two men not actually meeting, but a biographer nevertheless finds this non-connection significant.28

Both Hahnemann and Goethe were subjects for Pierre Jean David, whom Haehl names as a celebrated French sculptor, but again there is no evidence that they met. Haehl found no reference to Goethe in Hahnemann’s writings,29 nor have I.

What is noticeable is how many references to Goethe are hagiography; they are references cited in such a way as to lend status to Hahnemann, to enhance his reputation in retrospect because of Goethe’s unquestioned status as a creative writer and philosopher. Nowhere in these biographies is the possibility considered of any correspondence between them about their two separate and distinct approaches to science. Goethe’s approach is now further considered.

Goethean Science

Twentyman considers that Goethe invented the science of morphology through his work on plant metamorphosis. Goethe emphasised that the forms of nature were in continuous transmission, that the phenomena of nature were never still, but that forms were changing, continuously interplaying and transferring themselves. This is in contrast to the static notion of Gestalt, of fixed forms in nature. Goethe was not concerned with the Linnaean notion of the classification of plants into distinguishable species:

He was concerned with the unity, which underlies those manifold forms, with what it is that enables us at once to recognise a certain form as a plant. He aimed to discover what is the “plantness” and to grasp this idea, the concept of the plant, in such a vital and imaginative way that he could really behold it, not as a verbal abstraction, but as a living dynamic creative archetype which by its innate transformations creates the world of plants about us.30

Twentyman attempts to take Goethe’s reasoning further and postulates from this a notion that disease “is a metamorphic form arising out of the very innate nature of the being itself,” so that mental and physical illness can be shown as manifestations of the same form.

Goethe, in order to systematise comparative anatomy, proposed the assumption of an “anatomical typus,” namely a basic pattern of an archetypal “animal” (also of an “archetypal plant”) as a general image in which the shapes of all animals would be contained as potentialities and according to which one could describe every animal in a definitive order.31 Those qualities which upon comparison of the different forms are found similar or common would fashion the abstract image of the archetypes.32

Whitmont suggests that Hahnemann used this method in comparing the symptoms common to most of the provers with those of the most similar diseases; out of those common or similar qualities he fashioned the abstraction of the totality of a drug picture. This drug picture contains a very special instance of a proving or similar instance as a potentiality. It is an archetypal image according to Goethe’s postulate, since neither any single prove nor any single patient can ever actually exhibit all the characteristic symptoms predicted of a drug totality; every actual case presents a rudimentary and varied aspect of the ideal conceptual totality.33

The drug picture is drawn to assist the prescriber to perceive the archetype in the patient who confronts him. Goethe and Hahnemann compared shapes with shapes and symptomatology with symptomatology respectively.

Whitmont suggests that the comprehension of the archetype established the common connecting idea, and Goethe can help us understand “the individual variations which account for the manifoldness of natural phenomena,” by what he describes as metamorphosis. “In the fact that which is of similar

Selon le belle expression de Goethe, on eet reduits par le materialisme de notre epoque aux seules considerations mecanistes d’un determinisme etroit”, (p. 144) and a reference to the Schwarzenberg incident (p.238)

27 Trevor Cook: op. cit., p.40.
28 Trevor Cook: ibid.
29 Richard Haehl: op. cit., p.250.

concept may appear in its manifestations as like or similar yet even as totally unlike and dissimilar, in this fact consists the ever-changing life of nature.\textsuperscript{34}

We find that the manifoldness of shapes is accounted for by the fact that a preponderance has been granted over the others to this or that part. For instance, the neck and the extremities are favoured at the expense of the body in the giraffe, whereas the opposite happens in the mole. Upon this consideration we at once meet with the law that nothing can be added to one part without having it subtracted from another one, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{35}

The implication is that when certain qualities become more intense, others are abridged, "leading to a polarity of apparent opposites."\textsuperscript{36} Cultivation enhances the blossom of a flower, but its reproductive ability suffers. Grasses have diminutive blossoms, but propagate abundantly in the mental sphere; persons who live in a world of ideas may do so at the expense of their sense of practicality, and the more practically minded often care little for abstract thought.\textsuperscript{37}

Whitmont transfers this idea into a medical context; He calls this an example of the law of complementary balance. Extension and intensification are complemented by contraction and diminishment. Goethe demonstrates this as a metamorphosis in plant forms and in the various animal and human skeletal forms.\textsuperscript{38} The metamorphosis of plants can be regulated by changing the quality of the sod.

Whitmont finds archetype and metamorphosis as basic dynamic principles of manifestation. But the archetype principle is inaccessible to our direct sense of observation. We feel its manifestations and by reasoning can experience it. He suggests that this resembles gravity and magnetism and our understanding of them. Could it also be analogous to the vital force, the Chi, and the Chakras and our understanding of them? Hahnemann compares the totality of the proving symptoms to the totality of those presented by the patient, and not isolated single symptoms. A totality is represented not by an endless number of details but by the peculiar, unusual and characteristic general qualities that typify the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{40} He shows how to extract the similar elements of drug and disease; Jung leads one from symbol to psychological problem;\textsuperscript{41} and Goethe from symbol to morphology.

Goethe was able to claim the existence of the intermaxillary bone as a scientific postulate in spite of obvious evidence to the contrary. Subsequently it was actually discovered.\textsuperscript{42} Hahnemann applied the therapeutic law of similars. He indicated the effective remedies for persons with the new disease of cholera, before he himself had ever seen or treated a case of it.\textsuperscript{43}

Whitmont suggests that basic archetypal entities are not just a poetic notion: but an eminently practical approach to a basic encompassing natural law which includes, as special instances, the therapeutic law of similars, the psychic evolution by symbolisation, the laws underlying morphology and biologic evolution, the law guiding psychosomatic relationships, and probably many more phenomena not yet understandable to us.\textsuperscript{44, 45}

The spread of ideas
In order to make sense of the continued interaction of the ideas of Goethe and Hahnemann, it is necessary to refer to biographic data to trace the

\textsuperscript{34} J.W. Von Goethe: op. cit., p.5.
\textsuperscript{35} J.W. Van Goethe: ibid, p.176.
\textsuperscript{36} Edward Whitmont: op. cit., p.35.
\textsuperscript{37} Edward Whitmont: ibid, p.36.
\textsuperscript{38} J.W. Von Goethe: \textit{Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen}. pp. 9-139.
\textsuperscript{39} J.W. Von Goethe: ibid, p.15.
\textsuperscript{40} See Margaret Tyler and John Wein, “Repertorising”. Introduction to James Tyler Kent: \textit{Repertory of the Homoeopathic Materia Medica}, enriched Indian

\textsuperscript{41} Carl G. Jung: \textit{Man and his Symbols}, Aldus 1965.
\textsuperscript{42} Edward C. Whitmont: op. cit., p.37.
\textsuperscript{43} Richard Haehl. op. cit., p.173.
\textsuperscript{44} Edward Whitmont: op. cit., p.38.
\textsuperscript{45} Rupert Sheldrake: \textit{A New Science of Life}. Blond & Briggs. 1980.
\textsuperscript{49} Olive Whicher (ed.): \textit{George Adams: Interpreter of Rudolf Steiner; his life and a selection of his essays}. Rudolf Steiner, Press, n.d.
spread of ideas.

Demarque\textsuperscript{51} locates Emil Schlemiel (1852-1934) especially as a source for the transmission of occultist ideas from Germany to France through his pupil, Antoine Nebel. Schlegel wrote an influential\textsuperscript{52} text, Religion der Arznei.\textsuperscript{35} Another of Schlegel’s pupils, Elizabeth Wright Hubbard\textsuperscript{54} was told that Steiner learned his homeopathy to a great extent from Emil Schlegel. She told Twentyman of Schlegel’s long-standing friendship with Steiner.\textsuperscript{55} This connection is confirmed by Demarque and further delineated and located in a definite tradition of the occult, interpreted critically as one of the masks of homeopathy.\textsuperscript{56} Karl König also links Schlegel’s Religion der Arznei (Religion Medici) with Steiner.

The old doctrine of signatures represents an instinctive recognition of the basic law of homeopathy - similia similibus curentur - but becomes a scientific absurdity when applied on the superficial basis of only single attributes, such as Chelidonium - a yellow flower - for jaundice, instead of total phenomena. König suggests that there is a need for a new doctrine of signatures. He characterises Schlegel’s attempt at an exposition of signatures as 19th century Pantheism and suggests that only through the ideas of Steiner can we enter step by step into the depth of the various substances, in such a way that their inner nature will begin to reveal itself in the various parts of their appearance.\textsuperscript{57}

For König a signature is an aid to understanding the individual substance and its destiny, as a heuristic device for insight into materia medica. Signatures are discussed in a historical context as part of the chain of the transmission of knowledge from Hippocrates, and Paracelsus to Hahnemann and his contemporary, Rademacher.

It is Keller\textsuperscript{58} who not only truly continues the line of the transmission of ideas but puts his finger on the reason why Steiner and some of his followers may be regarded as something other than homeopaths. Paracelsus, Rademacher and Steiner held the view that the physician must first diagnose the organ in which the disease takes its origin, before the appropriate organotropic medicine could be prescribed. Hahnemann, on the other hand, was against such a theoretical approach and depended entirely on the subjective symptoms of the individual to find a remedy for the particular person, and not for an abstract disease.

Rademacher was greatly influenced by the teachings of Paracelsus, and his Empirical Medicine\textsuperscript{59} greatly influenced Schlegel. Keller suggests that Rademacher held that only one remedy should be right for one disease, one stage in a disease, or one particular organ that was the site of the primary disease. Rademacher, his predecessors and his followers, believed that once one had identified the nature of the disease it should be possible to deduce the remedy for that disease directly from that identification. (A great English follower of Rademacher was James Compton Burnett,\textsuperscript{60} who practised at the end of the nineteenth century.)

Schlegel’s pupil mentioned above, Elizabeth Wright Hubbard, was responsible for teaching homeopathy to Edward Whitmont. Whitmont graduated in medicine in Vienna and continued his studies in psychology under Adler. He learned about Steiner’s ideas from Karl König, before seeking refuge in America. He taught homeopathy at the Postgraduate School of the American Foundation for Homeopathy. He also practised and taught Jungian analytic psychology.

This combination of intellectual backgrounds has led to some formidable insights collected by Whitmont in Psyche and Substance,\textsuperscript{61} to which reference has already been made.

As in so many aspects of professional life, the enterprise of homeopathy in Britain was enriched by the arrival of a number of refugees from Nazism, before and after the Second World War, some of whom practised anthroposophical medicine.\textsuperscript{62} I believe that this is an important factor in the influence of anthroposophy on homeopathy in Britain. Karl König (d. 1966) founded the Camphill movement of curative education, residential care, and treatment for the mentally handicapped, and practised and wrote for the British Homeopathic

\textsuperscript{51} Denis Demarque: op. cit., 1968.
\textsuperscript{52} Richard Haehl: op. cit.
\textsuperscript{53} Emil Schlegel: Religion der Arznei, 1915.
\textsuperscript{54} Elizabeth Wright Hubbard: A Brief Study Course in Homeopathy, Formur, St. Louis. 1977.
\textsuperscript{55} L.R. Twentyman: Private Communication, 1.4.82. He writes that no other anthroposophist has ever mentioned this connection to him.
\textsuperscript{56} Denis Demarque: op. cit., 1979.
\textsuperscript{58} Georg Von Keller: Chelidonium and Organ Therapy, Br. Hom. J., 70, 1981.
\textsuperscript{60} James Compton Burnett; Diseases of the Liver, 1891
\textsuperscript{61} Edward Whitmont: op. cit.
Journal. Karl Nunhofer holds office in the Association of Anthroposophical Medicine but is not a member of the Faculty of Homoeopathy. Three other homoeopaths who were not, as far as I can ascertain, anthroposophists were also both typical and influential. Manasse was a general practitioner in the Home Counties; Ledermann practised naturopathy and psychiatry as well as homeopathy, and Leeser, who had written extensively before the war on inorganic medicinal substances, established a plant collection and pharmaceutical laboratories in High Wycombe. There were undoubtedly other refugee doctors, but I have no further data.

L.R. Twentyman was editor of the British Homoeopathic Journal for twenty-one years to 1979 and has been influential in reprinting not only some of Whitmont’s essays but many more articles from doctors and others influenced by Steiner and anthroposophy.

Anthroposophical writings, particularly those on healing plants, have continued to be published in the British Homoeopathic Journal since Twentyman retired.

In July 1980 there was a letter in the British Homoeopathic Journal from Dr. R.A.F. Jack. He cited a circular letter from the President of the Faculty containing a position statement on anthroposophy. He complained of the number, extent, strangeness and blasphemy of a number of articles on anthroposophy and expressed his embarrassment that these articles were issued publicly, and that authors like Pelican are not medically qualified.

In January 1981 Kamla Datt-Lai replied with a spirited defence of broadmindedness in principle and the usefulness of other therapies, including anthroposophy.

Dr. Jack referred to unpublished research by Dr. Frank Bondman (who has contributed a number of historical articles to the British Homoeopathic journal), delineating the extent of the influence of

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anthroposophy. In 1981 there were 21 members of the Anthroposophical Medical Association.\textsuperscript{74}

Another source cites “more than a thousand doctors practising anthroposophical medicine, while probably two thousand medical practitioners are using remedies developed according to anthroposophical principles in Europe, but in the English-speaking world growth has been more gradual.”\textsuperscript{75}

Of these 21, nine are cited in the recently-created Homeopathic Handbook\textsuperscript{76} (first published in 1980 and thereafter annually). The handbook lists 175 (1980) and 221 (1982) homeopathic physicians in the U.K. Anthroposophists are not a large group by comparison but certainly produced a substantial volume of written contributions to the journal. These contributions have ranged on a variety of subjects, with polemical, philosophical, heuristic and practical implications, some of which have been referred to in detail. There is now a therapeutic residential community run by anthroposophic doctors at Park Attwood, near Bewdley in Worcestershire.

The ideas of Rudolf Steiner: Anthroposophy\textsuperscript{*}

Steiner has been characterised as possessing a faculty of spiritual imagination in advance of other human beings, for which the physical eye is no longer required (this is a faculty of the mind-not the physical eye).\textsuperscript{77} This imagination was acquired on a path of training which is said to be the direct continuation and development of the Goethean path. To understand Steiner we need to retrace our steps back to Goethe, and to Hahnemann.

Steiner delivered a number of lectures on the theme “From Zarathustra to Nietzsche: The story of the development of man as reflected in World philosophies, from the earliest oriental times up to the present, or anthroposophy.” This was the first time he used the word, which he was later to apply to his own brand of spiritual science: anthroposophy. It had already been used as a word and as a designation by Immanuel Hermann, the son of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. One of Steiner’s tutors at the University of Vienna, Robert Zimmerman, had taken the word as the title for his standard work on aesthetics.

At the age of 22 Rudolf Steiner was given the formidable task of editing the scientific writings of Goethe. He later edited the works of Schopenhauer, the philosopher, and became associated with another philosopher, Haeckel. He edited the German Literary Journal. He became a theosophist, a member of a Rosicrucian Society. He was a prolific writer on spiritual life, drama, speech, aesthetics, painting, sculpture and architecture. He devised a new form of movement, “eurythmy,” which was later developed as a form of therapy. The literature suggests he gave “indications”\textsuperscript{78} on the mode of transmission of ideas for both eurythmy and for particular medicaments. This gives a notion of a charismatic figure whose “indication” is sufficient to reify an idea. He has been accorded unqualified adulation by his followers.

In extending his spiritual science to medicine, it is made dear that he admitted only doctors and medical students to his courses on therapeutics, “with a few carefully chosen exceptions.”\textsuperscript{79,80}

*The divine wisdom (Sophia) found in the knowledge of the true being of man and of his relation to the universe.

Steiner describes the dynamics of the healthy human organism as the result of three autonomous, yet interacting and interpenetrating, systems of organs:

the system of nerves and senses, extending throughout the body with its main activity focussed in the head, providing the physical basis of sense perceptions and thinking;

the system of metabolism and limbs, which provides the physiological basis for the life of will;

the rhythmic system of circulation and respiration, which is the physiological basis of the life of feeling.

The existence of these three systems is the basis for a classification of illnesses into those with an over-activity of the metabolic pole (inflammatory conditions) and those in which there is a preponderance of the nerve sense pole (degenerative conditions and tumours), so that the three systems are underlying notions of both physiology and pathology. The indications given by Steiner for medicaments assume a correspondence to these systems, rather than to the chemistry of active ingredients.

\textsuperscript{74} The Anthroposophical Medical Association in the United Kingdom. January 1981. Rudolf Steiner House. 


\textsuperscript{77} Ernst Lehrs Man or Matter, Faber and Faber, 1951, p.317.


\textsuperscript{80} James A. Dyson & Carlotta Hollman: op. cit.
The three systems are further elaborated by a concept of humanity as having a body of formative forces, termed the etheric body; by a concept of humanity as sentient beings experiencing an inner life of emotions and drives and so possessing what Steiner calls an astral body; and a concept of humanity as being self conscious, possessing an ego.

Various attempts have been made to provide evidence for the existence of these forces, for example, through the existence of "sensitive crystallization of minerals."  

In addition to these three levels, there is the physical body. We can now build up some correspondences with the medieval humours and elements:

- the ego is seen as spirit, as heat organism and fire;
- the astral body is seen as soul, air organism, and air;
- the etheric body is seen as water organism, as water;
- and the physical body as universal organism, as earth.

The last two are almost exactly coincident in space and only separate at death. The first two are not material, but are particularly evident during sleep.

Steiner criticised what he saw as a lack of rational relationship between disease and cure in homoeopathy, and he tried to do something about it. The remedy, he argued, should be based on a proper understanding of pathological processes. A single, diagnosis should cover all the aspects-that of the disuse process and that of the healing process. He sought to bridge this gap not only by deeper understanding of disease process and the relationship between physiology and pathology, but by comprehending the equivalent process in nature and the spiritual world; he claimed scientific insights into the spiritual world; he and his followers applied these to interpretative remedy pictures.

In the last of his Lectures to the Medical Profession Steiner said:

On the other hand, however, I must ask you to forgive me if I point out that a scrutiny of homoeopathic medicine does not always furnish satisfactory results. True, homoeopathy attempts to handle the human being as a whole: it forms a comprehensive picture of all the symptoms and attempts to build a bridge to therapy. But the professional literature of homoeopathy brings to light something else calling for comment. At the first glance one is almost in despair, for especially in the therapeutic literature we find the remedies enumerated one after another, and each recommended for an entire legion of illnesses. It is never very easy to discover specific indications from the literature, for everything is beneficial for so much! I will admit that for the present perhaps this is unavoidable. But it is also a source of danger, and this danger can easily be avoided if we proceed as we have sought to do here, even if on elementary lines, and by indications rather than in detail. Therefore, I have selected elementary facts as the content of these lectures and not, so to speak, the very summit of the finished structure. This can only be remedied if through such an inner study of human and extra human nature one ascends to the narrowing of the compass of a medicinal remedy to its delimitation.

Steiner’s aim in medicine was different from that of “classical” homoeopathy: wanting to achieve the purely practical aim of curing the one particular patient who is sitting in front of us, we are prepared to forego the full knowledge of the deeper context.” On the other hand, he was concerned to convey this very knowledge. His intention was not to deal with the more technical details of finding the homeopathic remedy, which he assumed his listeners were already familiar with.

For homoeopaths, however, the very details are important. In order to find the similar remedy in the individual case, the symptomatology must be considered in great detail. The more the distinguishing details of symptoms agree with the record of the provings, down to the actual words used to describe them, the more certainty there is that the right remedy will be chosen.

"It is the inability to take the step into individualisation which is one of the keys to the identification of a physician who has not fully adopted homoeopathy," wrote Keller. When Steiner wrote that he could not discover specific indications and that everything was beneficial for so much, he was admitting he was not fully comprehending or adopting homoeopathy.

It may be possible, nonetheless, to use the insights of anthroposophy as another facet or viewpoint to help us discover the simillimum, so that an exploration of the practicalities of anthroposopical medicine may be revealing.

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82 Victor Bott: op. cit.
83 Rudolf Steiner: Spiritual Science & Medicine, Rudolf Steiner Press. 1920 and 1948.
84 George Von Keller: op. cit.
85 George Von Keller: ibid.
The application of Goethe’s and Steiner’s ideas to healing

There is no anthroposophical materia medica or pharmacopoeia as such. The nearest to this would be the Weleda* Medicines List. Weleda UK incorporated many materials from the homeopathic materia medica, but Weleda of Germany and Switzerland tend to be more exclusively anthroposophic with respect to single substances. Weleda does have lists of inorganic, organic, plant and animal materials, where the materials or processes of preparation differ from specifications in the homeopathic pharmacopoeias. Also, some of the materials used with an anthroposophical rationale are listed alphabetically, with the specific cases for which they were indicated by Rudolf Steiner, together with quotations from his works, lectures and private communications bearing on the rationale for use of each of these substances, or groups.

*Weleda was a Druid Priestess, immortalised by Francois Rene de Chateaubriand, the priestess of the Celtic Warrior Aristocracy of North West France. The name has been taken by the anthroposophical manufacturing pharmacy.

Because of the nature of classical or normal homeopathy - simple drug picture matched to symptom picture-it is relatively easy, and necessary, to have and to use a Materia Medica such as Clarke or Boericke; it is not so easy or relevant to anthroposophical therapeutics in most cases, particularly for simple substances such as naturally occurring minerals, where substance is regarded as process, according to the anthroposophical picture of man. By comparison, homeopathy is empirical. It appears that the form of anthroposophical knowledge is more elusive, in that it is not amenable to codification or, by implication, computer repertorisation.

The anthroposophical movement has developed its own pharmaceutical manufacturing company, Weleda, established separately in many countries. In England it produces both homeopathic simple substances and also mixtures used by anthroposophists. But for the simple substances, “one could expect the rationale for prescription to be ‘anthroposophic’ rather than to be based on the homeopathic materia medica.”

Snook suggests that there is virtually nothing written on the distinction between different methods of potentisation, that is, techniques differing from those in Hahnemann’s work. There are certainly no experimental results (in the allopathic sense) or provings (in the homeopathic sense). There is very little on potentisation compared with dilution (i.e. without succussion or triturating), except for the work of Kolisko and Pelikan, specifically concerned with anthroposophical medicines.

In homeopathy, in order not to make nonsense of its fundamental principle, indications for single materials are largely fixed by the provings in the materia medica and related clinical experience.

The differentiation between the potencies used in anthroposophic medicines is not easy to explain. One could say that the potency is selected in order to work selectively on a particular functional domain of the threefold man-the lower potencies, for instance, on the “metabolic-limb system”, and the higher ones on the “nerve system”. This differentiation ranges between mother tincture and 30x in general, hence the individual steps are more specifically signified than in homeopathy, where the tendency is to use a few standard potencies-low (6X, 12X), intermediate (30C, 200C) and high (the M range of potencies), in which different distinctions are observed. Consequently, it has been said that homeopathic potencies tend to act on disorders of and originating in the nerve sense sphere, coupled with the cold extraction procedure used for preparing homeopathic tinctures (maceration and percolation only). The distinction between the Similia principle and the process of potentisation is relevant here in gaining a clear picture of why potencies may be mixed in anthroposophical medicine.

The fundamental principle of homeopathy, similia similibus curentur. could be seen as separate in

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89 Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the USA, 1961, Boericke & Tafel.
90 American Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia. 1928. Boericke & Tafel.
93 Snook: ibid.
96 Victor Bott: op. cit.
The process of potentization of remedies is one of dematerialisation, rhythmically and systematically getting rid of physical matter, a removing of that which is measurable in quantity, and enhancing that which has a dynamic healing character. Steiner would call it leading matter back into spirit. Even Hahnemann called it “almost spiritual.”

The anthroposophical remedies
Anthroposophical medicine has ways other than the classical - succussion and triturating with serial dilution as a means of potentising medicines, and other variations in the mode of preparation and prescription. These include:
* changes in gravitational condition of the remedy by rotation in a high velocity centrifuge
* allowing a mineral substance to be potentised by a plant which has a special affinity to that mineral; for example: Ferrum per Chelidonium, or Stannum per taraxacum
* repeated exposure to light or heat, including the melting of metals
* taking into account the phases of the moon in the choice of time and date for collection and potentisation
* ingestion by the patient as itself a form of potentisation
* the use of injections to place the remedy in the appropriate level of the threefold being
* combination remedies of more than one simple substance, tincture, or potency.

The anthroposophical medicaments are typically prepared to correspond to “take hold of and manage disturbances of an organ, disorders of an organic sphere, from various sides. They should not be regarded as the sum of their individual components, but as unfolding a new therapeutic activity as a unity, as, in a sense, an intensification of the actions of their individual constituents”. Their names are revealing as possible specifics: Anaemodoron, Choleodoron, Dermatodoron, Digestodoron, Gencyde, Hepatodoron, Menodoron, Pneumodoron, Renodoron, Scleron.

The suffix doron in the Weleda medicines is attributed to a Dr. Palmer, a colleague of Steiner in the 1920’s, and is derived from the Greek to doron - the gift. Although anthroposophists claim to see every illness from its individual manifestation, they justify such wide-ranging basic remedies when disorders are considered to be not only the result of individual destiny, but from the nature of the modern age and civilisation. These disorders affect many people similarly and enable the formulation of “gifts” to counteract the pressures and destructive tendencies of our age, as medicines for typical diseases. They were worked out by Doctors Knoll and Eisenberg.

Their content is not always in potency but often in tincture, and attention is paid to the ingredients themselves, to the formative forces in their growth, and to the correspondence to the human system, so that Anaemodoron comprises Fragaria vesca (Fructarium) with Urtica Dioica (Planta Tota).

These “natural” forms of potentising have been suggested in a quite different - almost frivolous - way by the French homeopath Maury. He suggests that the growth of the grape and the fermentation of the wine potentises the mineral salts of the earth in different ways in different regions of France. So that a study of the sod will reveal which wine is the best remedy for which organ.

The activity of both plants in this preparation depends in essentials on the dynamics of their iron and silica processes; the iron process acts on the blood - forming and circulating forces of the organism and finding through the silica forces its formation right into the periphery of the organism. The sulphur present in the Urtica brings about the union of these processes in the metabolic sphere. The indications are the stimulation of iron absorption in hypochromic anaemic conditions, especially in cases where mineral iron preparations cannot be tolerated.

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99 Victor Bott: op. cit.
100 Weleda UK: Medicines List, op. cit.
101 Lily Kolisko: op. cit.
104 E.A. Maury: Wine is the best Medicine, 1974.
105 Victor Bott: op. cit.
106 Weleda UK: op. cit.
110 Fredrich Husemann: Das Bild des Menschen als Grundlager der Heilkunst. op. cit.
Not all the pictures are straightforward; for example, *Pertudoron* includes *Belladonna 3x*, *China 3x*, *Coccus Cacti 3x*, *Drosera 1x*, *Ipecac 3x*, *Mephitis 5x* and *Veratum Album 3x* as whooping cough remedy.

Engel provides an example of iron-deficiency anaemia. The patient may, in homeopathic terms, present a *Ferrum metallicum* picture.111

But a reflection on what iron does in nature, the importance of iron to human endeavours in industry, for example, or in warfare; the kind of spiritual forces out of which iron has materialised; all these considerations can tell us more than the microscope and the haemoglobinometer. They can tell us that iron draws human ego down to earth in a particular way, and helps the spiritual nature of man to work through the power of his will and to make his mark on the earth.112

Steiner is using a symbolic language to find a correspondence or signature of a medicament. Homeopathy uses the results of the proving evidence from the systematic observations of healthy volunteers ingesting controlled quantities of the substance.

Anthroposophists may give *Ferrum* alone or as a plant potentised preparation or a salt. There are 26 variants in the *Weleda Medicines List* (pages F1 to F3).

A different example of a combined remedy is *Carbo cum methane* as a treatment of steatorrhoea, or intra-intestinal putrefaction. *Carbo vegetabilis* alone may be used by homeopaths for persons with such a condition (if the symptoms fit). Anthroposophists combine heat destruction and moist decay in the absence of oxygen leading to air hunger!113

Combined remedies have often been viewed with disfavour because they have sometimes been used on the principle that if one of the constituents does not help, then another will. This is not only bad homeopathy, but it is also known that certain remedies weaken or annul one another if given together.

There is a possibility that through Steiner’s teaching the very notion *homeopathic* as similar is distorted and confused with *potentisation*, the dynamic release of energy parallel with dilution, so that the core of homeopathy is lost. Husemann, an anthroposophic physician and psychiatrist, writing of Goethe and the art of healing, suggests that when the human organism is given an allopathic medicine it may destroy the substance, and “the organism itself ‘homeopathizes’ (potentises). In this sense, the medicine used by the allopathic doctor heals, when it is helpful, only by reason of this ‘homeopathic process.’” The homeopathic doctor, through the process of potentising the remedy, relieves the sick organisms of a task for which it very often no longer has strength.114

All mention of homeopathy as “similar” is submerged under homeopathy as an undefined form of potentisation.

The remedy which appears to be the archetype of anthroposophy is *Iscador*.115 *Viscum album* is well known in traditional herbal medicine and has had homeopathic provings. The core symptoms are epileptic and choreic, “a trembling heart, twitching of the limbs at night, severe shaking fits, catlephoid state of insensibility for hours.”116 Clarke also mentions epilepsy, chorea, ear troubles, spleen and uterine diseases. He includes a number of curious mental as well as physical symptoms, including premonitions, “feels as if going to do something dreadful while the tremblings are on,”117 and there is mention of a sensation as if a spider were crawling over first one hand and then the other. Tyler, in her inimitable fashion, emphasises that “the symptoms and not the names merely of diseases are to correspond with the remedies.”118

By 1980 the anthroposophic literature comprised 111 references to *Iscador*,119 many of them in the *British Homeopathic Journal*.120 They refer not to the provings but to *Iscador* as a near specific for cancer, especially as a cytostatic drug in post-operative states and with no side effects.

We can imagine the reasoning even with our elementary exposition of anthroposophy so far. Cancer is a disease of cell proliferation and loss of control. Mistletoe in a parasitic plant of proliferating cells. Here is an obvious signature.

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111 *Weleda UK*: op. cit.
113 *Friedrich Husemann*: *Goethe and the Art of Healing*. op. cit. p.159
It has a spherical form; we do not find in it, as in plants growing in the soil, that orientation between upper and lower parts, between forces of gravity and of lightness. Whatever may be the site of attachment of its sucker, mistletoe grows perpendicularly to the branch which bears it, increasing in accordance with its own laws and its own rhythm, freed from the conditions to which other plants must submit. It remains green the whole year long, independently of its exposure to light. Even its sucker stores up chlorophyll in the darkness of the wood in which it has buried itself. The berries of mistletoe ripen in winter without warmth; the leaves themselves are indifferent to their orientation to the light. Thus mistletoe is neither geotropic nor phototropic and has freed itself from both solar and terrestrial forces equally, and this confers on it a very special place in the vegetable kingdom. It is in a way an anachronistic plant which has remained behind from the earliest evolutionary past. That is why it cannot grow directly in the soil but needs an intermediate host. “We could say that it repulses the terrestrial forces and thus behaves in a manner which is the opposite to that of a tumor which opens itself to them. It resists the action of etheric proliferative forces indicated by Rudolf Steiner.”

The idea is taken further by Hauschka, who suggests that the healer must add to the melody and the symptom picture “Paracelsus’s signature of the remedy - he must pay Nature’s examination.” His example is the remedy Disci lumbales CPS, a new medicament for the treatment of vertebral discs; its chief component is the node of the bamboo cane. It has an “imponderable quality of the creative organising force which gives form and substance...” The primal gesture of the bamboo plant is its uprightness. He cites Paracelsus as mentioning the stone-producing reeds of India, and again refers us to Goethe’s teaching of the metamorphosis of plants.

König considered that there is a correspondence between the drug picture of the classical homeopath and the “true melody” or archetypal plant in nature, as depicted by Goethe. “If homeopathic physicians would become earnest pupils of the Goethean way of nature study, then we should be able, in true Hahnemannian spirit, to celebrate ... this path of approach which was indicated by Rudolf Steiner.”

Anthroposophy should not be regarded as an alternative or rival to orthodox medicine, suggested Steiner, but as an extension at the core of the concern with formative forces. While the simillimum has been partially discarded, the potentised minimum dose in reaction with the vital force is still very much in evidence.

**Referred to for background information:**
James Compton Burnett: Curability of Tumours by Medicines, 1893.
James Tyler Kent: Lectures on Homoeopathic Philosophy, Ehrhardt & Karl, Chicago. 1900.

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**Note**
This article was typed for a computer some years after publication. If any reader finds a mistake, please contact the author: fran@gn.apc.org.

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125 Steiner & Wegman: op. cit.