



# HOMOEOPATHIC UP - DATE

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## CONTENTS

- 119** ..... Editorial
- 121** ..... Letters to the editor
- 123** ..... The Leading - Cholera runs through Europe
- 129** ..... From the library
- 131** ..... The Leading edge - Is free radical of orthodox system and Hahenmann's psora same?
- 137** ..... In Focus Hazards of Neo-Discovery
- 139** ..... Research update - Contact cures are homoeopathic
- 141** ..... Research update - Vaccinosis Bacille Calmette Guerin
- 145** ..... Clinical update - Diet restrictions in homoeopathy
- 147** ..... Pharmacology update - Benefits and curative properties of Garlic
- 149** ..... Procedure update - Suturing
- 153** ..... Literature update - History and Relevance of the Sixth Edition of the "Organon of Medicine" (1842)
- 161** ..... Magazine
- 163** ..... Health from fruits - Guava
- 164** ..... Case in my memory
- 167** ..... News
- 171** ..... A Report - Hahnemann's Birthday Celebrated
- 172** ..... Hindi

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## LITERATURE

### UPDATE

# History and Relevance of the Sixth Edition of the "Organon of Medicine" (1842)

Josef M. Schmidt

The first edition of the Organon was published by Hahnemann in 1810, entitled "Organon of the Rational Healing Art". It went through five editions, each of them revised by the author. The last edition appearing during Hahnemann's lifetime was the fifth, published in 1833 in Dresden and Leipzig. In 1842, however, one year before he died in Paris, Hahnemann completed the manuscript of a sixth edition. For that purpose he used an interleaved copy of the fifth edition and went over paragraph by paragraph, making changes, erasures, annotations, and addi-

tions - in his typical handwriting.

This manuscript, out of several adverse circumstances, *remained unpublished* for 79 years, until Richard Haehl in 1921 and William Boericke in 1922 edited a German and an respectively, English edition. This, however, took place, when homeopathy - especially in the United States of America - experienced already a rapid decline. Thus, almost the entire American history of homeopathy was based on Hahnemann's fifth edition of the Organon, published in 1833 - also applying to the school of James Tyler Kent who had died in 1916.

While working on its translation into English, William Boericke in San Francisco definitely had the original manuscript at his disposal. Richard Haehl in Stuttgart, however, had to use mainly a *handwritten copy* of Hahnemann manuscript for his German edition. Although Haehl had purchased the original manuscript in Darup (Westfalia) in 1920, he evidently went through it just for some days and thereafter sent it to Boericke in the United States. All further German editions of the Organon again were based on the edition by Richard Haehl (which itself was based just on a copy of the original). In this way, no authentic German

\* Paper presented in LMHI - Congress 1993, Vienna.

edition existed until last year.

Actually Hahnemann's manuscript of the *Organon* is kept at the University of California, San Francisco, at the Special Collections of its Library. During that year when I was a visiting scholar there, doing research on the history of homeopathy in San Francisco, I also took advantage of the opportunity of looking through Hahnemann's manuscript virtually every day. I had completed my work on the *Organon* in February 1992 - exactly 150 years after Hahnemann had completed his manuscript. Finally in May 1992 the first *text-critical edition* of it was published at Haug-Verlag in Heidelberg.

(If you may wish to have a look at it: All text in italics corresponds to handwritten text in the original, and all of the almost 1700 footnotes mean changes as against the fifth edition. So from now on it will be possible to selectively distinguish all those parts of the *Organon* which Hahnemann left alone from those which he completely changed).

The *authenticity* of Hahnemann's manuscript is secured by autographic criteria as well as by Hahnemann's own written references to this manuscript,

e.g. in a letter (to his publisher, Mr. Schaub, in Düsseldorf) which is preserved in Stuttgart written in February, 1842, he stated: "I have now, after eighteen months of work, finished the sixth edition of my *Organon*, the most nearly perfect of all"...

After Hahnemann's death in July 1843, the manuscript first went into possession of his widow, *Mélanie* Hahnemann d'Hervilly who, however, didn't accept any of the many offers on the part of homeopaths to publish it. Anyway, she had somebody make a handwritten copy. During the French-German War in 1870/71, Mrs. Hahnemann, her adoptive daughter, and her husband Carl von Bönninghausen, had to leave Paris and thus went to the estate of the latter in Darup (Westfalia). Also all posthumous works of Hahnemann (including the manuscript of the *Organon*) were then brought there, and after the death of Mrs. Hahnemann everything went into the possession of the *von Bönninghausen* family. Again all negotiations with homeopaths regarding the publication of the *Organon* failed.

Only in 1920, under the altered political and economical conditions after World

War I, Richard *Haehl* from Stuttgart, with financial aid from William Boericke and James W. Ward in San Francisco, succeeded to purchase the posthumous works of Hahnemann (including the manuscript of the *Organon* and a handwritten copy of it) from the family of von Bönninghausen. After Haehl had received the *Organon* in April 1920, he immediately sent it to New York where it was picked up by *Boericke* personally in May 1920. In June 1920, however, the latter presented it at both annual meetings of the American Institute of Homeopathy in Cleveland and of the International Hahnemannian Association. Then he worked out its English translation in San Francisco.

Original considerations to hand the *Organon* over to the American Institute of Homeopathy or to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for their exhibition on homeopathy, were not realized. After Boericke's death in 1929 *James W. Ward* kept the *Organon* in his office and then, in 1933, gave it to the *Homeopathic Foundation of California* having a joint office in downtown San Francisco. The Foundation's entire library, which after the death of Ward

in 1939 was named after him, was moved into the new building of the *Hahnemann Hospital* in 1940. The *Organon*-manuscript, however, was put in the safe of the hospital and then (after another valuable book had disappeared from that safe) into the private safe of the chief of staff, *Howard Engle*. After his death in 1952, *Elsa Engle*, his sister-in-law and former secretary of the Foundation, had to rent a safe on her own expense to preserve the *Organon*, since nobody else from the Foundation showed any interest.

Only in 1959 *Pierre Schmidt* from Switzerland (by the way, not related to me), on the occasion of his visit at the Annual Conference of the International Hahnemannian Association in San Francisco, asked for this manuscript. Yet, since Mrs. Engle at that time had other commitments, he wasn't able to see it. After his return to Switzerland, however, Mrs. Engle sent him slides of it, on the expense of the California Women's Homeopathic Association, founded in 1959.

The only person who was allowed to personally have a look at the manuscript, was Mrs. Engle's family physician, *Frederic Schmid*, a German homeopath, who ultimately

taught homeopathy at UCSF in 1984 for some months (not being related to me either).

On an inquiry of Heinz Henne from the Institute for the History of Medicine in Stuttgart, in 1971 a *microfilm* of the entire manuscript was prepared at the University of California, Berkeley, and a copy of it was sent to Stuttgart. After that, UCSF's former professor of homeopathy, *Otto E. Guttentag*, with the agreement of Mrs. Engle, gave the manuscript to the *Special Collections* of UCSF-Library where meanwhile the library of the Homeopathic Foundation of California had been transferred. Thus, in 1974, on the occasion of an exhibit on homeopathy, Guttentag was pleased to show the original *Organon*-manuscript to visitors of an International Homeopathic Congress.

Presently the original manuscript is preserved and kept in the Special Collections of UCSF-Library, and open to the public. Under supervision by the library staff users of the Library can have a look at it. Because of the poor condition of its many old and fragile sheets of paper pasted into it, however, it is generally recommended to first use the microfilm. Only in case of specific questions,

i.e. when the information out of the microfilm proves to be insufficient, the original may be requested. (Anyway, most of it is old German handwriting, so that the people interested in reading it, probably won't be too many.)

Now, to give you an impression of how the original manuscript looks like, I brought along some slides:

- Basically, the user of the library gets the book on a cloth of felt, on a book-stand, with a page-holder of velvet.  
- This is the interleaved copy of the fifth edition of the *Organon* which Hahnemann used to insert his corrections and additions for the sixth edition.

- Where the empty space in this interleaved copy proved to be insufficient for Hahnemann's emendations, he pasted in small sheets of paper and continued to write on them. When these attached sheets again proved to be too small, he pasted new sheets on these original sheets etc. - Here you see a page of the manuscript where the total length of a strip of sheets pasted together measures almost one meter, i.e. more than four times of the height of the book.

Now, let us have a look at

the famous paragraph 270, where Hahnemann - for the first and only time in his entire literary work - described the manufacturing procedure of the 50,000- or Q-potencies:

- The beginning of the main part of the paragraph is being found in Hahnemann's handwriting.

- In the second part of it, the original sheet of paper with Hahnemann's handwriting is torn into pieces, and the missing text is written on another sheet pasted between the original pieces. It is written in Haehl's handwriting and nobody knows its origin.

- The first footnote to this paragraph is written in another handwriting which, however, can be considered as authorized by Hahnemann, since you will notice insertions of words and phrases in Hahnemann's own handwriting on it. Consequently, this section probably was a dictation by Hahnemann which he finally had revised himself.

- The footnotes 2 to 6 again are in Hahnemann's handwriting.

- The footnote 7, at its beginning, is in Hahnemann's handwriting, but since the sheet evidently was torn off, the rest of it is in Haehl's handwriting - with reference to a pretended "dictation of

Hahnemann" which is not preserved, however.

- In the paragraph 284, finally, you can find three different handwritings on the same sheet of paper. First Hahnemann's, then his clerk's, and then Richard Haehl's.

These slides may show you why a text-critical edition of Hahnemann's "Organon of Medicine", the basic textbook for every homeopath throughout the world, is fundamental to any kind of serious future research on it.

The practical and historical *significance* of the sixth edition results from its changes as against the previous ones. Hahnemann here expressed new thoughts regarding the notion of "dynamic actions", the "vital force", "disease" as such, the status of different kinds of therapeutics, the nature and treatment of the "chronic miasms", the self-dispensing of drugs, the administration of single drugs and minimal doses, but also the justification of "sniffing" at drugs, the application of the magnet, of "mesmerism", of electricity and Galvanism, of rubbing-in drugs, of massages and baths.

The most important innovation, however, was the altered way of *potentization* of drugs and the corresponding

changes of their dosage and administration. Since now every dilution of 1:100 was completed by a dispersion of 1:500, the new potencies were supposed to act milder and quicker and therefore to be taken every day, even over a period of several months. - This was quite the contrary to Hahnemann's instruction in the fifth edition of the Organon to administer just one dose of a high potency and then wait and not give any dose of medicine any more unless the patient's process of recovery decreases once again. Nevertheless, this older method was the basis of almost the entire history of homeopathy, especially in the United States.

Even after the first publications of the sixth edition of the Organon in the 1920s, the new dosology was ignored rather than accepted by the homeopathic community. After all, the manufacturing procedure was more difficult than the old one.

Oddly enough, not even Richard Haehl - in the preface to his new Organon-edition of 1921 - mentioned the new way of potentization, but just talked about the "centesimal"-potencies of paragraph 270. Only in his biography of Hahnemann, published in the next year, he

roughly described the altered way of application of Hahnemann's pellets, but not their manufacturing procedure. The editor of both books was the pharmaceutical company Willmar Schwabe.

Rudolf Tischner (1879-1961), within four volumes of his history of homeopathy, only dedicated four lines to a short reference to the modification of the way of potentization during Hahnemann's time in Paris. Even in the revised edition of his work in 1950 he considered it sufficient to mention the new ratio of dilution of 1:50.000 to denounce this as a "purely spiritualistic concept".

The first one who took Hahnemann's instructions regarding the new potencies seriously and actually tried them on his patients was *Rudolf Flury* (1903-1977). In the early 1940s he fabricated 50.000-potencies by himself, coined the term "LM-potencies" for them, and applied them as pellets in the mornings and evenings. In 1950 he published his experiences pertinent to this in Lyon. Also *Adolf Voegeli* (1898-) had applied and recommended 50.000-potencies relatively early. *Jost Künzli von Fimmelsberg* (1915-1992) started in 1949 to prepare

and apply these potencies. *Pierre Schmidt* (1894-1987), in the course of his French translation of the sixth edition of the *Organon* published in 1952, thoroughly examined the 50.000-potencies, but - according to his statement - applied them only two or three times a year.

In 1960 *Künzli* introduced the term "Q-potencies" (for quinquagintamillesimal-potencies) and once again described Hahnemann's directions regarding their fabrication and application in detail, because - according to his view - up to that time nobody had carried this out accurately. Nevertheless, a conference held five years later still showed marked differences between the various interpretations of Hahnemann's instructions: some homeopaths started their treatment with 1Q, some with 6Q and some with 18Q.

Only since the late 1950s the so-called LM-potencies were offered by pharmaceutical companies, and finally their manufacturing procedure was included in the *Homeopathic Pharmacopoea* (HAB). However, till the very recent past there was no manufacturer producing Q-potencies originally according to Hahnemann.

As an excuse for not considering Q-potencies, sceptics among homeopaths usually kept doubting the genuineness of the instructions described in the *Organon*-edition published by *Richard Haehl* in 1921. Since last year, however, there is no reason left to ignore these directions, because the text-critical edition of the original manuscript, available since 1992, henceforth will vouch for their authenticity.

Well, why did Hahnemann abandon the old way of potentization and adopt a new one, anyhow? To answer this question let us first follow the development of Hahnemann's concept of potentization:

When Hahnemann in 1796 had published the *Principle of Similars*, the very next year for the first time he used the term "dynamic" which henceforth meant a direct effect of a remedy on the living fiber respectively on the nerves of an organism. Applied according the *Principle of Similars*, i.e. in states of specific sensibility on the part of the patient, some medicines proved to react too strong when given in usual doses. For that reason, during an epidemic of scarlatina in 1800 Hahnemann already recommended a dilution of

only one 24millionth of a grain of Belladonna - of which some drops should be taken every three days.

If - in case of very sturdy persons - the effect of a small dose should slightly be increased, this according to Hahnemann could be arranged via two principles:

- first by diluting and stirring the medicine in a glass of water, because when taking it, it would come into contact with more nerves and

- second by dividing the total dose into several single doses. According to an example by Hahnemann the effect of two drops given daily for five days proved to act stronger than ten drops taken at one time only.

For both principles Hahnemann even laid down a mathematic ratio and published that in all of the first five editions of the Organon.

Beyond these practical tenets Hahnemann also theoretically was convinced of the infinite divisibility of matter. So even the smallest part of the highest dilution according to him would always still contain "something" of the original substance and never would become "nothing".

Proceeding from these concepts, during the following years Hahnemann arrived

at ever increasing dilutions: 1806 he mentioned a dilution which contained only a "quintillion" of a grain (corresponding a 15C), 1809 he had reached a "sextillion" of a grain (corresponding a 18C) and 1816 finally a "decillion" of a grain (corresponding a 30C).

Only at that time Hahnemann gradually passed over to a kind of standardization of the manufacturing procedure of these "dilutions" - as he still called them. In 1816 for the first time he described the systematic dilution and succussion of a tincture in the ratio 1:100 (till a 30C) and in 1818 he gave an example for the systematic trituration of insoluble substances with milk-sugar in the ratio 1:100 (till a 2C). In 1821 eventually he prescribed the number of ten strokes for each step of dilution.

Meanwhile, Hahnemann had been exposed to more and more hostility, for not only did he lecture at the University of Leipzig on his fantastic doctrine, but also insisted on the self-dispensing of his medicines. In order to ridicule Hahnemann's dosology, his opponents compared the high attenuations with the dilution of one drop of medicine in the Lake of Geneva. Confronted with this kind of

arguments, Hahnemann in 1821 eventually developed the following new concept: medicines would not be dead substances, but rather spiritual entities which only in their crude state would seem to be bound and frozen. By means of a special preparation, however, they would become unbound, unfolded and developed, and their effects faster and stronger.

In accordance to this concept, in 1824 Hahnemann limited the number of strokes per dilution to two and the duration of triturations per grade to one hour at a time. The purpose was, as he wrote, "to keep the development of the medicinal forces moderate". In addition to that, now he also described the dissemination of one drop over tiny sugar-pellets. - Only after all elements of his new procedure of a gradual dilution, trituration and succussion of medicines had been introduced, in 1827 Hahnemann finally coined the term "potentizing".

In his work on chronic diseases published in 1828 - in connection with his discovery of the colloidal solubility of insoluble substances - Hahnemann gave a very precise instruction how to manufacture first a 3C-trituration of any medicinal substance and

then processing this in the form of dilutions. - This very direction can be found as annotation 1 of paragraph 270 in the sixth edition of the Organon. In other words, this is the basis for the production of every Q-potency.

There is a tenet in all of the six editions of the Organon which says that "any continuing and increasing amelioration (of a disease) excludes any repetition of any medicine". Despite that, from 1832 on Hahnemann tried to *shorten* the period of mere observation after the application of a high potency as far as possible - in order to accelerate the healing especially of chronic diseases. In contrast to his former view, he now found that a repetition of the same dose is necessary as well as possible - even in chronic diseases. As an example, small doses of Sulphur 30C could be repeated - if necessary with the use of intermediate remedies - in intervals of 7-14 days, about 4-10 times. In acute diseases the dose of a 30C could be repeated even within a couple of hours. On grounds of both new tenets, 1st that medicines accomplish the more, the more frequent they can be applied, and 2nd that they can be repeated the more frequently the smaller

their dose is, Hahnemann increasingly stressed the mere sniffing of medicines. - This article of Hahnemann, published in 1832, in the following year was incorporated in the fifth edition of the Organon. A new paragraph now read: "The dose of the same medicine is being repeated until the same remedy ceases to bring an amelioration".

In the second edition of the "Chronic Diseases" in 1835 Hahnemann again stressed the tenet to let every dose "act as long as the amelioration increases". But as an "approved exception" he mentioned the cases where during the treatment of a chronic disease the amelioration stops after 7-14 days, without any other aggravation. Here it would be possible and necessary to repeat the doses of the same remedy - in the "same minuteness", but possibly in a modified grade of potentization, e.g. first 30C, then 18C, then 24C, then 12C or 6C etc. Further, the potency could also be augmented and thus modified by diluting and stirring the dose in a glass of water and dividing its application e.g. over three days. Apparently Hahnemann here recalled principles already found 30 years before. - Also the instructions of administering Q-

potencies rest on these very principles.

In 1837 Hahnemann had further elaborated this procedure: He described the dilution of one pellet in 7-20 spoons of water, the addition of some spirit of wine for the purpose of a better conservation, the daily or hourly administration of a spoonful, depending on the fact whether a chronic or an acute disease is under consideration, the shaking of the liquid before its administration with 5-6 strokes to modify its degree of dynamization, etc. - all these being instructions which prove to be almost identical with those for Q-potencies. The only fundamental difference to the latter was the still decreasing sequence of the grades of potencies, i.e. first the 30C, then the 24C, etc. Since in this way every dose of a medicine could be "divided" over 15-30 and more days, to Hahnemann now no potentization seemed to be too strong any more. So, instead of the former two strokes per potency, he further on recommended once again *ten* strokes. - Curiously enough, this short preface of Hahnemann was omitted in the otherwise complete English translation of the Chronic Diseases by Louis H. Tafel. The



publisher of this standard work was the pharmaceutical company Boericke & Tafel which had been co-founded by Tafel's brothers.

In 1839 Hahnemann eventually went much further inasmuch as he now stated the number of even "10, 20, 50, and more strong strokes" per grade of a potency - which came already near to the final number of 100 strokes prescribed for Q-potencies.

That much was published regarding the way of potentization and administration of homeopathic medicines by Hahnemann still in his lifetime. Compared with these instructions, the directions for Q-potencies which are found exclusively in his manuscript of the sixth edition of the Organon, do not seem to be really new: Not surprising at all are - concerning their production - the systematic 3C-trituration, the following dilutions in the ratio 1:100, the 100 strokes per potency, and - regarding their application - the dilution of one pellet into 7-8 spoons of water, the addition of some spirit of wine, the shaking of the bottle before each administration, the former dilution of a spoonful in a glass of water, the strong stirring of it, the daily respectively hourly administration of a teaspoon of this

dilution over month, as long as the amelioration continues. - Actually new were - in the manufacture - at best the additional division of one drop over 500 pellets per potency and - in the way of administration - the continuously ascending sequence of the potencies. But also the division of one drop over pellets and the administration of a remedy in increasing attenuations were already known as elements of Hahnemann's kit of tools, but just not in this systematic arrangement.

As it turns out, these late instructions of Hahnemann do not mean a complete change of all his previous teachings. Rather they are the logical completion of a course followed by him for ten years already. Q-potencies were Hahnemann's solution of the following therapeutic dilemma: on the one side physicians are inclined to repeat the dose of a high potency as often as possible in order to accelerate the process of healing; on the other side they should refrain from repeating the dose to avoid violent aggravations of the patient's state of health.

According to Hahnemann, only in 1842 he definitely had described the most perfect procedure in pharmacotherapeutics. Only

then the "cito, tuto et iucunde" of Celsus (1st century) as well as the "fast, gentle, and persisting" healing, as Hahnemann always had propagated it, were guaranteed.

Hence, the significance of the sixth edition of the Organon - regarding the Q-potencies - does not consist of completely new opinions of Hahnemann (as this in 1961 still was felt by Pierre Schmidt), but rather in the final arrangement of concepts used by Hahnemann over many years and decades. Nevertheless, this kind of arrangement is unique in Hahnemann's entire literary work. - Thus, if this manuscript would have been lost during the last 150 years, we wouldn't have had any chance to learn about its actual contents let alone have been able to edit it in a serious and scientific way.

Therefore, let us bear in mind all the people who contributed to the preservation of this invaluable document of medical history.

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