

Introduction to the ORGANON OF THE MEDICAL ART by Wenda Brewster O'Reilly, Ph.D. Samuel Hahnemann was a physician, chemist, linguist, historian of medicine, and scientific revolutionary. Early in his career, he became so disillusioned with the state of medical practice that he stopped practicing medicine in the firm belief that the methods he was taught would do more harm than good. Instead he made his living translating medical and other texts. While Hahnemann was translating the Scottish physician William Cullen's *Materia Medica*, specifically the section on the toxicology of Peruvian bark, he was struck by the similarity between the symptoms of poisoning from Peruvian bark (also known as cinchona, from which quinine is derived) and the symptoms of malaria against which it was used as a medicine. It occurred to him that this similarity might not be coincidental, but rather it might be the very basis of the medicine's curative power.

Through numerous experiments conducted over several years, Hahnemann established that any medicine will cure a particular disease if it is capable of producing symptoms in healthy individuals which are similar to the totality of disease symptoms in the sick. These experiments also led to Hahnemann's development of guidelines for medicinal experimentation, which include testing medicines only upon healthy individuals (to avoid confounding the action of the medicine with the symptoms of the disease), the use of small doses, and the testing of any medicine on both men and women and on people with various bodily constitutions in order to determine a medicine's full range of action.

Hahnemann's use of minute, potentized medicinal doses originally arose from his interest in reducing the adverse effects of medicines. He then discovered that by successively diluting and succussing a medicinal substance, not only were the adverse effects of the medicine diminished, but the inherent curative power of the substance was dramatically increased. This led to his discovery that medicines and diseases act dynamically, not materially.

Hahnemann was a linguist of phenomenal ability. He spoke German, Latin, Greek and French fluently. At the age of twelve, he was given the responsibility of teaching other children Greek and Latin. As an adult, he translated complex medical texts from English, French, Greek and Latin, and quoted from Hebrew and Aramaic texts in his teaching. In all, he was conversant in at least eleven languages. His multi-lingual ability was integrated with his equally complex and multi-faceted way of viewing the world.

While Hahnemann's view of health and disease was accessible to the most intuitive minds of his generation, they had little scientific basis for understanding why things worked as Hahnemann indicated. Hahnemann himself attached little importance to understanding the 'why' of his discoveries, focusing instead on the 'what' and the 'how.' He constructed his philosophy and practice of medicine upon unbiased observation, pure experience, and unfettered deliberation. It is only recently that we are beginning to formulate theoretical constructs that address the 'why.' Hahnemann's approach to medicine had little to do with the understanding of the world described by the Newtonian physics of his day; it is much more closely aligned with the currently unfolding world of post-quantum physics. Hahnemann envisioned a holistic world in which the foot is not the man himself. He saw that individuals were neither jigsaw puzzles nor pieces in a larger puzzle, where the sum of all parts equals a whole. Rather, he saw that parts of a larger whole holographically represent that whole; the whole and its parts form an indivisible unity.

Over the course of a sixty-year career, from 1783 when he stopped practicing the medicine of his day, until he died in 1843, Samuel Hahnemann developed the homeopathic mode of medical treatment, which was as different from the prevailing medical practice as day is to night. Its basic premises were the use of similar medicines whose actions were fully known to the medical-art practitioner, the individualized treatment of a person's disease, the use of one single, simple medicine at a

time to avoid the unpredictable effects of combining two or more drugs, and the use of potentized medicines whose ability to act dynamically upon the patient's life force was thereby greatly increased. Another major achievement was Hahnemann's identification of miasms and his differentiation between the essential nature of a disease (its 'wesen') and the forms in which it manifests.

During his long professional career, Hahnemann condensed his precepts on the philosophy and practice of medicine and the maintenance of health into successive editions of the *Organon of the Medical Art*. The first edition was published in 1810, and the sixth and final edition was completed in 1842, the year before he died (see *Comments on the Text*, p. 275).

Hahnemann did not write the *Organon* only for medical practitioners, in fact, he prescribed the *Organon* to patients. The book itself is a remedy of the highest potency. Like other great works of art, it constantly reveals new marvels and mysteries, acting dynamically in relation to each reader, and acting differently with each reading.

This Translation and Adaptation of the ORGANON

Over the past few years, Steven Decker and I have worked closely together to bring Hahnemann's work of genius to light for modern readers. His goal has been to provide the most accurate translation of Hahnemann's language and thought. Mine has been to adapt the translation in such a way as to make it as comprehensible and as accessible as possible. Steven Decker's new translation of the *Organon* conveys more of Hahnemann's meaning than ever before, preserving the primary sense of his words as well as their imagery, color and texture. He has brought to the translation not only his keen understanding of the German language of Hahnemann's time, but also of Hahnemann's underlying philosophy, which was shared to some extent by a few other writers and philosophers of his time. This small group (including his contemporaries, Johann Goethe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge) comprise the

beginning of what may be referred to as a dynamic school of thought.

Steven Decker's translation (which will become available in computer format) includes two parts: an interlinear translation, in which an English word appears above each word of the original text; and a rendering of each of Hahnemann's sentences into an English sentence which follows as much as possible Hahnemann's original periodic sentence structure. I have further adapted each sentence by placing Hahnemann's translated words into a modern English grammatical structure, often expanding his very condensed style of writing. In addition, I have delineated the structure of the Organon by dividing it into chapters and sections, and I have interpreted the text in side-headings and editorial footnotes (indicated with an asterisk). A glossary and index have also been added.

The Glossary includes definitions of medical terms used in the Organon, as well as translation notes on specific words. Readers can now understand terms as Hahnemann meant them instead of having to guess which of an English word's several meanings was meant to apply. Also found in the Glossary are definitions of concepts that are fundamental to an understanding of Hahnemann's mode of thought.

The Index allows readers to use the Organon as a reference work. It also organizes information on certain topics. For example, listed under 'Homeopathic treatment' readers will find every homeopathic use of a medicine or treatment discussed by Hahnemann in the Organon; under 'Definition of' readers will find Hahnemann's own definitions of terms in the text.

Steven Decker and I worked together to solve one of the prime difficulties in translating and adapting a text of such complexity as the Organon: the problem of consistency versus context. At every turn, translators must choose between translating a particular word consistently throughout a text or translating it according to context. Previous translators have opted primarily

for translation according to context. However, one way in which readers come to understand Hahnemann's precise meaning is by seeing how he uses certain key words in various contexts. Steven and I approached this problem from different directions. Steven drew on a wide selection of English words to find the particular one that could span the various meanings of a given German word. We then worked together to define key terms in the Glossary so that readers can fully understand the nuances to be associated with particular terms. In other words, through the Glossary definitions, we are giving readers the opportunity to assign the full meaning of a given German word to the English word being used to translate it. One example is the use of 'malady' throughout the text. 'Malady' is being used to translate the German word Uebel, which has two meanings in German; it means both illness and evil. There is no word in English that immediately conveys both of these meanings to the reader. 'Malady' has been assigned the task of conveying both of these meanings and has been defined as such in the Glossary. Another example is the word 'impinge,' translated from the German einwirken. Of its various possible definitions, 'impinge' has been assigned the particular definition: to have initial superficial contact with something, followed by a thrusting, driving or penetration into it. Another frequently encountered problem in moving from one language to another is that different languages carry different ways of looking at something, conceptually dividing things into smaller or larger units. Where one language may use several words, another may use only one. For example, English has the terms 'curing' and 'healing,' which originally had different meanings. 'Cure' referred to medical intervention while 'healing' referred to the human organism's own efforts to recover from disease or injury. German, however, has only one term (Heil-) that covers both healing and cure, and which can refer to anything that is remedial or therapeutic. Any such differences between Hahnemann's original terminology and the translation are presented in the Glossary. As a result, readers will be able to better know and understand what Hahnemann wrote and what he meant.

In some cases, linguistic differences between Hahnemann's German and modern English describe profound differences between his philosophy or world-view and that of most modern English-speaking readers. The structure of Hahnemann's thought and writing in the *Organon* is functional, not linear. If one reads Hahnemann from a linear perspective, one misses half the story. Steven Decker's new translation, and his definition of key terms, bring these differences to light. Readers can come closer to seeing as Hahnemann saw and thinking as Hahnemann thought. An example of this is found in the English word 'knowledge,' typically used to translate both of the German terms *wissen* and *kennen*, which describe fundamentally different types of knowledge and learning. *Wissen* describes intellectual knowledge gained from study, while *kennen* describes knowledge gained through participative experience. In this translation and adaptation, the German terms have been translated with different English words.

As a multi-linguist, Hahnemann was profoundly aware that the name of something is not the thing itself. He conveyed this to the reader by giving multifaceted definitions that play off one another and thereby maintain a vibrancy and dimensionality that is missing in fixed definitions. One way that he did this was by referring to something using two or more words, often rooted in different languages. This information is included in the Glossary.

Hahnemann's original text consisted of a preface, an introduction, and 291 numbered paragraphs of text. A synopsis of paragraphs served as the table of contents. Hahnemann's *Organon* was consistent with the publishing standards of his day. The text in this edition has been formatted so that the reader may easily differentiate between Hahnemann's text and the editorial additions which have been made. The main text is translated and adapted from Hahnemann's original, with the exception of text in square brackets, which are editorial clarifications. Hahnemann's German has been translated into English, using American English spelling. Where Hahnemann

uses Latin, Greek or French, the text appears in the original language, followed by a translation in brackets. Hahnemann's footnotes are numbered. Those in the Preface and Introduction are numbered sequentially. In the main text, a footnote's number coincides with that of the paragraph in which it appears. Hahnemann's notes to footnotes are indicated with a cross ().

Most of the italics in the main text either represent Hahnemann's emphasis or his use of foreign words and phrases, such as *similia similibus* and *contraria contrariis*. In this edition, names of medicines and medicinal substances, whether Latin or common, appear in roman type, not italics. Also, these names appear in lower case (contrary to the modern convention of capitalizing the names of homeopathic medicines) since Hahnemann uses the common and the Latin names both in reference to unpotentized substances as well as to potentized medicines.

I have been blessed with excellent help and advice throughout my three and a half years of work on this project. This is reflected throughout this adaptation of Hahnemann's work. The many people who have contributed dynamically and materially to this endeavor will, I hope, recognize the value of all they did in the published result. I cannot adequately thank them. At the same time, I have made many choices which may differ from the choices others would have made in my place, and I take all responsibility for any resultant errors or shortcomings. Many times throughout the project, I had hoped that if I stuck closely enough to Hahnemann's wording in a particular paragraph, all of his meaning would come through to the reader even if I did not fully understand it myself. However, time after time I would do my best with a paragraph and then later come to a realization as to a fuller meaning. In every case, this led to my rewording the paragraph to bring that meaning into better focus. I am keenly aware that there is more in the *Organon* to be discovered as we grow in our understanding, yet I continue to hope that this adaptation will serve to bring the reader very close to Hahnemann's brilliance of thought, to his unparalleled

symphony of health and life that is the Organon of the Medical Art.