'THE STARS ARE LIVING BEINGS OF KEEN INTELLIGENCE AND EXTREMELY RAPID MOTION.'(1)

'IT WILL BE A PROPERTY OF A LIVING-CREATURE TO BE COMPOUNDED OF SOUL AND BODY.'(2)

'THE SUBSTANCE OF A THING IS ITS ESSENCE.'(3)



ARISTOTLE

God, soul and substance: Aristotle and Homoeopathy

By Peter Morrell

KEY TERMS

Essence, Aristotle, soul, substance, nature, holism, totality, vital force, similars, resonance, reductionism, materialism, mechanism, Hahnemann.

Introduction

The basis for this article lies partly in my previous articles about philosophical connections to Hahnemann in German Idealism, most notably Kant and Schelling. After completing those articles, it became clear that there are several aspects about homoeopathy that go further back in the history of philosophy that might be profitably explored. These include potency energy and the vital force. These two concepts, which are central to the theory of homoeopathy, resonate with ancient notions concerning the nature of substance and with the idea of the soul. Although many philosophers have written on these topics, they can both ultimately be traced back to the ancient Greeks, and especially to Plato and Aristotle. On delving into this matter more deeply it seemed to me that Aristotle had many important things to say about these topics and so the focus of this article mainly falls on his ideas.

Preamble

Probably from the beginning of life there have always been two ways to obtain knowledge and understanding about the world and ourselves. First, by simple observation of the tangible and visible world we live in, which is often termed empirical knowledge. Second, through thought and reasoning often termed the metaphysical or rationalist method. (4) Of course, in everyday life we all use both methods.

However, these two methods of gaining knowledge often seem to occupy opposite ends of a spectrum with pure or strict empiricists at one end, who insist that everything we know must come to us through our senses. (5) These are often also called atomists and materialists who believe that nothing other than matter is real, for example, Locke and Hume, Ayer and Russell. (6) This is also the dominant view in modern science. (7) At the other end of this spectrum are devotees of '*the metaphysieo-dynamical mode*' of thinking, (8) who claim that only through intuition, thought and reason can we gain true knowledge and understanding. They also tend to accept the value of spiritual vision as another valid source of truth, life and reality existing alongside material substance. Examples here include Spinoza, Berkeley, Leibniz and Hegel. (9) Most people tend to be much nearer the centre of this spectrum, accepting both methods of enquiry as valid, but occasionally we find someone positioned mostly at one end or the other.

Hahnemann seems from the start to have been more of an empiricist: '*in Hahnemann empirical medicine found its Galen*', (10) being rooted mostly in observations of the world and ideas based thereon, for example his numerous observations about the actions of drugs and of the subtle details of sickness symptoms. His many provings of drugs also show that he was a very accomplished observer, *'being guided … not by reasoning, but by clinical experiment and observation*.' (11) Hahnemann was 'a *thoughtful physician and a good observer*', (12) *'his unrivalled powers of observation',* (13) tell us *'Hahnemann was a good observer'*. (14) But later in life he was led to see the validity of ideas

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in their own right and increasingly espoused decidedly metaphysical views about medicine and the organism. *'It was only at a much later period that Hahnemann made any pretensions to metaphysics.'* (15) *'Hahnemann provided an implicitly spiritual or metaphysical view of healing with references to the "spirit-like" activity of some medicines. He suggested that homoeopathic remedies enabled an inner vital spirit to combat illness.'* (16) Examples include his theories of disease, potency energy, miasms and vital force.

By contrast, Aristotle started off with strongly metaphysical views, largely derived from many years spent as *'a member of Plato's Academy'*. (17) These include the tripartite nature of the soul and transmigration (reincarnation) of the soul after death. (18) *'As far back as Plato we find the attempt to bring the three powers of the soul, which he considered hierarchically stratified, in relation to the arrangement of the body as to head, chest, and abdomen. Cuvier talks of a hierarchy in which the central nervous system, as the centre of the animal functions, occupies the highest level, the heart and the circulatory organs are centres for the vegetative system next below, and the lowest are the digestive organs that as the sources of matter and energy take care of the preservation of life.'* (19)

But for two years after leaving Plato's Academy, he embarked on a programme of empirical biological research on the island of Lesbos. (20) This work gave him a much deeper appreciation of the value of empirical observation: *'throughout Aristotle's work there is a constant interaction between his theoretical assumptions and the empirical data at his command.'* (21) Later in life he seemed to move towards the centre of the spectrum we have detailed, being neither an out-and-out atomist nor strongly metaphysical in his attitude, '*having charted, fully successfully in his view, a middle course'*. (22) Having mellowed somewhat, he rejected outright vitalism, Plato's tripartite soul theory and transmigration and accepted some of the materialist ideas of the atomists, *'such as Democritus's atomism, based solely on material particles.' (23) However, he remained 'dissatisfied with a purely atomistic-reductionist approach to the problems of biology.'* (24)

Aristotle

Aristotle was born in 384 BCE in Stagira, Macedonia; *'he came from a rich family'*. (25) Coming from a long line of physicians his father was physician to the king of Macedonia: *'the son of a physician and early exposed to biological science and medical practice'*. (26) He moved to Athens aged 17 and studied in Plato's Academy for twenty years, until Plato's death. (27) The headship of the Academy then passed not to Aristotle, as expected, but to one of Plato's nephews. At this point, possibly due to disappointment, Aristotle left Athens and lived for two years on the island of Lesbos in the eastern Aegean: *'he left Athens for Atarneus: he was thirty-seven, a philosopher and a scientist in his own right'*. (28) He also married at this point and had a daughter. (29)

While on Lesbos with *'his friend and pupil Theophrastus'*, (30) he studied the wildlife in and around its large lagoon, conducting numerous dissections of insects, crustaceans, fish and molluscs. (31) He was also the first to open a hen's egg and study the live development of the embryo: *'it is clear that he has taken care to observe the developing embryo in its living state'*. (32) Much of his biological work is recorded in five books on animals and another on plants. *'These works are scientific, in the sense that they are based on empirical research and attempt to organise and explain the observed phenomena. They are also all philosophical, in the sense that they are acutely self-conscious, reflective, and sy*stematically structured attempts to arrive at the truth of things.' (33) On his return to Athens he set up his own school called the Lyceum where he was active *'for thirteen years'*. (34) He then retired to the town of Chalcis where he died; *'the cause of his death was a stomach ailment (ulcer or cancer)*', (35) at the age of 62. *'Aristotle died of a stomach disease that had plagued him for several years.'* (36) *'Fleeing to his mother's homeland, Chalcis, on the island of Euboea, Aristotle died of a stomach illness in 322 BCE.'* (37) A plaque in Lesbos records his death as occurring on 7 March 322 BCE. (38)

Aristotle is unquestionably the most influential philosopher of all time: '*Aristotle was the most influential rhetorician in history'*. (39) Even though only about a fifth of his original writings have survived, *'Aristotle's surviving works amount to about one million words, though they probably represent only about one-fifth of his total output'*. (40) It is very clear from what has survived that he articulated interesting ideas on a very wide range of topics including politics, justice, poetry, language, the arts, ethics and knowledge (epistemology) including metaphysics. He wrote tracts on *'zoology, biology, botany; on chemistry, astronomy, mechanics, mathematics; on the philosophy of science and on the nature of motion and space and time; on metaphysics and the theory of knowledge.'* (41) He was also concerned with laying the foundations of logic and *'the nature of causation and explanation'.* (42) For many centuries and in all fields, his ideas were revered as the absolute foundation of all knowledge, and many became crystallised into dogmas.

His philosophy was also destined to become absorbed by Judaism, Islam and in Christianity, in each of which he was revered as the greatest philosopher. *'Aristotle was a one-man university, not only to his fellow Athenians, but also to Arabs, Jews, and medieval Europeans.'* (43) Examples from these three traditions include Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna.

> *'Christians, Muslims, and Jews claimed – and still claim – that humans have a special kind of soul, an eternal soul'*. (44)

In his writings, Aristotle's approach is consistently rigorous, systematic, detailed and analytical, much like a modern scientist: *'as the first systematic study of animals, the zoological treatises represent a formidable achievement'*. (45) He searches not just to gain knowledge, but also to explain, to find reasons, to unveil the deeper causes lying behind observed phenomena: *'Aristotle's outstanding characteristic was that he searched for causes. He was not satisfied merely to ask how-questions but was amazingly modern by asking also why-questions.'* (46) and also, to categorise and classify all forms of knowledge into various branches and sub-disciplines. He was a systematiser. *'Aristotle is traditionally*

celebrated as the father of the science of classification.' (47) In this respect, he is seen as the first true scientist and the first biologist and taxonomist. *'By any reckoning, Aristotle's intellectual achievement is stupendous. He was the first genuine scientist in history.'* (48) *'Aristotle placed a new and fruitful stress on the value of observation and classification.'* (49)

It is interesting to consider why he spent two years conducting biological research. Do they reveal a deeper aspect or offshoot of his philosophical work? After twenty years discussing ideas in Plato's Academy, it seems strange for him to then conduct empirical research for two whole years. Delighted with his dissections of animals, was he in fact searching for something more profound? Judging by his later comments on the nature of life and the soul, maybe he was searching for an answer to what a living thing is and what sets it apart from non-living matter? Dissection wonderfully opens up and reveals the inner workings of the body, but it probably leads to more questions than answers: any *'theory about what goes on inside a living organism must be tested against the observations arrived at by dissection'*. (50) What do the various organs do? Why are they shaped the way they are? What force holds the whole thing together? How and why are the parts arranged like they are? Why does the whole thing stop working when it dies? What is life and what is death?

Experimental science

The work of Galileo, Newton and Descartes soon spawned a materialistic and reductionist view of the world: *'Newton's reductionist concept of matter'*, (51) which has persisted to this day through its progeny: science and technology. The philosophical reactions against this system of scientific mechanism have been profound and enduring, most notably in Germany.

Reactions against '*the mathematico-mechanical mode of explication'*, (52) of Galileo, Bacon, Newton and Descartes first by Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz, then followed by Wolff, Kant, Fichte, Berkeley, Schelling, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, reveal a common thread in German and Continental philosophy that runs down to the present day. (53) *'The German natural philosophers such as Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (1747–1832) and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854) reacted strongly to the mechanistic-materialistic viewpoint taken by the philosophy of enlightenment. According to their view, thinking about the world as a machine was not so much wrong as it was irrelevant. It did not take account of the deeply organic aspect of nature, its internal vitality which was manifested in humans as mind and spirit.'* (54) These reactions were basically rejections of what were seen as forms of materialism and dualism that have separated God from man, man from nature, mind from body, spirit from substance, etc. and which deny any spiritual component of man, nature or the world. The 'dynamic philosophers had little patience for the Newtonian world mechanism', (55) for 'this *"essence of nature" cannot be dissected mechanistically into parts'*. (56)

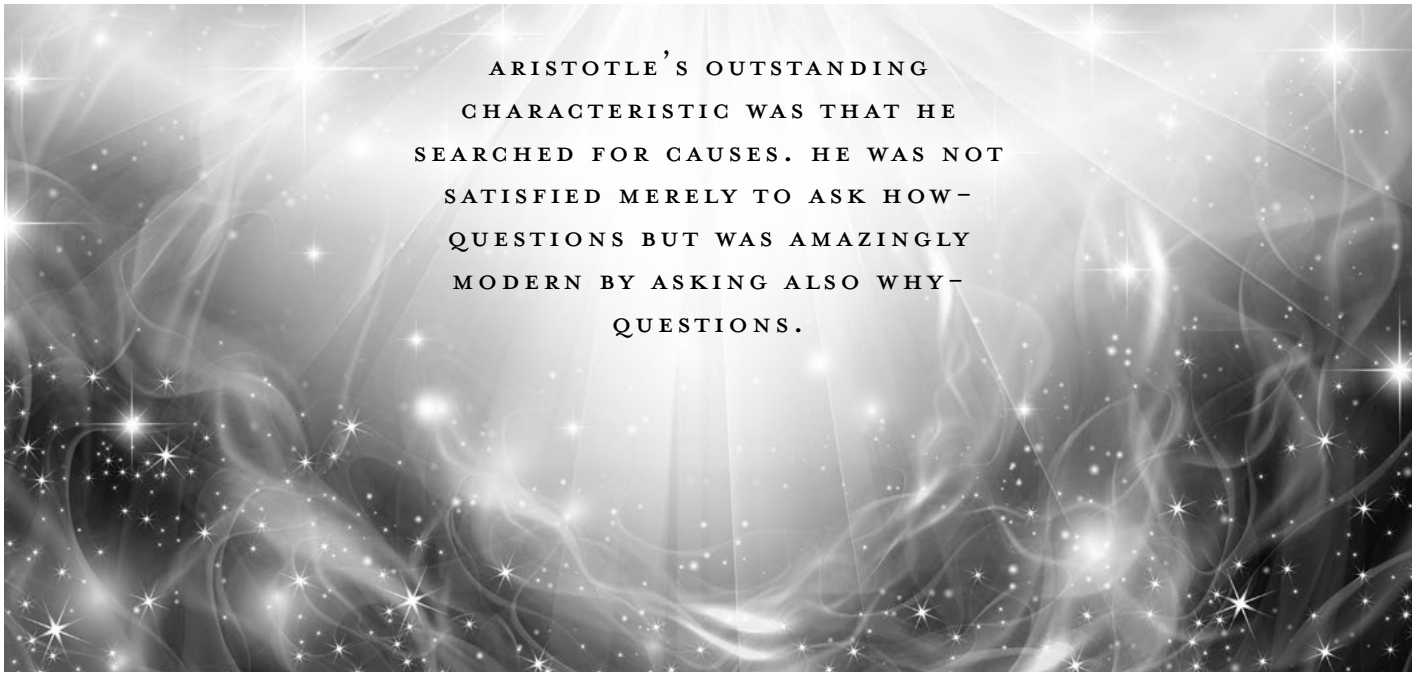
The work of Newton and Descartes sought to explain the world in purely mechanical and material terms. *'Descartes' mechanistic picture was an adequate generalisation of mechanics.'* (57) *'Newton's reductionist and abstract thinking'*, (58) was the view of those interpreters of Descartes and Newton who applied these scientific principles in Hahnemann's time: *'Cartesian mechanism, which is the ground for the theory of the man-machine'*. (59) The reactions of the above philosophers, therefore, were in large part to try and show that human life requires that we should acknowledge the reality and validity of spiritual and metaphysical ideas, and not just the material aspects, and so illustrating *'the ongoing conflict between vitalist and mechanist metaphysics'*. (60)

Hahnemann's century (c.1750–1850) was a century of dramatic developments in human thinking, in philosophy, in chemistry and in biology. He lived through one of the most dynamic and fruitful centuries. It was also a century of the emergence of the industrial era in which we still live. On the one side dramatic developments in our understanding and on the other side highly negative activities creating problems flowing from industrialisation and urbanisation, we are still dealing with today two centuries later. *'Under their "scientific" scrutiny the world became an isolated object, perceived by man, but without any explanation for the purpose of man and his knowing, without any room for the knower among the atoms in motion.'* (61)

After the findings of Galileo and Newton it was easy to argue that the universe consists solely of matter in motion, of matter and energy. *'Newton's philosophy was popularised by Voltaire and the other Enlightenment thinkers. Newton had evaded some philosophical problems by appeal to God, Hume, Locke and Kant pried off the Deity, leaving the situation with logical inconsistencies.'* (62) In the first phase of reactions against Bacon, Galileo, Locke, Descartes, thinkers like Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz were emphasising an overtly religious aspect to existence, as against *'the sceptical empiricism of Bacon, Hume, and Locke'*. (63) They were opposed to the materialistic idea that 'matter in motion' is all that exists in the universe. Such a reaction was repeated later by Berkeley: *'there is but one substance, and that is spiritual'*. (64) But that first tranche of thinkers saw matter and energy merely as aspects of the divine, aspects of God and are therefore essentially not physical but spiritual. Or as Spinoza puts it of One Substance, that is, God-Nature. (65) And so, in their view what we see as matter and energy are merely appearances or manifestations arising from the invisible yet underlying spiritual or divine reality of the universe.

In other words, they took the view that matter and energy — the visible and tangible realm — cannot be primary — a cause of itself — but must be secondary, a product or effect of a hidden spiritual cause, the divine.

This view is especially apparent in the works of Berkeley, Malebranche and Spinoza who all identify world and God or nature and God as inseparable aspects of One being or substance. (66) Reactions against Descartes and Newton also include those of Wolffe, Kant, Fichte and Schelling. (67) Schelling also echoes Spinoza's view of man and nature as one and he rejects the idea of a separation of man from the natural world: the *'mechanistic decomposition of systems*



into parts and operations'. (68) Kant extended that argument even further by claiming that ideas and metaphysics form the underlying ground of reality and that the visible and tangible realm of matter and energy is merely a state of appearances: 'spatiotemporal objects are appearances'. (69)

Therefore, it is possible to see that all these examples comprise reactions against the materialist, anti-spiritual ideas issuing forth from the work of Bacon, Galileo, Newton and Descartes and their scientific successors. It is fair to depict '*mechanistic, mainstream science as "analytic", "partitive", "dissecting", to indicate the method of approaching the study of its object (analysis, decomposition, breakdown in simple subunits or "components" to facilitate the analysis).'* (70) The German Idealists were rejecting the materialism that sets man apart from God and nature and that creates various forms of dualism, for example, man and God, mind and body, subject and object. They are maintaining the idea of a unity, of an integrated totality to man, the world, nature and God which rejects any views that might divide these into individual elements. (71) Hegel and Husserl also go in the same direction towards organic holism and integrated totality rather than emphasising a splitting apart or analysis that scientific work has continued to engage in. (72) Both were broadly anti-reductionist in their approach. But these later reactions against materialism and reductionism are increasingly secular for they lack an overt religious basis.

Hahnemann

Hahnemann strongly emphasised the central role of experience in his formulation and repeated revisions of homoeopathic ideas, in which he adopted an essentially experiential approach. '*Like Paracelsus, he denounced scholasticism, metaphysical medicine, and written tradition, concentrating his attention on experience and observation.' (73) Hahnemann also condemned reductionism as 'indulging in a like explanation-mania'* (74) It was purely experience that had taught Hahnemann to reject the authority of ideas, theories, traditions, textbooks, professors and great figures of the past. He dismissed them all as useless when measured against the power of experience. *'Hahnemann was guided by experience to which he trusted solely.'* (75) It seems fair to say, therefore, that the only authority that Hahnemann valued and recognised, in the end, was the authority of his own direct experience. In all of this he comes close to the views of Aristotle and Leonardo da Vinci. (76) And that is why he stated so many times that homoeopathy was constructed and formulated by experience and fundamentally is the 'medicine of experience': *'in 1806 he published the nearly ripe fruit of his experience in Hufeland's Journal, under the title The Medicine of Experience. This admirable article, full of interest even at the present day, presents a further development of the fundamental principle contained in the Essay on a New Principle (1796).'* (77)

Therefore, during Hahnemann's lifetime two strands of thought were being actively pursued: one overtly scientific and analytical, empirical, dualistic and broadly materialistic in its outlook, alongside another idealistic or metaphysical strand that takes a more holistic, multifaceted and all-encompassing and non-reductionist view and sees an invisible realm at work in the world, lying behind and underpinning the phenomenal and tangible realm of matter and energy. The latter tilts much more towards organic holism, the spiritual and metaphysical. These two strands are broadly Kantian in nature: noumenal and phenomenal. The later rejections by thinkers of materialist mechanism, for example, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, were more spiritual rather than religious in nature. *'Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries trends in science and philosophy led to a tug of war between vitalism and mechanism.'* (78) This involved the construction of credible arguments against materialism and mechanism rather than merely saying God underpins everything. Hahnemann and homoeopathy can be seen to partake of both of these central strands and approaches, although it remains debateable what part, if any, speculative metaphysics may have played in its early development: he wanted a medicine *'founded not on speculative guesses about the essence of disease, but exclusively on experiment and observation'.* (79)

Substance and essence

Three of the main themes in philosophy down the ages were self, world and God. But another key element not to be overlooked involves substance, essence and resonance. These play an important part both in homoeopathy and in ancient alchemy as well as esotericism. The notion of substance has a long and complicated history, stretching back to Aristotle and beyond him to the ancient Egyptians. The nature of substance has been a source of important speculation and ideas down the ages, such as attempts to explain the magical way matter can transform itself or reveal hidden depths like ores and metals which seem to reveal hidden essences somehow nested within otherwise very different substances.

Mining and geology in particular have spawned innumerable examples of the secret wonders that lie buried in the Earth's crust. To a certain extent homoeopathy undoubtedly connects with and builds on this tradition. Does it not seem that the 'therapeutic imprint' of a proving brings out and makes manifest the hidden and unique essence of a substance? If we accept that point as valid, then clearly homoeopathy can be traced back way beyond alchemy—arguably its most proximate cousin—into the esoteric traditions, and then to the distant mists of antiquity, for then it will be seen to resonate with the myths and legends surrounding the metaphysics of metals, gems and minerals. *'The ancients set great store on the magical qualities of precious stones.'* (80)



Since the advent of the age of chemistry and atoms, for example, the periodic table, the concept of matter or substance appears to have been 'settled,' and we seem to have lost contact with any appreciation of the enormous power, the enchantment and the often dramatic nature of many substances. If we think back to the impression various substances must have made on our ancestors, then we can perhaps begin to appreciate more fully the way their magical powers resonate deeply with us. *'Any … precious stone contains in itself a lapidific spirit.'* (81) Mercury, gold and sulphur, which can be found in their natural state, along with innumerable precious stones and colourful minerals, have always had a massive and enduring impact upon early humans. *'The ancient Britons manifestly set store on personal ornamentation with gold and precious stones.'* (82)

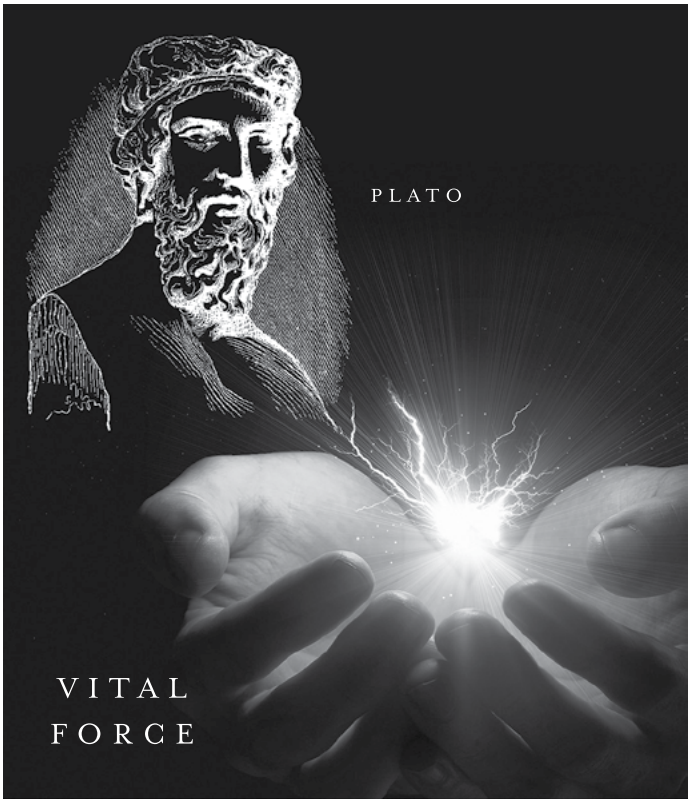
We do not revere gold, amber, rubies, diamonds and lapis lazuli for nothing; their allure is still just as powerful. *'A gemstone, or stone, is a singular, relatively rare, and precious mineral … These vibrating energies can be used for self-discovery, for healing, and for a more profound connection with the world of Spirit.'* (83) Ancient people spent enormous time and energy searching out and finding precious stones, attractive minerals and metal ores. They did this presumably because they regarded them so highly. *'How beautiful and how fruitful grow our relations with the mineral kingdom the moment that we discover that in precious stones dwell powers of attraction and repulsion entirely independent of their chemical elements. Those powers reveal to us a life in what otherwise would be dead – a life more enduring perchance than animal or vegetable life.'* (84)

Substances are often not what they seem to be and can transmute at any time into something radically new and surprising, they often seem quite fluid and unpredictable. This is one lesson from alchemy and the 'cookery' experiments of the early chemists. Roasting (calcination), filtering and distilling processes will often change a substance into another form: metal extraction, evaporation of seawater, wine, vinegar and the making of spirits provide good examples. (85) Additionally, many natural processes, seasonal change, growth and flowering of plants, emergence of insects, germination of seeds, hatching of eggs, etc. also show that a so-called and consistent looking 'substance' can sometimes transmute magically into a very different form. Such changes must have mystified and enchanted ancient people and confounded their attempts to make sense of the world around them, or to classify things in a reliable and predictable manner.

The idea of essence (what Plato calls Form) is basically the proposal that there must be some internal immaterial something, hallmark or 'imprint' that lies hidden within a material substance and lies behind and maintains the 'continuity' of a substance. Thus, the essence is what is invisibly carried along and is present in the substance no matter what changes it might undergo. Thus, the essential 'frogness' of a frog is present in the egg, in the tadpole and in the adult. (86) The essential 'flyness' of a fly must be present in the egg, the maggot and the fly. Aristotle argues for precisely this type of continuity of essence, and it can also be seen in homoeopathy, for example in materia medica, where all salts of the same metal seem to bear similar features and carry the hallmark, as it were, of that metal. (87)

This notion of substance and essence originates with Aristotle, is adapted from Plato, and the idea persisted for two millennia. (88) It was therefore the accepted prevailing metaphysical foundation of knowledge about substance before and during the lifetime of Hahnemann. In this respect,

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we might almost say that it forms the foundation – as far as that can be known – of his homoeopathic ideas regarding the nature of substance. (89)

Connections to homoeopathy mostly revolve around the notion of the nature of a potentised drug. As the material atoms are stripped away during the potentisation process, so all that is left is the invisible imprint or essence of the substance. (90) It is also implicit in the classes of remedies such as calcium salts, kali salts or magnesium salts, where a whole class of drugs are deemed to share certain features in their provings and therapeutic properties because they all contain the same element. Kent especially emphasises this idea in his writings, for example in his comments about various aluminium salts and some silicates, but it can also be found in Hahnemann. Examples include, Magnesia carbonica, Calcarea silicata, Kali silicatum, Alumina silicate. (91) Our materia medica is packed with examples, where we find many salts of the same metal. We see several aluminium, calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium and ammonium salts, for example, each possessing what might be seen as subtly different variations of the same basic metal. Their symptom pictures usually show some important similarities

Souls and vital force

According to Aristotle, the vegetative soul is an immaterial ghost or blueprint that forms an information framework for the assemblage of the material form of the body, mineral, etc. This fits neatly with Hahnemann's concept of the vital force as the creator, maintainer and protector of the organism and its homoeostasis. Even Hahnemann's vital force (Lebenskraft) could be further broken down into various aspects relating to its different functions. These are all terms that can be used to identify some of the key aspects of what Hahnemann calls the Lebenskraft or vital force or dynamis. It is so interesting that Aristotle expounded on very similar ideas over 2300 years ago!

Plato and Aristotle on the soul

Plato uses the motile power of an organism to illustrate his famous doctrine that the soul is a self-mover: life is self-motion, and the soul brings life to a body by moving it: motion being a distinguishing feature of all living organisms: *'all living things move themselves, the motion is motion in respect of place'*. (92) Aristotle accepted Plato's theory and conceived motion in the world as resulting from the work of the invisible and immaterial gods. (93) In this view, all motion thus has its origin in divine intervention (the prime mover concept). *'The doctrine of the unmoved mover, for example, was the outcome of successive attempts to give a satisfactory account of the movements of the heavenly bodies.'* (94) By analogy, living things must likewise be imbued with an invisible and immaterial soul, possessing a power like that of the gods, allowing them to move by themselves, of their own volition, which inanimate objects cannot do: *'some things in the world are always motionless'*. (95) This aspect of Aristotle's philosophy is tied up with many other aspects of his work, such as the soul, breathing, animals and the human being.

Tripartite soul

Plato divided the soul into three parts: the logistikon (reason), the thymoeides (spirit), and the epithymetikon (appetite). The logos or logistikon, located in the head, is related to reason and regulates the other parts; the thymus or thumoeides, located near the chest region, is related to spirit. the eros or epithumetikon, located in the stomach, is related to one's desires and appetites. Plato argued that plants have a vegetative soul, animals vegetative and appetite soul but only humans have those plus a rational soul. Aristotle agrees but holds that they all have all three in some respects and can feel and rationalise to some degree. *'In his promulgation of a tripartite soul, or anima, in all living things, Aristotle gives life to a general idea of vitalism in the Western mind. One also finds clear elements of a vitalist perspective in the Hippocratic and Galenic medical traditions.'* (96)

Aristotle modified Plato's theory in favour of seeing the body and soul as united aspects of one being, a single soul-body but with multiple faculties. He wanted to dispense with Plato's dualistic notion of soul and body and present it as a unity of soul-body. However, he often referred to the 'vegetative soul' that is involved in body maintenance, growth and reproduction. He still wrote about the vegetative soul concerned with nutrition and growth, the rational soul concerned with thought, and the sensitive soul concerned with perception and motion. That is not such a long walk from Plato's original ideas. *'Aristotle attributed to the earliest embryo a vegetative existence animated or informed by a "nutritive" soul; to the later embryo, resembling a little animal, a "sensitive" soul; to the formed foetus, recognisably human, a "rational" or "intellectual" soul, encapsulating not replacing the other two.'* (97)

It doesn't make a lot of difference whether the soul is one or three, it has a range of properties and functions in both of these philosophies about it. One part of it is unconscious, involuntary, survival-motivated, self-preserving, healing, concerned with growth, emotion and sensation along with the powers of motion, nutrition and reproduction. It does not

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matter very much whether plants have all three souls or just one or two, again the broad list of functions seems to apply to all living things. They all move, grow, feed, sensate, respire and reproduce, such are the defining features of a living organism.

Decline of Aristotle

Only with the expansion of experimental science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were some of his ideas disproved and his influence as 'the' philosopher began to wane. Aristotle's ideas about the spontaneous generation of animals were mainstream, until they were disproved by some experiments in the 1660s and early 1700s, such as the experiment by Francesco Redi (1668) to discredit spontaneous generation theory, and Lazzaro Spallanzani (1768) who showed that boiling kills ferments, and that both eggs and sperm are needed for fertilisation. (98) *'It was in 1550 that Aristotle's reputation began to wane, and by 1700 he was, as a zoologist, all but forgotten.'* (99)

Goethe and his ilk continued to hold what are now seen as irregular beliefs about embryo development and many scientific contemporaries of Hahnemann such as Blumenbach and Humboldt were vitalists and followed Goethean science. (100) Goethe did not align himself that closely with the Romantic movement (101), yet, like them, he was very dismissive of Newton's ideas about light, colour and mechanics. (102) He was broadly vitalistic in his view of living things, as were many German intellectuals of that period. (103) So, there is a bit more to include about the vitalistic science of Hahnemann's day that was largely unique to Germany. There is also Wöhler's synthesis of Urea in 1828 (104) which some historians of science have depicted as the 'death of vitalism'. (105) Berzelius believed that *'the romantics, the latest speculative philosophers … ridicule the atomic theory … they themselves are dynamists; they have constructed a dynamic system … based on the idea that nature lives by spiritual forces, that matter is a product of the striving of two opposing forces in opposite directions'.* (106)

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... the similarity between them lies in their work having a mix of empirical and metaphysical – strands that they both certainly shared ...



HAHNEMANN

Hahnemann and Aristotle

Hahnemann and Aristotle seem to differ in certain ways despite many similarities. For example, Aristotle's dissections and biological investigations were probably motivated mostly to prove some philosophical concepts and thus they might be seen as merely an extension of his philosophical work rather than showing any solid commitment to empirical work in its own right. *'Dissection again provides the evidence to refute those who held that the sex of the embryo is determined by the side of the womb it is on, and the view that some birds copulate through their mouths.'* (107) After spending twenty years in Plato's Academy, it must have been very refreshing and uplifting to spend two whole years out in nature catching and dissecting fish, birds, squids, insects and tortoises. (108) However, being steeped in Platonic metaphysics for twenty years probably instilled in him a quest to answer some puzzling questions about the living world. *'Broadly speaking, Aristotle's appeal to the results of dissection support two different sorts of claims: [i] positive support for generalisations about the internal anatomy of wide classes of organisms, sometimes of a comparative nature and [ii] evidence against claims made about some feature of internal anatomy by Aristotle's predecessors … it is clear that he was a skilled dissectionist.'* (109)

His extensive biological writings show, among other things, that he wanted to know what living things are, how they are constructed, what are their parts, how do they move and reproduce and what innate force or power distinguishes them from inert, non-living matter: *'meaning that, like an animal, the heaven has a soul distinct from its body. It means only that, like an animal, it is moved by a principle of motion which is within itself, but that inner principle of motion is the nature of the body itself, to which life and motion are congenital'.* (110) His biological essays cover all these topics. Perhaps he had been nursing such questions for some time and decided the only way to find out was to get out there and get his hands dirty. Being born into a family of physicians to the king of Macedonia probably also meant that in his childhood he had received some basic grounding in anatomy and physiology, and he may possibly have indulged an interest in plants and animals at an early age: *'his lifelong interest in biology presumably found its formative influences in the practices of the medical guild to which his father belonged'.* (111) His later biological work on the island of Lesbos might then be seen as a revisitation to a much earlier passion, rather than a totally new venture.

By contrast to Aristotle, we might conclude that Hahnemann has most of this the other way round being possessed of a very firm commitment to the practical task of medicine, involving practical, empirical work and only an ancillary philosophical or metaphysical bent coming in a long way behind as a possible offshoot of his strong empirical grounding. But the similarity between them lies in their work having a mix of empirical and metaphysical – strands that they both certainly shared. They both also employed *'acute and detailed observation'*, (112) and a practical, empirical bent. They also indulged an interest in interpretation, speculation and theorising about what they had observed, but this was probably much stronger in Aristotle than in

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Hahnemann, who repeatedly condemned in his writings excessive theorising and speculative metaphysics: *'he hated the speculative theories of Galen, the pedantic scholasticism of the medical schools, which followed merely the letter and not the spirit of the doctrine'*. (113) Hahnemann was also experimental, for example, the provings, but Aristotle apparently never conducted experiments. *'Aristotle was not doing the experiments that would sustain his statements.'* (114) *'Aristotle never tried experiments.'* (115) *'Aristotle never attempted to establish appropriate experimental conditions or to make controlled observations.'* (116)

For the reasons stated above, we might also say that the alleged underlying motivations of each must have affected the conclusions they arrived at. If Aristotle's motivation was primarily philosophical, for example, then it matters little that in his biological research he got some anatomical and physiological facts wrong – only very few in fact – according to later investigations. But how they might affect the conclusions he comes to regarding the soul or the workings of an animal on a metaphysical level needs to be explored further. Likewise, for Hahnemann, his metaphysical ramblings are definitely of secondary importance to his work in medicine, for manifestly medicine is primarily a practical endeavour and questions about how or why homoeopathy works, or what the vital force is, for example, must be of secondary importance compared to the therapeutic realities of homoeopathy in its practical application for curing patients of sickness.

Discussion

Considering Hahnemann's own interest in and contributions to chemistry we might imagine there is a link from chemistry to homoeopathy. *'The exactitude and soundness of his chemical labours, which procured him a wide fame, were recognised by such chemists as Berzelius, Trommsdorff, and others.'* (117) Chemistry was only first emerging during Hahnemann's lifetime and to which he himself contributed at least in part. For Hahnemann *'chemistry was of profound interest'*. (118) he occupied himself *'solely with chemistry and writing'*. (119) He died (1843) before the periodic table (1869) had been established, for example, but he must have been aware of atomic masses as per John Dalton's table of elements (1801). (120) But it seems that the development of chemistry might have been largely irrelevant because knowledge of chemical structure and composition would not have damaged the centuries-old and long-established prevailing ideas about the nature of substance and essence which maintained that every substance is totally unique and carries a unique essence that forms the non-molecular or immaterial cause at the root of the substance itself. This is an Aristotelian idea, which had been slightly modified first by Thomas Aquinas and then by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. (121)

'Aquinas takes the opportunity to introduce a new level of "composition" in created things beyond that established by Aristotle of matter and form. His guide here is Avicenna, whose notion of "essence in itself" gave him the key premise in the argument to a new level of composition: "every essence or quiddity can be understood without knowing anything about its existing [esse]".' (122)

Homoeopathy has never accepted any material or molecular theory for the action of potentised drugs on the organism (123) and so developments in chemistry would not have impacted upon the prevalent views within homoeopathy about substance, essence or the provings of drugs or indeed their therapeutic effects in homoeopathy. Therefore, we might say that chemistry as we know it and homoeopathy have run on entirely separate and parallel tracks that have never really converged at any point. And that seems to make the entirety of chemical knowledge irrelevant to homoeopathy. On that basis alone it might be said that homoeopathy does not need chemistry to find reasons and has felt perfectly content to ignore it throughout its history.

Therefore, any implications of chemical theory about the nature of substance, emerging during Hahnemann's lifetime, have probably not been relevant to the development of homoeopathy, on the basis that they have both studiously ignored each other and held entirely different conceptions of matter and substance. This also explains the situation with homoeopathy vis-à-vis science that still prevails to this day, even though some homoeopaths have attempted to construct theories in chemical terms, of what a potentised drug might be and how it might affect organism functioning. (124) But the mismatch between the two paradigms appears to be permanently unbridgeable.

Non-identical minerals that are called variants of the same chemical formula suggest a mismatch between the mineral as it is and its reduction into a chemical name – for example, agate, amethyst, quartz and citrine which are all classed as SiO2 even though they are radically different in colour and crystalline form. Therefore, this habit of classifying things is misleading and prevents us from seeing things as they actually are. It leads us into making simplistic judgements about things, objects and substances. It is well known in homoeopathy that very 'similar' plants or remedies produce totally different symptom pictures in their provings. Closely related drugs in the plant families Ranunculaceae, and Solanaceae do not have similar drug pictures: *'Perhaps, however, botanical affinity may allow us to infer a similarity of action? This is far from being the case, as there are many examples of opposite, or at least very different powers, in one and the same family of plants, and that in most of them.'* (125) Therefore, we might say forms that are similar but different probably possess different essences. This point tends to dismiss the idea of a universal essence among classes of similar things.

One important connection between homoeopathy and Aristotle seems to lie in the whole concept of essences. The 'secret something' that is left when a drug is potentised – after the atoms and molecules have been stripped away by serial dilution – seems to correspond to what Aristotle termed the essence of a substance. And arguably it is this immaterial and insubstantial 'essence' that creates the symptoms in

a proving and that rouses into activity the vital self-healing powers of the organism when the potentised drug is given to a patient. And each substance, each drug, therefore, has its own unique essence which is different from every other essence, and this explains why one drug cannot replace another for each creates its own unique drug picture. This essence might be construed as being close to Plato and Aristotle's vegetative soul of plants or minerals?

A formative force present in the drug causes the symptoms in the proving and the cure in the patient. This 'ghost of the substance' is purified and concentrated by potentisation as the molecules are stripped away by the serial dilution process. By about 1818–9 (126) by which time Hahnemann had been practising homoeopathy for some 25 years, and according to the mountain of evidence from his empirical practice, he could see that there exists a powerful analogy between the drug and the patient. The patient has a Substanzgeist or Lebenskraft or Lebensprincip, a vital force that powers the organism and which corresponds to the Substanzgeist of the remedy. This immaterial and insubstantial Geist kind of defines and holds together the material substance, and is, in Aristotelian terms its essence. Hence his belief in a Substanzgeist parallel and corresponding to the Lebenskraft or vital force of the organism. The two concepts fit together so well, so neatly and are entirely confluent with each other. *'Hahnemann's empirical observations led him to postulate that the exponentially diluted homoeopathic remedy possesses an immeasurable spiritual, dynamic power.'* (127) and that the drugs therefore *'needed to be extremely diluted and spiritualised'*. (128)



And in an important respect the homoeopathic consultation is very much about the matching up of two essences: the essence of a specific patient and the essence of a single drug. It is the matching up of the idiosyncratic features of an individual patient with the idiosyncratic features of a single drug. This process relies on identifying the specific features – the essence of the patient's suffering, their multifarious symptom totality – and finding a drug that has the closest match of similar features in its proving symptoms. Therefore, we might conclude that essences are a very integral part of homoeopathic practice. In this respect, it becomes clear that knowledge of Aristotle's theory of substance and essence helps us to formulate a clearer understanding of what homoeopathy is and how it seems to work.

Hahnemann on vital force

However, when we look at the vital force in homoeopathy, we see a number of useful parallels. It is broadly comparable to Plato's thymos and eros combined, and to Aristotle's vegetative soul.

Hahnemann describes the vital force as being *'unintelligent, unreasoning and improvident'*, (129) and having a *'life-preserving power'*, (130) being *'the instinctive, irrational, unreasoning vital force subject to the organic laws of our body, which is ordained by the Creator to maintain the functions and sensations of the organism in marvellously perfect condition'*, (131) that it is *'implanted in our organism'*, (132) it has *'the automatic and unintelligent vital powers'*, (133) and is also *'energetic'*. (134)

By summary, Hahnemann depicts the vital force as instinctive, automatic, irrational, unintelligent, unreasoning and energetic but also the maintainer of the bodily functions and sensations. It therefore equates quite closely to the two non-rational parts of the soul of Plato and Aristotle. Kent calls it *'the vital force or vice regent of the soul, that is, the limbs or soul stuff, the formative substance which is immaterial'*. (135) *'The life substance within the body is the viceregent of the soul, and the soul in turn is also a simple substance.'* (136) *'… the true holding together of the material world is performed by the simple substance … immaterial substance … which is endowed with formative intelligence.'* (137)

Hahnemann goes on to say that it is this vital force that responds to the potentised drug and that incites changes in the organism towards health. It is also the vital force that is affected by drugs in provings and so producing the unpleasant sensations we call proving symptoms.

And finally, he maintains that the causes of sickness reside in the vital force as derangements (138) that prevent it from maintaining a healthy symptom-free organism. Hahnemann does not go so far as to say that the vital force is an immaterial entity, but that idea is probably implicit because of it being soul-like, being directly influenced by immaterial (potentised) drugs and that it is what distinguishes a living being from inanimate matter. We might also choose to equate the rational soul to the conscious

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mind working through the voluntary nervous system, and the vital force as the vegetative soul and operating through the autonomic nervous system.

Vitalism

The so-called 'death of vitalism' requires deeper consideration. *'In 1828, Friedrich Wöhler stumbled on an abiological reaction to produce urea. This began a long series of experiments demonstrating the lifefree production of complex organic compounds.'* (139) When Wöhler synthesised urea in the laboratory the implication it had was that organic and inorganic substances were not so very different after all. But was this really the death of vitalism? For millennia, it had been assumed that living things are fundamentally different from inert matter like rocks and minerals. In other words, they were totally different types of substance. So far, so good. This belief also involved the additional belief that organic substances can only be formed in living things. This is of course an optional secondary belief. Therefore, the synthesis of an organic compound like urea from inorganic molecules, was thought to be impossible because of this add-on secondary belief. *'He heated an aqueous solution of ammonium chloride and silver cyanate, both inorganic compounds and – to his surprise – obtained urea, an "organic" compound.'* (140)

Thus, when Wöhler succeeded in synthesising urea, the scientific community gasped in shock that organic matter was not so very different after all. But of course, when we look at living versus non-living things, we find that although their chemical composition is very different (organic versus inorganic) and certainly divides them, but it is probably even more important to appreciate how the molecules behave. In a living organism, not only are the sugars and proteins, etc. chemically different from minerals like silica or limestone, but they are engaged in the complex, ***dynamic*** and organised activity we call metabolic life processes. Such processes are ***never*** found in non-living substances. It is actually this dynamic activity that holds much greater significance, and which more fully distinguishes a living thing from inert matter. It is also what distinguishes a living from a dead organism. Something that was, incidentally, of great interest to Aristotle.

Therefore, we might conclude that a living organism can still conceivably contain a vital force that binds, maintains and protects the organism and that is involved in organising and regulating all the biochemical processes of life in the organism. And so, we can also see that the mere synthesis of urea, glucose, amino acids, etc. in the laboratory does not of itself invalidate the vitalism concept. It merely shows that living or organic matter can be treated chemically and manipulated just like the matter of the non-living mineral world. It does not disprove vitalism.

Comparisons

Regarding motivation, it seems highly likely that Aristotle had some issues with the Platonism in which he had been steeped for twenty years, such as about the soul and transmigration, which stood in conflict with the materialist ideas of 'atomists' like Democritus (460–370 BCE) and Empedocles (494–434 BCE). (141) Maybe he decided he had to investigate living things for himself to try to resolve some of these issues.

It looks highly likely that after leaving the Academy his chief complaint with Platonism concerned the nature of the soul and his biological work looks like an attempt to resolve this matter. What it led to was a new phase of his philosophical life where he gained a new respect for empirical observation that he now feels must be used to back up and prove theories by the accumulation of evidence. (142) In other words, at that point he deviated widely from the Platonic idea that simply saying how the world is because you think it to be so is sufficient. By contrast, one must locate and identify actual evidence in the world of experience to support a point of view.

All this represents a new phase in philosophy of which Aristotle is the founder. It is less metaphysical and speculative compared to Platonism, being more firmly grounded in observation, evidence, proof and the search for causes that underpin observed phenomena. (143) His biological writings are clearly much more than merely descriptive, for he repeatedly attempts to explain what he sees, to find underlying causes and to engage his speculative philosophising impulse with real-world observations. And it is this coupling together of speculation with observation that marks Aristotle out as the pioneer of a new science and a new philosophy. (144) And that is most probably one of the reasons he stood as an absolute authority in the world of knowledge for over 1700 years.

Hahnemann

With Hahnemann it is a different story. Although he had been exposed to esoteric sources and medical alchemy in Sibiu it probably did not chime with his thinking at that time and its possible influence upon him is hard to estimate, especially seeing that he became an entirely conventional physician and practised for about eight years before giving it up around 1785. *'Hahnemann was one of the most learned men of his generation in matters medical, chemical and pharmacological.'* (145) He abandoned it in disgust because in his experience it simply didn't cure patients. *'Hahnemann, perceiving the utter uselessness of old pharmacology, commenced by throwing overboard all this visionary science, and, turning to the true source of observation and experiment, applied himself to the testing of the physiological action on the healthy human organism of simple drugs, examined singly and separately.'* (146) For a time, he then found consolation in chemistry and translation work: he occupied himself *'solely with chemistry and writing'*. (147) For Hahnemann, 'chemistry was of profound interest'. (148) But he never gave up hope of returning to medicine at some point and clearly continued to research why it didn't work.

His abandonment of medicine and his later condemnation of all its methods are also very revealing. Why did he condemn all its methods such as bleeding, purging, use of herbal drugs and mixed drugs, clysters, etc? He made clear that: *'an eight years' practice had sufficiently disgusted him with the medical art, and he had seen quite enough of the deplorable results brought about by the systems of Sydenham, Hoffmann, Boerhaave, Gaubius, Stoll, Cullen, Quarin, and others … that shortly after my marriage I completely abandoned practice, and scarcely treated anyone for fear of doing him harm.'*. (149) The natural conclusion we might draw is that he had personally tried all these methods himself and found them to

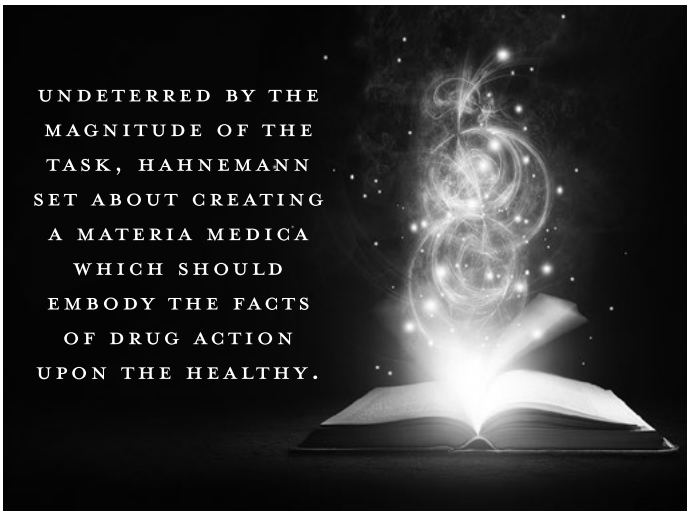
be non-curative and/or creating dangers for the patient. In the Organon, he explains that he had been searching for an ideal form of medicine which he defines as one that gently cures the patient but leaves no ill effects at all. Therefore, we may assume that none of the prior or extant methods, that he repeatedly condemned, conformed to this definition.

He rejected all theories of disease based on material factors as ludicrous and wrong. Why? He did not believe that physical and chemical factors were the root causes of sickness, and he did not believe that physical and chemical procedures could safely cure sickness: *'diseases are not and cannot be … mechanical or chemical alterations of the material substance of the body, and are not dependent on a material morbific substance, but they are merely spiritual dynamic derangements of the life.'* (150)

He concluded that such procedures were at best only capable of providing palliation and relief of sickness symptoms, which was only ever short-lived and never permanent: *'From pure experience and the most careful experiments that have been tried, we learn that the existing morbid symptoms, far from being effaced or destroyed by contrary medicinal symptoms like those excited by the antipathic, enantiopathic, or palliative methods, they, on the contrary, reappear more intense than ever, after having for a short space of time undergone apparent amendment.'* (151) This accurately summarises his entire attitude to all forms of prior and contemporary medicine. He makes it very clear that he had arrived at these conclusions from what he repeatedly professed to rely on the most: experience.

Eventually he found in the literature that some drugs that had been recorded to cure a patient of a specific condition could also produce similar symptoms in the healthy. This link proved to be a crucial turning point in his long sought-after return to medicine. From this simple clue he then went on to study Stoerck and in due course adopted his proving method. *'Hahnemann credited his teacher Quarin as the source of his medical capabilities. Quarin's teacher, Stoerck, advocated testing drugs for their like effects'.* (152) *'Baron Stoerck was the first to introduce this mode of ascertaining the action of remedies … Hahnemann borrowed it from Stoerck.'* (153)

The convergence of all these factors then allowed him to embark on what he saw as a programme to reform the old materia medica and create a brand new one based solely on drugs proved on healthy persons: *'Undeterred by the magnitude of the task, Hahnemann set about creating a materia medica which should embody the facts of drug action upon the healthy.'* (154) He was then placed on track to create a safe, harmless and truly curative medical system by his own definition.



We might say Hahnemann and Aristotle faced similar dilemmas between conflicting ideologies: atomism/materialism versus metaphysics. They faced similar problems but solved them differently. While Aristotle came from a background where for twenty years he had been steeped in metaphysics – courtesy of Socrates and Plato – Hahnemann by contrast started out as a conventionally-trained, that is, empirical materialist doctor, but later veered increasingly towards metaphysics: vital force, potency energy and miasms: *'the period of transition from physics to metaphysics in Hahnemann's teachings, the decline of the scientific, the dawn of the mystical the decline of the demonstrable, the dawn of the dogmatic'*. (155)

In Hahnemann's case, his abandonment of the materialist medical teachings in which he had been trained flowed from his finding that those teachings were entirely wanting when applied in practice. *'Hahnemann, perceiving the utter uselessness of old pharmacology, commenced by throwing overboard all this visionary science, and, turning to the true source of observation and experiment, applied himself to the testing of the physiological action on the healthy human organism of simple drugs, examined singly and separately.'* (156) Therefore, such a profound disappointment inspired his search for alternative methods and alternative ideas about sickness and its cure. And, because the diluted drugs he ended up using work by some mysterious process of engagement with the organism, he was obliged to formulate new ideas that could begin to explain their action, which led to him adopting more nebulous theories of sickness and cure and more nebulous ideas about the nature of a

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living organism. (157) Hence his move into vitalism. For both Hahnemann and Aristotle, we can therefore see it was largely their experience in the world that shaped their changing views.

Although Aristotle's biological studies may well have been designed to solve the issues he had about the soul and how it engages with and controls the body, yet ultimately it would seem that his numerous dissections probably yielded nothing really significant that even came close to solving that problem. If he really had been searching for answers as to what life is, what the soul is and how it engages with and operates the 'levers' of the bodily machine, he was probably very disappointed. Dissections of the material body do not reveal many answers regarding the nature of the soul or how it functions. But then, how could the material body reveal much about such an immaterial entity?



Plato it seems indulged an unrestrained theorising tendency and although Aristotle still theorised all the time, unlike Plato, it was tempered by observation and the search for empirical evidence to support his ideas. It seems that by retaining a toehold on metaphysics, Aristotle ended up in a middle ground between the atomism of Democritus and Empedocles and the metaphysics of Plato. For both Aristotle and Hahnemann, the driving force and the final arbiter of their ideas seems to have been the same: experience in the world. *'Hahnemann brought light into the interregnum of darkness and chaos; in place of rude empiricism, he introduced rationally scientific experience and observation'*. (158) While Aristotle probably found that you can still be an empiricist without being a materialist or atomist, and so, some metaphysical views – such as an immaterial soul in a material body – are still viable concepts, Hahnemann by contrast probably found the reverse: you can be somewhat metaphysical and still acknowledge the value of empirical observation. They boil down to almost the same thing.

Conclusions

Ultimately, it doesn't much matter what Aristotle meant by soul and essence because in the centuries following his demise these ideas took hold regardless of their relative philosophical merits, or otherwise, and they entered the mainstream of western culture. These potent ideas resonated with people and became absorbed, having found a useful niche in human consciousness. And that was the case in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, for in all these religious traditions Aristotle's ideas were embraced and cherished for many centuries: '*translated in the fifth century of the Christian era into the Syriac language by the Nestorians who fled to Persia, and from Syriac into Arabic four hundred years later, his writings furnished the Mohammedan conquerors of the East with a germ of science which, but for the effect of their religious and political institutions, might have shot up into as tall a tree as it did produce in the West; while his logical works, in the Latin translation which Boethius, "the last of the Romans," bequeathed as a legacy to posterity, formed the basis of that extraordinary phenomenon, the Philosophy of the Schoolmen.'* (159) For example, Aristotle's ideas on soul and essence became the standard authority persisting, through the work of the early Islamic scholars (7th to 10th centuries), the Jewish scholar Maimonides (1138–1204) – *'Maimonides describes Aristotle as the chief of the philosophers'*. (160) – and the Church Fathers (3rd to 13th centuries), in more-or-less unmodified form, to become accepted as essential concepts. (161)

And from the point of view of homoeopathy what is important is that these concepts came down to Hahnemann's time and were still part of the predominant prevailing 'zeitgeist' to which he was certainly exposed. In this sense, the concepts have had a life of their own and remain valid and useful for explaining certain things.

The soul and essence are strongly parallel concepts: immaterial, invisible but essential aspects of a substance. Aristotle called all things 'substances' including living things, so essence is clearly the conceptual counterpart in inanimate matter to the soul in living things. Only with the rise of materialist science after about 1700 did essence and soul gradually start to be dismissed as questionable ideas or redundant, airy-fairy concepts. But to religious people and the Romantics, among others, these ideas still had great potency and attraction.

We might visualise an essence as an organising principle, a piece of 'information' (162), an immaterial intrinsic property or feature that 'rides alongside' the molecules of a substance and is invisibly present. For example, although in strictly chemical terms, chalk, limestone, calcite, marble and oyster shell are all calcium carbonate, yet they are so obviously different in their form, and so it is helpful to believe that although they are 'the same' substance in chemical terms, yet they have different essences, different organising principles, and so their form or structure is different for each. They are 'imprinted' with different 'information', with some immaterial entity that organises the same atoms into quite different structures, arrangements and substances. And the same applies to thousands of other examples throughout the mineral world. Thus, the concept of an immaterial essence still has a useful validity and an explanatory power no matter how much materialist scientists scoff. The concept of essence therefore seems to fill a gap in our knowledge of substances and the world around us.

One of Aristotle's key arguments concerns motion, substance and causation. Aristotle argues that because the key feature of a living thing is its ability to move – only living things have this innate power – so, all he motion in the world must be attributable to a living thing – that is, God. He assumes God cannot be a physical being as there would have to be some other cause

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lying behind it ad infinitum. He therefore proposes that it must be an immaterial being and so by analogy he assumes that any living organism that is able to move itself and be autonomous, must also contain an immaterial soul with God-like powers to create motion. Same for all animals and plants, because they too are autonomous and have the power of motion.

Then by extension the next point he raises is that all matter must therefore contain an immaterial essence that gives it its specific qualities, its 'isness', an invisible 'organisational power' that makes it 'what it is' (*ousia*). Thus, he proposes that God is the prime mover, soul is the second mover and essence is something in third place. Clearly therefore he proposes two kinds of substance: material substance and immaterial substance. And that all substance carries both a material component and an immaterial component or essence. In the case of limestone and chalk, for example, they have the same material component, but they have different essences because their forms are different. To what degree Hahnemann believed any of this is completely debateable, but it ties in quite well with homoeopathic theory.

Of course, it goes without saying that in modern science the concept of a soul or vital force is rejected as ludicrous and the role identified by Aristotle as a 'source of information,' or an 'organisational principle' is covered by the genotype of an organism. The problem with this idea from Aristotle's perspective is that DNA is a solely material concept of causation and according to his analysis the prime mover in a living organism must be immaterial to avoid the existence of other prior material causes in an ad infinitum chain. It is of great interest that Hahnemann also rejected all material causes of health or sickness in an organism as an untenable argument, but perhaps for different reasons?

And the link with homoeopathy is very clear. The drugs we use have been stripped of their material component – their chemical content – by continued serial dilution and shaking. And yet they manifestly retain powerful therapeutic potency. And each drug has its own unique and idiosyncratic symptom-producing powers. Therefore, the concept of essence is very applicable in homoeopathy and a valid and useful notion that helps us to explain why our remedies – stripped of all their molecular content – can still beneficially influence the health of people and animals.

And it helps explain why each drug creates a unique symptom picture. In other words, its therapeutic power and the symptom uniqueness both flow from the unique essence inherent in each drug. Furthermore, as Aristotle might have said, the essence of the drug resonates with the soul (vital force) of the living being and induces a healing response within the organism. And we might also add that the essence of the drug and the vital force of the person are of the same nature – immaterial and spiritual. Kuzniar suggests that the material substance of the drug becomes progressively spiritualised by the process of potentisation that Hahnemann employed: *'as the remedy becomes increasingly energetic … the living spirit within it becomes ever more active.'* (164) She therefore claims that 'matter … is capable of this magical, spiritual *transformation'*, (164) that *'matter will thus become spiritual'*, (163) and that this process unleashes, *'the immaterial powers residing in a plant'*. (164)

It is no secret that Kuzniar gets these ideas directly from Hahnemann himself: *'It becomes uncommonly evident that the material part by means of such dynamization (development of its true, inner medicinal essence) will ultimately dissolve into its individual spirit-like, (conceptual) essence. In its crude state therefore, it may be considered to consist really only of this underdeveloped conceptual essence.'* (165) He goes on: *'… the medicinal powers hidden within and manifest them more and more or if one may say so, spiritualises the material substance itself'*, (166) and so creating a *'spirit-like medicinal power'.* (167) And also: *'the homoeopathic system of medicine develops for its use, to a hitherto unheard-of degree, the spirit-like medicinal powers of the crude substances.'* (167) *'It is not in the corporeal atoms of these highly dynamised medicines, nor their physical or mathematical surfaces (with which the higher energies of the dynamised medicines are being interpreted but vainly as still sufficiently material) that the medicinal energy is found.'* (168)

Kuzniar also quite rightly refers to *'the dynamised essence of the diluted remedy'*, (164) *'its individual, spiritual essence'*, (164) and the *'undetectable and imperceptible the dynamic essence in the remedy'*. (164) She maintains that *'specific medicinal forces are concealed in their inner essence'*, (169) and that *'Hahnemann searched beyond the mere attributes or effects of a remedy towards the essence of its spirit-like action'*. (164) In such statements we can also see a strong parallel between what Aristotle calls the Soul and what Hahnemann refers to as the dynamis, vital force (Lebenskraft) or vital principle (Lebensprincip).

Certainly, what Aristotle and Plato called the 'vegetative soul' corresponds very closely to Hahnemann's vital force. Both are regarded as immaterial (spiritual) parts of the body controlling growth, nutrition, reproduction and movement. In modern parlance, this vital force or vegetative soul might be called the 'mover of molecules,' which blatantly has binding, protective and maintenance functions such as keeping the coherent structure of the organism intact and in mounting healing responses to threats to our survival such as from shocks and sickness-causing (morbific) agents.

Summing up

Ultimately, it is clear that Aristotle and Hahnemann both reach a centre ground halfway between metaphysics and empiricism. Hahnemann clearly starts off entirely as an empiricist and repeatedly denies that any importance can be attached to metaphysics or theoretical thinking, abstract thought, speculation, etc. However, later in life, he concludes that metaphysics and theorising do in fact have a value, can play a part and, of course, the miasms and the vital force are explicitly metaphysical concepts. He begins to accept metaphysics, and this seems to have come about through

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experience, which is his experience with homoeopathy – seeing potentised drugs working in the way they do – which has taught him the value of metaphysics, how he's moved from the empirical end of the spectrum into the centre ground where he now gains a more balanced view.

But in Aristotle's case, it's the opposite. He starts very much immersed in the Platonic method of metaphysics and theorising at the beginning of his career, having spent 20 years in the Academy. But when he had experience out in the world – which is the experience of actually investigating living organisms especially – he changes his mind. He then modifies the view of the pure speculative metaphysics of Plato, that tendency fades more into the background.

Plato it seems indulged an unrestrained theorising tendency whereas Aristotle still theorised all the time but unlike Plato, it was tempered by observation and the search for empirical evidence to support his ideas. Obviously, Plato taught him how to think and how to theorise and speculate, not about observed things, but largely about abstract ideas. So instead of that, he gradually moved to an understanding which incorporates empirical observation. In other words, his experience of the empirical world, looking at and observing phenomena in the world, such as the stars, the heavens, the planets and living organisms, all of those, all of that empirical work has led him to adopt a different view.

And the other alternative field that he's now embracing is a view based on the idea that the empirical world is real, which, of course, was denied by Plato. He now sees the empirical world as useful and important, and that he can use his speculative and theoretical training in Plato's Academy to understand the functioning of the heavens, of the seasons and of the soul, nature, plants and animals. And so, he has then moved away from the Platonic end of the spectrum of pure metaphysics into the centre ground. So, he moves in the opposite direction to Hahnemann, but he ends up essentially in the same place at the centre of the spectrum midway between metaphysics and empirical thinking.

Not only did they both come to the same point in the middle of the spectrum, it's also fairly clear that Hahnemann and Aristotle agree on certain aspects. For example, the vegetative soul. Combined with the sensitive soul of Aristotle, this corresponds clearly with the vital force that is the concept used by Hahnemann. It's fairly clear that similarly Aristotle's soul (or Plato's soul) corresponds to the belief that Hahnemann reached from experience, in the vital powers. In other words, the energy in the organism that responds to the potentised remedy.

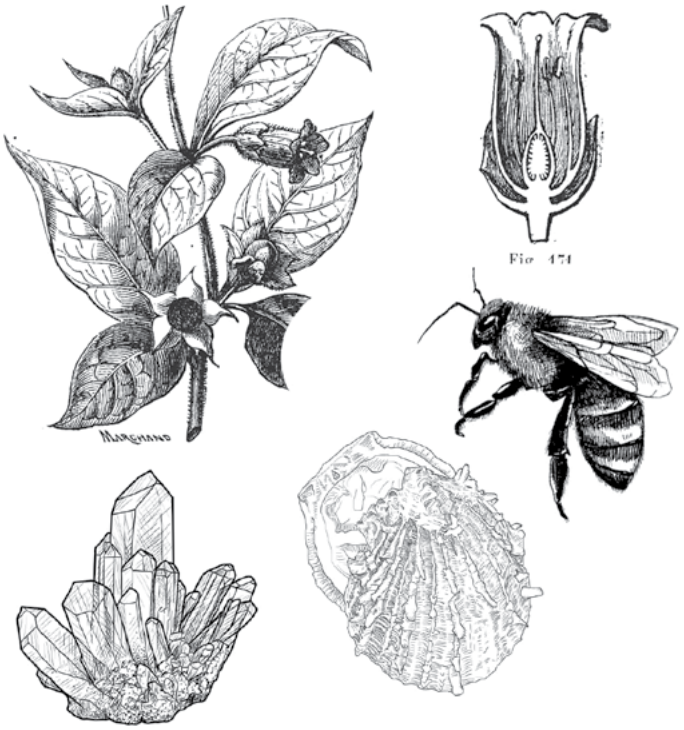


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The second major correspondence between these two thinkers concerns the nature of the 'potential energy' itself which Hahnemann observed in each individual drug, whether it is from the cuttlefish, Sepia, whether it's from Apis, the honeybee. It's visible in oyster shell, Calcarea carbonica, Quartz silica, or indeed even substances like Nitric acid or Belladonna. In every case, there is an immaterial imprint within that substance, an energetic imprint that is retained when the substance is diluted and shaken. And not only is there an energetic imprint that is retained in the solution as it is potentised, but also that in every case it is a unique imprint belonging solely to that particular substance: one drug cannot wholly replace another. With one voice, Aristotle and Hahnemann would both say that every recognisably individual thing has its own unique essence, and it cannot ever be substituted by another no matter how similar.

So, this idea of an energetic imprint or what might be called the potency energy or the drug energy, clearly corresponds very closely to Aristotle's idea of the essence. That a substance is not entirely material, not all a molecular or physical component, but also this metaphysical or spiritual or hidden energetic essence. So, the two together seem to describe what a substance is actually composed of.

And you can see there a definite correspondence with homoeopathy because the idea that a material substance is solely material, atomic or molecular is not confirmed; it is denied. And homoeopathy proposes that there is another invisible component to substance which again corresponds to Aristotle's idea of the essence. So, therefore, we can see

in conclusion that there are two areas of correspondence between the ideas of Aristotle and Hahnemann, one concerning the potency, energy or unique essence of an individual drug, and secondly, the idea of a soul or vital force, which again brings the two sets of ideas into correspondence.

In conclusion we might therefore say that homoeopathy as a medical system seems to provide substantial support, if not proof, for two of the key concepts of Aristotelian thought, the soul or vital force and the idea that substances are not composed solely of molecules, but also carry with them an immaterial essence.

Finally, there are some other ways that Aristotle and Hahnemann are similar. They both tend to lay out observations of fact in an aphoristic style and then draw conclusions from them, draw out their meaning and significance. In this respect parts of the Organon certainly seem to resemble the style of argument used by Aristotle. For example, Aristotle argues that motion is what drives living things and the source of this motion must be an immaterial soul. Then he argues that any motion anywhere, for example the stars, must also result from an immaterial soul. And so, the stars and planets must be alive and have souls. This is how he 'explains' how they are able to move.

Similarly, Hahnemann argues that because chemical and physical methods do not cure sickness, so the nature of sickness cannot have a chemical or physical basis, and ultimately must have an immaterial or spiritual basis. Likewise, he argues that a human being must have a semi-conscious vital force similar to plants and animals that maintains the organism, but which is not the conscious self (ego) or what Aristotle calls the rational soul. Both lay out arguments using a similar style of reasoning.

The word *Organon* means instrument of truth or instrument to establish the truth.

And it looks very much as though Hahnemann originally wanted his *Organon der Heilkunst* to serve as an instrument of truth in medicine, which might be seen as a rather grandiose claim to make. He thus presents it as the third book of its kind in a series, if you include its authoritative predecessors by Aristotle and Bacon. He probably wanted it to be seen as part of the same noble lineage. Why else would he give it that name?



Aristotle's six books which became known as *The Organon* are books that lay out the foundation of his system of logic and reasoning. Bacon's *Novum Organum*, by contrast, is a rather cheeky challenge to the authority of Aristotle by suggesting that we should not rely solely on logic and reasoning but must base truth upon sound evidence and be seen to conduct experiments to provide solid proofs of what we believe to be true. So, Bacon goes a stage further than Aristotle and proposes an experimental approach, which in due course helped to spawn the scientific revolution.

Hahnemann it would seem wanted a piece of both these cakes! He wanted to show in a grand aphoristic style *a la Aristotle* that he has examined everything in medicine and is now presenting the truth about it. But he was also keen to show that most of what he says is solely derived not from reason but predominantly *a la Bacon* from experiments he has conducted. Thus, he probably envisaged the work as burnishing his credentials both as a philosopher of medicine and as a mature empirical scientist as recommended by Bacon and his scientific followers. This then forms the hidden backstory to Hahnemann's *Organon der Heilkunst.*

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