

When a new controversy spreads about homoeopathy...

I - 'Can one be a doctor if one is a homoeopath ?'¹

This is the question that has recently been asked by some defenders of medicine, as anxious to protect their patients from the potential effects of an approach not approved of by 'science' as to defend their reputations... The risk of being associated with if not put into the same category as colleagues practising homoeopathy and seen as as unscrupulous people as charlatans is not acceptable to them...

If this is not a new problem, one can ask oneself what justifies such 'fuss'. Must one conclude that it is such a sensitive issue that it justifies complaint, a manifesto, or such relentlessness ? If it must be taken into account appropriately, it is worth lingering over.

To be a psychiatrist is to be a doctor ; to be a homoeopath in France is also to be a doctor ; therefore, to be a psychiatrist also practising homoeopathy in psychiatry makes one feel concerned about it on two counts. The conviction that this approach is interesting in this field and in various fields of medical care can only engender various questions.

Several points make one ask oneself questions, which can be found at two poles...

They can only make the psychiatrist and homoeopath feel concerned about them.

Confronted with the evolutionary movements of the world and the trends that appear in it, they are led, through their experience, to detect more acutely the more or less perceptible changes - more marked every day - which emerge.

That is why the content and form of violence of certain recent attacks on homoeopathy and the new face they are taking on make one think about them : by calling into question the legitimacy of the capacity of the practitioners in this discipline as doctors, they can only lead one to ask oneself questions on two essential main lines :

The first is about the insistence of non-homoeopaths on trying to reject homoeopathy outside the scope of medicine :

Given this comes not from 'scientists' but from medical practitioners it makes one wonder...

Even if, more often than not, it is considered a 'placebo', as it is called in 'high places', this obviously disturbing practice is undeniably part of the habits of many patients.

Their choice², the fact that they continue to ask for it for themselves and their families, the advantage they say they gain from it as regards improved well-being and medical care³ are **also** worth 'listening to'.

¹ First part of a two-part article entitled, *When a new controversy spreads about homoeopathy* and published on homeopsy.com (Doctor Geneviève Ziegel, September 2018).

² - whether it is linked to family habits, to the desire to take 'natural' medicine, to the distrust of an approach seen as unequivocal in its answers, to reluctance as regards substances considered to be potentially 'aggressive' towards their organisms and dosages that they often do not tolerate well, or to marginality proclaimed with regard to the different 'powers' in place - even that of their doctor and of the way of thinking that they represent or espouse -

Obviously, more than any other therapeutic approach, homoeopathy is disturbing...

If one wishes to be in a world that wants to feed on certainties, even though it does not pose questions, it poses problems and the lack of knowledge about its origins, the context of its appearance and of some of its evolutions as well as what relates to the history of medical care and medicine as a whole can only act as a brake.

What makes one ask oneself questions is not so much the conceivable refusal to accept a somewhat different approach which has its roots in the world of the ancients and in that of 'magic' - with the archaic fears that are associated with them - as the insistence on wishing to see it disappear from the scope of medicine because of very surprising 'worries' : the practice of medicine as a whole might be affected by it⁴ (sic !)...

The desire to remain as close as possible to what is at the leading edge of progress ? The vague feeling that one's way of practising is called into question ?

Nobody can say...

The question is what the reason for it is and where the real fear lies.

If one wants to leave out all other reasons of a societal nature, it can be explained by the rejection of the unexplainable and the irrational and by the desire to keep at a distance all the approaches that are not backed up by proofs or certainties : the form of 'modelling' inherent in the present way of thinking shows its impact... Trained more and more often in this direction, doctors seem to want to distance themselves from all 'non-scientific' approaches.

This distrust of what seems incomprehensible is in fact a most commendable concern but, unfortunately, everything happens as if the treating people who do not espouse the 'official' views as regards, above all else, the therapeutic tools used - notably the medication - had to be 'banished' without further ado... Not to mention that - which runs counter to any openness to other points of view - neither the stories nor the experiences of those who subscribe to a different conception of the way of treating oneself are taken into account. They get no response except 'that this has not been "scientifically" demonstrated' : they would constitute only a non-individualised 'mass' without critical judgement, who must therefore be protected since they might 'swallow' any story... And the epidemiological investigations that show the interest of its benefit in everyday life if only to avoid more

³ Even if, 'scientifically speaking', their stories cannot be considered to be 'proof'.

⁴ And, whereas the homoeopathic approach is beginning to be present in certain hospital fields - notably cancer treatment - , the risk of being involved in the possible tacit acceptance of this way of treating seems to damage the prevailing thought to such an extent that teachings which had been present for about thirty years in certain universities are now suspended, waiting for the 'official quietus' to be given... Everything happens as if all association with 'unproven elements' might make one 'suspicious'. And yet is it possible to provide proof for everything ? Regarding this, it seems that, rather than in the - minimal, in fact - impact on public funds, the desire for homoeopathy to stop being reimbursed lies in the wish to impose a way of seeing medical care, with the disappearance of the 'not scientifically' proven elements from the scope of medicine - even though, it must be said again, medicine is not a science but an art. All different contributions are banished, leading to the irrevocable rejection or even the rejection without any examination of what is advanced... If we can pay tribute to the courage of certain researchers in infinitesimals who, despite the obstacles, the distrust if not the rejection of many of their colleagues, persist in choosing to further knowledge, we can only deplore what leads and contributes to the imposition of the fruitless domination of a form of 'doctrinaire approach'. Homoeopathy is not free from it : certain trends coming from Kentism state with the utmost certainty unequivocal and dogmatic points of view which, despite the lack of appropriate 'scientific' and homoeopathic foundations according to Hahnemann, are now imposed as postulates if not 'truths'.

'aggressive' therapies, increase the preventive aspect of the disorders, decrease, in severe pathologies, the doses of medicines and their iatrogenic effects, seem to have no impact. In fact, they are little known. Only the 'proofs' count and those which are provided are, above all else, the negative ones or those based on often partial or erroneous elements, which permit to proclaim loudly and regardless of all codes of practice that homoeopathy is only a placebo and the practitioners who use its tools are just charlatans...

But this is somewhat risky...

This irrevocable rejection of a way of seeing medical care which goes back to the dawn of time can only reinforce the propensity of many of those who are attached to it to turn even more to the 'irrational' but it can also, which is more alarming, result in homoeopathy being practised, in France, by non-doctors, with all the risks that this may entail.

If there are many of the latter in a good many countries turning more to various 'traditional' types of medicine for economic and cultural reasons, they are not always able to grasp the reality of the pathologies of the patients who go and see them or to treat them by all available means. Besides, they often work with a medical practitioner.

The drifts linked to what was engendered by the legacy of Kentism⁵ make the problem worse and they do so all the more as the study or teaching groups having been little in touch with each other so far except for certain yearly common meetings have often not permitted to grasp the changes that have gradually been brought about, except if one refers to the publications on the Net.

Many homoeopaths are aware of this risk...

As they are attached to the practice coming from Hahnemann's teachings, some of them also feel the justifiable fear that, given the impact of certain new approaches of homoeopathy, the irrational and 'magic' will supplant objectivity and the sense of reality...

They are also concerned to prevent the patients from being left in confusion if not in a form of delusion : the interest now often turned, above all else, to mental signs without any real support from somatic signs, the fact that there is often no⁶ - or a brief - clinical examination⁷ or that there are no thorough supplementary examinations, the use of 'pathogénésies' of sometimes doubtful origins or carried out in a questionable way, make them worried about what may be stated as the impact of the medicine in its 'pharmacological' aspect.

Homoeopathic doctors and allopathic doctors agree on that...

⁵ Not predominant until recently in the French homoeopathic field : contrary to the Kentian Unicists, who advocate a single medicine that would respond to the disorders caused by the marks of the 'original sin' in the mentality carrying the source of all the diseases of the subject and even if their leader mentions in his writings Kent's theorisation, the French practitioners who advocate the prescription of a single medicine **do so for different reasons : they refer to the 5th version of *The Organon* and not to the 6th version.** In this last version published posthumously given the problem posed by chronic illnesses, Hahnemann reconsidered his position on the single medicine and advocated the alternation of substances to avoid mixing and check their interaction. A chemist contemporary with Lavoisier, he was trying out his method and put forward his conclusions step by step according to what he observed.

⁶ Often left to the responsibility of another doctor - which deprives one of invaluable information and runs counter to what is officially advocated.

⁷ Unfortunately often regretted, also in allopathy, by the patients and replaced by a vast number of tests and X-rays of all orders...

The health of their patients means as much to them as their preserved confidence in their ability to treat them.

As they have had the same training in medicine, both of them⁸ are concerned to understand what happens 'scientifically' in their approach.

The second point that raises questions concerns the insistence of homoeopaths on trying to provide scientific proofs likely to support the value of their practice :

Trained in the same melting pot, they have the same concern as their allopathic colleagues :

The recent questions about the new homoeopathic approaches⁹ generated by what followed from Kent's teaching are a first proof of this ;

The desire to understand how the effective information circulates is another. 'Water memory', quantum physics, nanoparticles, various hypotheses... Everything is debated, with a view to putting some 'explainable' elements in what is beyond all comprehension...

But perhaps it should be stressed that, in the light of the conditions imposed by the current mechanistic paradigm, in spite of the results observed every day and in certain experiments carried out in conditions appropriate to homoeopathy, it must be admitted that, given the shortage of funds allocated¹⁰ and the presence of brakes of all orders, it is impossible at present to go any further... : if the facts are not looked at objectively¹¹ or an analysis of their content is not done, if there are not appropriate conditions or specific experimental protocols, this will not be possible.

If, in spite of their interesting results, certain clinical trials carried out do not meet **all** the requirements adequately to be totally 'approved' - and therefore published - , if the epidemiological investigations that show the positive impact of homoeopathy confirm what is observed every day, **providing one looks at things from a strictly scientific point of view**, the latter may not be considered irrefutable : factors that escape all taking into account¹² might have played a part in them and may be referred to. Whether in allopathy or in homoeopathy, they only apply to the sample observed and cannot therefore be generalised.

⁸ In spite of the fact that medicine is not a science but an art and this 'scientific' aspect is not the most important part of their teaching.

⁹ Which can be called 'homoeotherapy' instead, given that it uses diluted dynamised medicines **but does not apply close similitude - accepted by the scientific world and taught by Hahnemann** - but broader analogies instead with, as Kent advocated, the prevalence of the looking for the signs concerning the sphere of the mind to find the medicine corresponding to the signs presented.

¹⁰ Which does not make large-scale experiments easier, which leads to the fact that, even when positive results are observed, the argument that there are not enough patients to permit to conclude that the experiment is positive is put up.

¹¹ And not, as it has been recently heard on the air from a panel member described as a 'scientific expert', a mixture of scientific points of view and - which runs counter to the rigour and moderation expected of someone with his training - the summary, without any figures to back it up, of the cost of homoeopathy for the community (it would constitute 0.94 per cent of the National Insurance budget), with the regrettable confusion between the total budget and the profits of a laboratory producing homoeopathic medicines...

¹² Other medications taken at the same time, various changes not mentioned.

If they are valuable and important, strictly speaking, statistics are not, it must be stressed, 'proofs'¹³. As regards the pure scientific approach, they are only an observation, an interesting one which should be taken into account, but only an observation.

One should nevertheless agree to examine their consequences, have an overall and objective view of the conclusions proposed, facilitate the fact that they are spread and communicated when they may be valuable and not close the debate without further ado - or by drawing contradictory or rash conclusions¹⁴...

Not to be able to provide irrefutable 'proofs' such as those asked for does not, it must be said, destroy the value of the practice of homoeopathy.

It speaks for itself in the field and the number of users defending this approach is a telling sign : their loyalty, insistence on safeguarding their way of treating themselves whereas everything is done to arouse their distrust, the lack of conditions permitting to give an official 'scientific' stamp¹⁵ to their therapeutic choice speak for themselves. And yet, they often go and see their doctor again. This is also worth taking into account...

The lack of repeatable proofs as regards the impact of a medicine is not the sign of a lack of action :

Should appropriate protocols be used to demonstrate it... ?

Therefore, and beyond appearances...

Allopaths and homoeopaths : the same concern, the same questions...

Their preoccupation is to look for what may help the patients, broaden the scope of their knowledge, be recognised in their skills and capacity as 'doctors'...

This poses an essential question : 'What does it mean to "be a doctor" ?'

Does not this essential profession imply both the concern with medical care itself and the close observation of what contributes to its effectiveness (medicine, mode of action, impact of the latter, relationship, etc.) ?

Is this not what they all have in common ?

The problem is so important that both sides are passionate about the refusal to accept the calling into question of that capacity...

To escape the risk of being likened to what is carried by 'popular' approaches, to eradicate what may remain of them, and to retain legitimacy towards a part of society seems to be essential in order to feel 'authenticated' in the validity of the approach used...

¹³ Cf., on the subject, *Une histoire des concepts des séries temporelles*, Véronique Meuriot.

¹⁴ Certain results explicitly recognised in certain of their publications by eminent members of the scientific world would have been followed by the conclusion that homoeopathy is ineffective !

¹⁵ Inappropriate experimental protocols, the obtention of the product licence in France based on the same principles as for allopathic medicines, the impossibility of envisaging an approach based on a different view from the mechanistic one, explanatory theorisations regularly called into question, the regular depreciation with results often distorted or diverted from their original contexts do not facilitate any progress in that direction...

In the two scenarios, to claim a type of knowledge backed up by tangible proofs in which the 'magic' attached to the diviners and magi of the past is no longer accepted would seem essential...

It must be stressed that this was Hahnemann's concern and this concern is still that of those who put all his teachings into practice.

Allopaths and homoeopaths : the same training, the same preoccupations...

Linked to their common studies... : the same wish...

The strong interest of the patients in this approach that raises questions poses problems to certain defenders of the official medicine to such an extent that, to 'protect' them and make sure that they are treated appropriately and to shield them from the 'irrational', they even demand that homoeopathy should be eradicated permanently from the scope of medicine - and that the capacity as doctors should be taken away from those of their colleagues who practise it.

Conversely, the clinical results obtained for those same patients constitute a sufficient incentive for the defenders of the Hahnemannian approach to try still harder, like their master, to improve their practice and knowledge.

Coming from the same melting pot, after all, these two ways of thinking express the same desire :

To go in the direction of progress... : this is a common wish...

It concerns allopaths¹⁶ and homoeopaths.

To eradicate what carries the mark of 'magic' and obscurantism and is unreliable... : this is a common concern...

To allopaths and to those of the homoeopaths who desire to remain in the way of thinking of Hahnemann... : a common desire : to eradicate permanently that 'irrational' going back to the dawn of time and try as best one can to understand what happens in the relationship as well as in the manner in which the medicine acts as regards the way it is administered to be effective...

But, for homoeopathic doctors, a concern...

If all have the desire to go further in the understanding of what happens - and to see how this can be achieved - , the effort expended varies.

If most want to reach a significant result - which is impossible to provide in the present state of affairs - , for others, who are followers of more or less new theorisations coming from Kentism, this is not essential : certain of them - there are now fewer and fewer of them - totally accept that they are somewhat 'unconventional'. They display a lack of interest or a more or less overt refusal to be equated with the current norms of medicine and do not

¹⁶ And this has recently been expressed by certain members of the allopathic world who did not show the same uninterest or irrevocable rejection as those who have lately demanded that homoeopathy should be eradicated from the scope of medicine.

proclaim that they belong to either the official medicine or 'traditional' homoeopathy - that is to say, apply similitude such as taught by Hahnemann¹⁷.

For others, the ready-made reference to quantum medicine, if it is stated as absolute modernism and at the leading edge of progress, masks with difficulty the 'passive' position on that preoccupation... The effort focuses every day on looking for new 'pathogénésies' and finding a way of broadening the scope of prescriptions. One should also add that, in essence, the use of broadened similitude and Paracelsian elements makes their position different from those preoccupations even though they often insist on backing up their choice with 'scientific' explanations¹⁸.

Allopaths and homoeopaths : same goals...

The profession of a doctor remains the same on both sides...

Even if, on the one hand, one focuses, above all else, on the signs of the disease and, on the other hand, rather on the ill **subject**, their symptoms, the signs they show and what they say about their 'illness', the attention to the disorder has the same goal : medical care...

Even if the profession of a doctor is marred by marks linked to the training and time which made its basis, it is carried and accompanied on both sides by the same principles.

The somatic examination and the different explorations constitute, for the two approaches, the first essential stage with a view to the diagnosis...

If, during this stage, their clinical sense remains alert, the doctor is still within the bounds of their art, that is to say, their attention is not fixed on any technical quality or on the leaving out of the precepts essential for the diagnosis, the emerging signs will determine what must be done.

Listening and asking questions in order to determine the therapeutic strategy will depend on the practitioner's training¹⁹ and on the tools at their disposal.

The quality of their listening, their knowledge of pharmacology, that of the mode of reaction of the subject to illness, the diagnostic component and, in homoeopathy, the ability of the doctor to determine the or the series of medicines to recommend will do the rest.

Allopaths and homoeopaths : things in common but different tools...

Given the impact of the therapeutic relationship, the 'placebo' effect is always present in the two types of approach...

If it can be assessed, it is not more important in homoeopathy than in allopathy²⁰.

For the homoeopathic doctor, an advantage in the view of the disorders

¹⁷ Similitude in accordance with that accepted by the scientific world.

¹⁸ Unfortunately, often as ill-considered as inappropriate.

¹⁹ Or on that of the authorised treating person (veterinary surgeon, midwife, dental surgeon, etc.).

²⁰ Cf. *L'homéopathie face au placebo*, G. Ziegel.

The manner in which the subject can be grasped, the signs they show, their cause and their treatment - with what may contribute to its effectiveness - passes through a double - standard and homoeopathic - filter.

Relationship, medicine ? What plays a part ?

The problem brought up here is extremely important... It is one of the cruxes of the controversy.

Point of contention and of difference : the homoeopathic medicine...

The non-verifiable - since individualised - aspect and the diluted and dynamised nature of the treatment used pose questions if not problems.

The lack of understanding of the processes at work can only make it worse.

In the present state of affairs, all explanations can only be hypotheses.

Apart from that proposed by Professors Madeleine Bastide and Agnès Lagache, which has not been contradicted up to now, many of them, which have been advanced too hastily, have been quickly called into question if not brushed aside...

And yet, not easily quantifiable, active in the specificity of their 'pharmacological' component, the effects of the Hahnemannian dilutions exist.

Even if, in the present state of affairs, one cannot say how their therapeutic genius works or grasp the modalities of their action, their impact can be clinically observed and, in certain ways, assessed on plants, animals, human beings, etc. and therefore outside any prevailing placebo effect...

This is an important element to use to counter all controversies over that point.

Even if this 'treating' aspect is only met with superficial interest or kindles passions only to deny the reality of the effects of those dilutions, it remains extremely important.

The controversy it engenders shows it is far from being insignificant and raises questions.²¹

To be continued...

Doctor Geneviève Ziegel

²¹ Translated by Pascale Tempka