

To counter those wrong ideas that die hard...

Alongside a television report concerning homoeopathy...

To the same questions, the same answers and still the same questioning without any real possibility of going any further or analysing the issue in a different manner.

Soon after a report of the same type on another channel, the one which was recently broadcast on *Arte*¹ was propaedeutic in its approach to the problem posed by the Hahnemannian discipline.

Although it was very well constructed, it was like all those which have been made here and there for so many years...

Everything happens as if, while seemingly trying to solve the problem, one continued to develop the same clichés and somewhat hackneyed comments which it seems important to counter in a well-argued and assured way.

All homoeopaths should now be able to do so and be aware of the need to be clear when faced with a different point of view but also to use a language that is acceptable and appropriate to the environment and training of their interlocutor, whether they disagree or show benevolence.

Vagueness, imprecision of concepts, pseudoscientific or pseudopsychiatric statements, confusion of points of view are, in this respect, most dangerous to everyone. They can only engender confusion and rejection, which is quite understandable.

The report referred to here is again the opportunity to clarify the points that are most often objected to and must be countered clearly.

Wrong ideas die hard. They are all the slower to disappear as ignorance and stagnation in a way of thinking regularly put them again in the forefront if an acceptable, open line of argument - therefore likely to pave the way for thinking - has not been objected to them.

As regards the preparation of homoeopathic dilutions

Homoeopathy may give the impression of being based on apparently disconcerting elements... What is active is described as inherent in an element that has been diluted so much that it is impalpable...

It can therefore only be impossible to be imagined by a mind desirous of concrete and materialised representations. One can only agree with the legitimacy of the resulting reaction.

In its way that respected the reality of facts - even if the presentation in the form of a drop of substance diluted in the mass of the ocean was most explicit in its intention -, the report could not stress that aspect more. The wish to highlight such 'aberration' was obvious behind the apparent objectivity. Anyone who does not go into the matter in greater depth can only question the reliability of that mode of preparation and, also, of an approach which can only appear to be 'fanciful' if not somewhat surreal or rooted in magic...

And yet, in spite of its somewhat destabilising facet for a rational mind used to the logic and evidence of scientific thought - we are still laughing about the supposed activity of a

¹ Arte, 15 February 2020, 22:25 : *L'homéopathie, médecine douce ou imposture?*

drop of water in the ocean, and we have a good memory!... -, the preciseness of what was shown in the report proved to be useful.

The way of proceeding recommended by Hahnemann was faithfully respected but, in spite of the somewhat accusatory aspect, another fact appeared: the preciseness and care attached to the manoeuvre showed that it was out of the question to do 'anything' or 'anyhow'. The sequence showing a chemist preparing his pellets in a small-scale manner and the care with which he struck his flask ten times onto a leather book - which was stated specifically - are the striking illustration of this.

There are a question and doubt that may appear and are likely to counteract the somewhat 'fanciful' aspect of a practice calling to mind the antiquated ones of the magi and doctors of the past...

His meticulousness and the time conscientiously spent on that preparation in the loneliness and obscurity of his laboratory make one wonder. To a greater or lesser degree and because of the very preciseness and steadfastness devoted to the way of proceeding, there appears the idea that, even though it has not been 'proved' yet, the therapeutic genius may go through a different way from that attached to molecular action. If that conscientious 'apothecary' had doubted the healing properties of what he was preparing, would he have made it as carefully, given the generally low cost of those medicines?

The placebo effect...

The manner in which the issue of the placebo effect was later broached, mentioned as possibly responsible for the healing effect, was significant: 'Perhaps it's not so much the product in its specificity that is in question but an action which, mobilising the functioning of neurons - which can be checked by neuroimaging -, would bring about the sedation of the disorder...'

This is indeed a possible explanation! It makes the process in question fall within scope that is acceptable to the current way of thinking - tangible proof, which can be assessed, exists - except that... Anyone who has seen the quick and spectacular effects of *Spongia* on a child with stridulous laryngitis, who suffocates, cannot doubt the effects of the medicine. If *Coccus Cacti* or *Rumex Crispus* had been given, it is unlikely that its action would have been as instantaneous and marked... The need for preciseness in the analysis of the modalities and the necessity to modify the treatment - if it proves to be ineffective or the patient's health has evolved - run counter to that explanation, notably in acute cases and somatic pathologies...

If, like in a standard approach, the placebo effect may play a role in functional disorders in which the therapist's aura and what may support their words play a definite part, an explanation of a placebo nature cannot always and in all cases apply to homoeopathic treatment.

Unless we adopt a viewpoint which might imagine an action through a somewhat 'magic' means of the experimenter's psyche on what they try out - which runs counter to the results obtained in veterinary medicine² and on plants -, this would be a hypothesis which, in the present state of knowledge, would be still more questionable than that put forward by the supporters of 'water memory'...

² Which have been recognised, it must be repeated, by our former minister of Health, a passionate defender of the stopping of the reimbursement of homoeopathy for human beings...

In response to what comes from the scientific thought...

The definite opposition of the doctor angry that she had been led to believe in such an unreliable practice - since it is not approved by the scientific world - showed the way the problem arises and may bring about scission in someone and a community: the confidence in what is 'scientifically correct' leads one to reject at once something whose beneficial effects were assessed when the practice started.

There is therefore a tangible dividing line that appears between the reality checked in day-to-day clinical medicine and what cannot be validated by one's peers or the current paradigm through lack of palpable proof.

Accepting those two facets which consist, on the one hand, in observing then showing the effects of one's prescriptions and, on the other, stating very clearly that, for the moment, it is not possible to say through what way the therapeutic genius goes³ is part of all homoeopaths' duties provided, of course - and this has been rightly put forward here - that, in addition to listening carefully to their patients, they carry out all further medical examinations with a view to a diagnosis and make sure the patients retain all their chances in their fight against illness.

It is important that homoeopaths should regularly remind people of this and proclaim it...

It is essential not to let people mention regularly the cases of patients with cancer who have died because that most basic precaution had not been taken.

It is important to repeat that that attitude dishonours not the community of homoeopaths or homoeopathy but the whole community of doctors... There are bad doctors among homoeopaths as well as allopaths... It is necessary to say it and not to let people repeat such assertions regularly without responding⁴.

The eternal 'water memory'...

Brought up again here, it needs to be once again put back in its appropriate place...

Faced with that hypothesis, which is still unconfirmed, homoeopathic doctors should be definite.

If there was deception - which no-one can confirm or deny, except those who witnessed that lamentable story -, it is important to repeat that it is no longer appropriate to base one's judgement on what it put forward: none of the tests meant to make it credible has so far been able to support its reality or conclusions⁵... It was as good a hypothesis as any which, if it had not been put forward to try to explain the mode of action of homoeopathic dilutions, would probably not have caused so much ink to flow or favoured and fuelled the controversy so much.

It is therefore essential that every homoeopath should bear this in mind and firmly refuse to let themselves be led on that ground or play a role in maintaining any doubt

³ The hypothesis concerning the transmission of information of Professors Madeleine Bastide and Agnès Lagache (cf. *Du stress au transgénérationnel*) has not been denied so far.

⁴ This draws attention to the risk that that type of problem will increase if homoeopaths are not necessarily doctors or authorised to prescribe homoeopathy.

⁵ Even though different types of work are under way to study the role of water as a medium.

regarding their adherence to that hypothesis which, even if it paved the way for various investigations in various fields, belongs to the past, like many others.

Otherwise, it will only maintain confusion in people's minds and therefore continue to discredit homoeopathy as a whole.

Double-blind trials

The mention of a test of that type on hyperactive children would not have concluded that the homoeopathic treatment was more effective than the placebo... So be it. But several studies carried out in Switzerland a few years ago from very precise criteria with the possibility, for the doctor, of choosing the appropriate medicine and changing it if necessary have shown the opposite.⁶

It is important to stress that all the tests that are likely to sow doubts and validate the effects of homoeopathic medicines are regularly questioned... All excuses - technicalities, insufficient patients - are used to thwart if not destroy what is put forward.

If we can only praise everything of the nature of rigour that makes knowledge progress, perhaps we should also say that what is refuted here can just as well apply to certain tests carried out with chemical medications.

As regards the experimentation concerning hyperactive children, the stopping of the experimentation with homoeopathic treatment would have marked the reappearance of the symptoms, rightly suggesting the interest taken in the children by the families and experimenters had probably played a role. This point of view is acceptable but it would have been interesting to know which symptoms had reappeared and after what amount of time⁷.

It would also have been helpful, if only out of intellectual rigour, to say that the same conclusion had been drawn from a study concerning Ritaline[®] carried out on 2,000 cases, which was quickly passed over in silence and apparently not diffused⁸.

The special features of experiments in homoeopathy

As regards the double-blind experiments reported here, it may be useful to repeat again and again that the protocols applying to chemical substances can in no way apply to homoeopathy unless certain special features are respected:

- If one wants to try out the same medicine in a single-blind manner (a medicine known by the experimenter and a placebo), this is possible on condition that a range of signs permitting to characterise the disorder in question is stated. Rhus Tox can only be prescribed if the modalities of the medicine are present and given when symptoms appear;

- If, on the contrary, one wants to have an effect on a particular symptom - pain, hyperactivity, inflammation - without any further details and several medicines have to be given successively according to the development, how can one conclude that one tries out a homoeopathic treatment in a double-blind manner against a placebo or an allopathic substance? Every patient may have been given either the same medicine twice or the placebo twice or the placebo once and the medicine once or else two different medicines. This is impossible...

⁶ Cf. *L'homéopathie face au placebo*, Ed. Homéopsy, 2005.

⁷ All the pathologies that are related to hyperactivity do not have the same cause and do not justify the same type of treatment and the homoeopathic approach confirms this rightly and precisely.

⁸ Cf. *L'homéopathie face au placebo*, Ed. Homéopsy, 2005.

And that is why it is important that homoeopaths should be clear on the reality with which they are confronted and say it when this comes back to the forefront.

All the facets of those wrong ideas that fuel the controversy over the Hahnemannian approach have been set out here.

Perhaps it is now up to homoeopaths to counter what constitutes its still being obsessively spread and to enlighten people about certain facets that are not widely known...

Faced with those persistent wrong ideas, the homoeopathic doctor should:

Not let themselves be involved, in whatever circumstances, in loaded exchanges;

Agree not to be always able to give an answer in the present state of knowledge, say it loud and clear but point out and call to mind the points where the latter evolves thanks to clinical experiments and those carried out on high dilutions;

Oppose in a firm way all slanderous statement if unfortunate cases are recounted in which 'Homoeopathy means non-competence of the doctor, endangering other people's lives and less chances for the patient'...

Remind people, in this respect, of the charter of homoeopathic doctors and always make sure they broaden their knowledge...

Be careful not to tread, as many opponents of homoeopathy do, on unknown ground⁹ or outside the scope of a homoeopath's field or give vague explanations and mix up the levels of comprehension...

A scientist will understand a scientist's language and, in order to make themselves heard, will have to use the frame of reference that is theirs: similitude is not analogy, quantum physics does not go together with intuitive knowledge, psychological disorders affecting a certain field (work, money, relationships) cannot be deduced from chemical features...

No scientist, physicist or specialist in what affects the world of the psyche, even if they are most open to different ways of thinking, can subscribe to those assertions. Even if they are founded on data coming from Traditions, many of them show total extravagance and glaring ignorance of the various fields mentioned.

And, in order to manage to 'make themselves heard' in a world dominated in many domains by the fascination for doctrinaire approach, make sure they argue about what they put forward and assess the difficulty that many people have in questioning the scientific thought, its rigorous aspects and undeniable limits - of which they should not be afraid to remind people.

In conclusion...

To enlighten, argue soundly and in an appropriate and unanswerable way...

To use the appropriate language,

⁹ - they often do not know what the latter really consists of, do not want to know since it has not provided experimental evidence of its validity and the effectiveness of its medicines... Everything is only a placebo...

Not to let oneself be 'overawed' by one's opponents' confidence, condemnation and tendency to thrust forward the usual repetitive words,

Not to continue to let truncated information or accusatory information from the outset be spread,

To counter the pieces of information which can or must be so,

To remain and make sure everyone remains in their area of competence and is able to assess the limits of what they put forward.

The possibility of a whole section of the population retaining the choice of treating themselves as they like totally justifies it and requires the efforts of all.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Translated by Pascale Tempka