

HOMOEOPATHY... THE END ?

About a television programme¹...

Summarised to itself, this title might seem to prefigure a 'loaded' debate.

Confirmed by the file for the prosecution included in the report, the potential violence in the words used - The end... At last !! - spoke volumes about the form of 'victorious satisfaction' which appeared to emerge from them and seemed to prefigure almost triumphantly what appeared to have been already concluded and hoped for for so long. The somewhat excessive and very surprising passion that has often surrounded that type of bringing to light can therefore only make one wonder about its profound origins... : the fear of the irrational, the refusal to accept what is neither explainable nor approved by the scientific authorities caught in the requirements of a mechanistic paradigm which, according to many researchers, has reached its limits... Everything seems to be intermingled...

Photos, appalling examples to back it up, results calling into question not the obvious and pathetic incompetence of the doctor but homoeopathy as a whole, words of established 'scientists' certain about their points of view, pointing out the cost : the arguments put forward in a part of the report were meant to justify the correctness of the planned 'killing'. The cold and irrevocable tone of the journalist going through a list of all the evils attached to that dangerous approach calling to mind diviners, witch doctors, and alchemists of all kinds appeared to sound a knell and announce that what is 'correct' will prevail at last... The knife and the 'impending execution' are imminent. The court will decide at last... If this was not a serious subject, one might say as a quip that one could almost - and already - hear the cries of joy of the crowd happy to get rid of that plague that has been capable of defying the established order for over 200 years...

And yet, beyond the violence that the title might call to mind, the presence of various elements and the open moderation of certain of the actors anxious to leave a place for 'the words of the other' gave a new turn to the debate. Even if, apparently, it seemed, as in the past, that the result was no more than a form of somewhat 'dull' observation and unchanged positions without any real advance, something seemed to have changed very imperceptibly. The lack of in-depth debate about the profound and various issues was obvious but, since the latter had not been clearly expressed - or, perhaps, had not even been consciously understood - , they were more or less left unsaid, in the background and could not really be formulated if not communicated. Besides, the manner in which the debate was carried on did not lend itself to it...

The obvious form of lack of knowledge, on both sides, about various aspects of the problem appeared more clear-cut : on the one hand, a thought shaped by the mechanistic paradigm and scientific postulates ; on the other hand, inherent in their training - in medicine too - , a position that is obviously totally different in the way of approaching medical care... Two 'angles' and two levels of emergence of words and knowledge that are more and more totally unknown to each other... The time when doctors did research, treated the mind and the psyche and were sometimes even surgeons and produced the medicines is dead and gone... If there remains any trace of that old way of being, it is worth

¹ TV5, 15/01/2019, 20:50.

making people aware of it and getting it out of individual and collective memory... Times have changed, the more and more specialised practices do not permit it any longer and today's doctors can no longer venture to retain an attitude that is too imbued with that outdated conception of their capacities²...

Thus, despite the somewhat incisive tone - although it was meant to be neutral - of the journalist who had come to present her file for the prosecution and for the defence, a form of exchange of views was nevertheless attempted between various 'worlds' often unknown to each other and generally not inclined - or invited - to communicate...

In fact, contrary to what the title of the programme could make one fear, what was brought up in it was not uninteresting. More courteous and less tumultuous than many others that had been held in the past, it pointed to a form of advance in the will to make objections that could be listened to by everyone. In the end, the desire to show the will to be objective dominated passion. That was one of the positive points of that exchange, even though one sensed - but perhaps this was only a feeling - that, for some of the participants for the prosecution, it was as if the die was cast... For some, interviewed for the report, their 'virulence' was all the more justified as it was now necessary to 'have done with' the problem of homoeopathy - which had begun right at the time of its founder... For the others, present on the set, - but perhaps this was only a personal feeling - that prospect probably permitted the form of peace of mind and confining to the most important things, making sure that no pointless controversy was brought about... One generally lets the 'condemned person' express themselves... And one knows that, quite obviously, homoeopathy will not take the double-blind tests proposed for all medicines. Given the current paradigm, it will not be possible for its advocates to demand the application of a different and specific way of carrying out tests : they cannot afford to do so... The studies planned will not be conclusive scientifically speaking... Given all the required parameters, they will not produce better results than placebos... Statistics are not proofs... It is not possible to conclude that the medicine is 'pharmacologically' active... 'Water memory' has shown how absurd it is... Homoeopathy will no longer be reimbursed and may even be excluded from the scope of medicine, which it 'brings into disrepute'... Therefore, even if it does not disappear from the scope of medical care, it will lose all credibility and will no longer pose any problems...

Except that...

And that was raised by one of the witnesses for the defence of homoeopathy... Other difficulties will inevitably appear... If they no longer concern medicine, they will still affect medical care... The fact that, as a fellow homoeopath so correctly pointed out, it will be prescribed by non-doctors is not safe or without its drawbacks... But that did not seem to be problematic... Their honour was safe and, at last, medicine would be rid of its 'charlatans' who, doctors too - this should be kept in mind - , are as concerned as their colleagues about the health of **all** their patients and the impact on public funds of a type of medicine that is badly managed or backed up...

The fact that homoeopathy will be reduced to more or less inappropriate self-medication whose deleterious effects it will be impossible to distinguish does not matter either... Pellets of sugar and illusion have never hurt anyone... If the treatment for

² The trend which, a few years ago, wanted to give them the possibility of being authorised psychotherapists without having to study the appropriate subjects caused such a general uproar that it was eliminated.

'bobologie'³ is only within the means of those who will be able to afford the pellets whose prices will only increase - at the same time as those of mutual insurance companies - , this does not pose any problems either... It will cost society even less which, as the epidemiological investigations show, is not correct. And the organism 'is cured by itself' - which is not untrue... - but one should not forget to add that its capacity for reaction must not be exceeded, rest is essential and the anxiety accompanying the illness must not be so marked that the patient demands the omnipotence of the saving medicine...

The fact that the past 'medication of the poor' will become that of the 'rich' and its potential contribution to research (iatrogenic effects, unusual types of sensitivity) or to the improvement in diagnosis and therapeutics is unknown is of no importance... It is not worth going into in depth... Given that homoeopathy cannot prove that it is effective and one cannot know how its supposed curative genius works, it must be eliminated from the scope of medicine... Full stop. For some of the participants or of the people interviewed, who were probably ill-informed or caught in the unequivocal views of their training or opinions, the conclusion was obvious...

And yet it must be stressed how useful this form of debate, even if it does not fundamentally develop much and is dominated by a form of vagueness and mixture of levels, may prove. By helping to catch glimpses of everyone's point of view, it also - and above all - permits to bring to light the 'shortcomings' inherent in the differences between the types of training... It was more a discussion about points of view than about the core of the problem...

After all, the latter is about one point : 'Should homoeopathy still be reimbursed? In fact, can that "irrational" approach - since it is outside the postulates of the mechanistic paradigm - still be within the scope of medicine - which claims here to be no longer an art but a science?'

Compared with what a layman can understand of it, a few details are worth giving about the notion of 'services rendered' mentioned by the head of the HAS⁴. What are the 'services rendered' and to whom? Would they only affect the economic issue?

In that case only, is the cost introduced in medicine in order to have an impact on its practice?

It does not seem to be the basic problem.

Curiously present since fundamentally inherent in considerations of a scientific nature and always in the background, the shadow of placebos looms on the horizon. And it is mixed with considerations of a very different nature... A financial and societal one? Nothing is really clarified here.

And yet this should have been so... The low cost of homoeopathy, the epidemiological data relayed by the 'Epi 3' study were not mentioned in any way whatever... And yet the number of patients who use homoeopathy, their lesser consumption of medicines or fewer consultations with a doctor which were mentioned in it spoke for themselves. This would have enriched the debate and permitted certain explanations that were not given. They would have explained the current positions of the signatories against homoeopathy... For instance, the fact that the report of the Australian government on the contribution of

³ From 'bobo', which is in French a child's onomatopoeia for 'physical pain' (Translator's note)

⁴ 'Haute Autorité de Santé' (Translator's note)

homoeopathy would prove to be a forgery⁵... (?) was not mentioned... This is most detrimental since it was it which triggered the current controversy and mainly contributed to the eradication of homoeopathy in certain countries where the chemists who dispense it are blamed...

Besides, everything happened as if, at the same time as one brought the notion of 'services rendered' into line with the effectiveness - and thus the validity - of the method, one did not go any further...

The specific conditions essential for the appropriate verification of the results of homoeopathy in relation to placebos were passed over in silence... Those were not mentioned at all.

No mention was made of the fact that, whereas that was not appropriate, the same rules as allopathy were applied to homoeopathy (even the obtention of the product licence in France, leading, for economic reasons, to the decrease in the number of strains put on the market). And yet their protocols must be different and the funds were not allocated to do so. The cost was not even mentioned and no room was left to talk about it...

The complexity of the issue which made the interpretation of the results difficult if one wanted to assess them rigorously in all their parameters was not touched on either.

Whereas there should be a complete review of it, given what is at stake as regards public health and a certain amount of objectivity, the issue was not raised. It was either totally unknown or left out or so complex that it was evaded... And this is a regrettable element. It would have permitted to 'enlighten' certain opponents, notably the doctors.

If the grounds for that exchange can be summarised in the question posed to the head of the Haute Autorité de Santé, that is to say, as it has to be done for all medicines listed in the official pharmacopoeia, to assess the importance of the 'services rendered' to justify their reimbursement, other more or less pertinent questions have emerged.

Mentioned by one of the signatories of the manifesto against homoeopathy, they are not uninteresting insofar as they express a form of new position on medical practice in its essence : 'Why should any medicine be given whereas the body is capable of being cured by itself?' - this is without knowing that the capacity for self-healing of the organism is stimulated by the sweet pellets... It seems that the 'omnipotent medicine' of the recent past is being put in its right place. Perhaps because of its cost but also, and probably, it is a 'modern' way of reconsidering healthcare... The iatrogenic effects are problematic, one must see to it that public health as a whole is good ; it will cost less (?)... One has to see to it...

But one lets the matter rest as regards the calling into question of a practice in which its technical nature has replaced the willingness to listen and in which the subject has been treated as a 'case' for a long time... But if, more or less consciously, one begins to ask oneself this type of question if not call into question a practice that has become more and more different from that of the family doctor of the past, it is necessary to eradicate what invites to reconsider one's role as a treating person practising an art and not a science. One feels that 'something is wrong' and, without really realising it, one makes conceptions of the past re-emerge. Seen as more willing to listen to the patient, closer to them, 'diviners, alchemists, and illusionists' if not charlatans enjoy suspicious popularity... This makes one wonder... Besides, their practices go back to the dawn of time and are unfairly trusted given the bases of their knowledge... It is imperative that they are excluded from the scope of modern and

⁵ The 'real' one would be in favour of homoeopathy...

'scientific' medicine. The placebo effect is obvious... It can only be obvious... It would even go through the psyche of the pig and sheep breeder to have an influence on the recovery of their animals - this was also said - to save them from certain epidemics which, after all, would be likely to be cured by themselves... (Sic!) It is amazing what one can put forward to try to be proved right at all costs! If this is not more credible than the cost issue - every penny counts, it was said at another point in the report - , this is not convincing... Who is irrational and not realistic here?

Moreover, in another field, no mention was made, if not in a very modest way by the fellow homoeopath - but not at all in the report - , of the research carried out by small units on tight budgets. The GIRI, Groupe International de Recherche sur les hautes dilutions, was not even mentioned. On the other hand, as usual, the never-changing 'water memory' was, even though it was shown that the results announced have not been reproducible and do not therefore prove anything.

It is important to stress here that, like all doctors, homoeopathic doctors are clinicians rather than researchers or physicists. They have neither their training nor their way of looking at things and should not suggest that they do... Like their fellow allopaths, unless they have had specific and further training, they cannot sustain a debate about fields in which they are not competent... They observe, note, report what is being put in place here or there, embark on a few clinical experiments but their views are those of people with practical experience rather than those of 'people of science'. To use again the example only mentioned by the fellow homoeopath, and which was as concrete as pragmatic, let us say that dismantling a device that produces music has never explained how the latter is capable of coming from it... It is no longer the role of the doctor busy with their day-to-day practice to try to study it as they had to in the past or to endeavour now to provide proof of the music produced.

Several elements should have been stressed and should be so if necessary in other spaces for debates :

As regards experiments :

The protocols used for the other medicines cannot be applied to the experiments about homoeopathic medicines...

As regards the pain affecting the ligaments and joints, one can compare the effects of Rhus Tox with a placebo only if **all the patients chosen have the signs of it in similitude** - otherwise the prescription of Rhus Tox will not have any more results than the placebo.

Differently from what happens with chemical treatments, even if the homoeopathic treatment has been recognised **unequivocally** in its unquestionably positive impact, it never gets the approval of scientists. The experiments are not even published. For instance, whereas its results had concluded that the homoeopathic treatment carried out in that mode was effective, a Swiss study on ADHD comparing the effects of Ritaline® with the effects of the homoeopathic treatment by nine criteria and on two groups of children could not be so. It was merely declared, as usual, that this in no way was proof that the homoeopathic medicines used were effective, which did not stop homoeopathy being reimbursed again under the pressure of the general public.

It is also useful to stress, since the example was mentioned by one of the panel members of the documentary, that if certain experiments about depression comparing the placebo with the homoeopathic treatment have not been conclusive, certain of those about the effect of Prozac® or of Deroxat® and that of the placebo have not been either... The difference in population - psychiatric hospital or medicine as practised in general practices in towns - led to the conclusion that there had been different reactions to the molecule according to the severity of the depression and the doses used to overcome it, hence the range of responses and uncertainty that persisted over the effectiveness of the two antidepressants - quite an understandable range of responses when one knows that the reactive depression of a Pulsatilla or Natrum mur subject bears very little relation to that of an Aurum or Psorinum one. Here, too, even when the diagnoses are the same, individual treatments are imperative...

In this respect, it is important to remind, given that it was said inappropriately by one of the participants, that **one cannot link a homoeopathic medicine to an illness**. This would be an antinomy. A homoeopathic medicine cannot be the medicine for cancer, manic-depressive psychosis... On the other hand it can accompany the treatment or treat certain of the symptoms on condition that they show similitude to the substance that is proposed to them in a mirrored way.

As regards certain elements concerning the core of the controversy and related to the fundamental concepts inherent in homoeopathy.

As the organism is capable of finding in itself strength for its recovery, **it seems important to say that the homoeopathic medicine contributes to its activation** by making it possible for the life force to develop. This is worth repeating to the advocates of the 'not indispensable medicine' or of the placebo effect alone of many substances used in 'bobologie'.

If, for the moment, it does not seem possible to determine what way the genius of the homoeopathic medicine takes in its pharmacological aspect, **one cannot conclude and accept that the homoeopathic medicine is only a placebo**. One should only content oneself with adding that, in the present state of knowledge, one cannot express an opinion on that issue.

Unless it is updated by an irrefutable demonstration, **the famous 'water memory'** should be **forgotten about once and for all and left out**. Its non-reproducible aspect and the conditions mentioned for its highlighting do not permit one to refer to it in any way whatever. **It is necessary for homoeopathic doctors to refuse to accept once and for all that**, in the present state of affairs, **any reference to it is made in any way whatever**. This could only reinforce the charlatanistic and deceitful aspect linked to their practice.

On the other hand it may be helpful to **remind** if only for information that, for the time being, **the hypotheses mentioned by Professors Madeleine Bastide and Agnès Lagache have not been invalidated and work on high dilutions is under way**. This can only widen the scope of knowledge and give a less deleterious - and, as many participants in the report hoped, more constructive - twist to the debates and exchanges.

One should also bear in mind that 'All irrational people may be "rational people" who have not found their grid' and be careful not to be prejudiced. Perhaps it is by having the

humility to keep in mind that 'the other facing us' may, through their difference, also contribute to the furthering of knowledge that, perhaps, ignorance will decrease one day.⁶

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⁶ Translated by Pascale Tempka