

ORGANON OF MEDICINE

SAMUEL HAHNEMANN

THE FIRST INTEGRAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION
OF THE DEFINITIVE SIXTH EDITION OF THE ORIGINAL
WORK ON HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINE

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Translators' Introduction

Samuel Hahnemann's *Organon of Medicine* clearly and completely states, for the first time in history, the true nature of health and disease, the natural principles of cure, and the system of medical therapy based on these principles which we know as homoeopathy. It has remained until today the one essential cornerstone of homoeopathy, the ultimate authority on its doctrine and practice. Everything ever written on homoeopathy proceeds from it.

It was first published in 1810, in Köthen, Germany. Hahnemann published five editions of the work during his lifetime and completed the manuscript of the sixth and final edition in 1842, the year before he died at the age of eighty-eight. This last edition was not published until 1921.

The Standard English version of the *Organon* has hitherto been a nineteenth-century translation of the fifth edition, to which a translation of the important changes introduced by Hahnemann in the sixth edition were later added in an effort to bring it up to date. Unfortunately, this translation is very tedious and difficult to read because it approximates in stilted Victorian English the dense and cumbersome style of Hahnemann's German. Hahnemann's language is difficult even for a modern German ear, and its literal equivalent in English is a formidable obstacle to understanding. Furthermore, there are serious errors in the translation and in the additions made to it.

The present translators have made a completely new translation from the original text of the sixth edition. Hahnemann's manuscript is in the possession of the School of Medicine of the University of California in San Francisco, and we have been fortunate in obtaining a photocopy of it. We have scrupulously adhered to

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every word of Hahnemann's text but have rendered it into Standard modern English, sometimes dividing his very long sentences into several shorter ones for the sake of clarity and readability.

There has been a most remarkable reawakening of interest in homoeopathy during the last ten years, and many important textbooks have been republished in different English-speaking countries. It seemed therefore all the more urgent to bring out a clear English translation of the book from which all others in the literature developed and on which they comment.

This translation is the fruit of many months of arduous labor; it has been rigorously and systematically checked against the original text by us and by other scholars. It was commissioned by The Hahnemann Foundation of California with the intention of providing a reliable modern English source for homoeopathic physicians and the public.

The *Organon* may in time be widely recognized as one of the most important books in the entire history of medicine, because it introduced in the long story of man's struggle against disease a successful system of medicinal therapy that contrasts radically with everything previously taught and practiced.

Homoeopathy is recognized and practiced throughout the world, but it is still something of a challenge to the orthodox medical establishment, which can neither assimilate it nor refute it.

Amid the public doubts and criticisms that today cloud the image of technological medicine, homoeopathy offers a clear, simple, and inexpensive way to cure disease. It may indeed turn out to be the new medicine of the world.

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*We dedicate this translation of the
Organon to its author, Samuel
Hahnemann, with love and respect, and
hope that he would have found it worthy.*

Organon of Medicine

Samuel Hahnemann

1

The physician's highest calling, his *only* calling, is to make sick people healthy—to heal, as it is termed."

a. It is not to weave so-called systems from fancy ideas and hypotheses about the inner nature of the vital processes and the origin of diseases in the invisible interior of the organism (on which so many fame-seeking physicians have wasted their powers and time). Nor does it consist of trying endlessly to explain disease phenomena and their proximate cause, which will always elude him.

Nor does it consist of holding forth in unintelligible words or abstract and pompous expressions in an effort to appear learned so as to astonish the ignorant, while the world in sickness cries in vain for help.

Surely by now we have had enough of these pretentious fantasies called *theoretical medicine*, for which university chairs have even been established, and it is time for those calling themselves physicians to stop deceiving poor human beings by their talk and to *start acting instead*—that is, really helping and healing.

2

The highest ideal of therapy is to restore health rapidly, gently, permanently; to remove and destroy the whole disease in the shortest, surest, least harmful way, according to clearly comprehensible principles.

3

If the physician clearly perceives what has to be cured in disease, i.e., in each individual case of disease (*knowledge of the disease*),
if he clearly perceives what it is in medicines which heals, i.e., in each individual medicine (*knowledge of medicinal powers*),
if he applies in accordance with well-defined principles what is curative in medicines to what he has clearly recognized to be pathological in the patient, so that cure follows, i.e., if he knows in each particular case how to apply the remedy most appropriate by its character (*selection of the remedy*), prepare it exactly as required and give it in the right amount (*the correct dose*), and repeat the dose exactly when required,
and, lastly, if in each case he knows the obstacles to cure and how to remove them, so that recovery is permanent,
then he knows how to treat thoroughly and efficaciously, and is a true physician.

4

The physician is likewise a preserver of health if he knows the things that disturb it, that cause and sustain illness, and if he knows how to remove them from healthy people.

5

In addition, it will help the physician to bring about a cure if he can determine the most probable *exciting cause* in an acute disease and the most significant phases in the evolution of a chronic, long-lasting disease, enabling him to discover its *underlying cause*, usually a chronic miasm.

In this he should consider: the evident physical constitution of the patient (especially in chronic affections), his affective and intellectual character, his activities, his way of life, his habits, his social position, his family relationships, his age, his sexual life, etc.

6

The unprejudiced observer realizes the futility of metaphysical speculations that cannot be verified by experiment, and no matter how clever he is, he sees in any given case of disease only the disturbances of body and soul which are perceptible to the senses: subjective symptoms, incidental symptoms, objective symptoms, i.e., deviations from the former healthy condition of the individual now sick which the patient personally feels, which people around him notice, which the physician sees in him.

The totality of these perceptible signs represents the entire extent of the sickness; together they constitute its true and only conceivable form.⁰

a. This is why I do not know how at the sickbed one can imagine that one has to seek out and can find what is to be cured in disease only in the hidden and unknowable interior of the human organism; how one can fail to pay most careful attention to symptoms and be scrupulously guided by them to

cure. I do not know how one can be so ridiculous and presumptuous as to try to recognize what has changed in the depths of the body without paying special attention to the symptoms or how one can try to reestablish its order with medicines of which one knows nothing, calling this method the only radical and rational therapy.

As far as the physician is concerned, is not that which reveals itself to the senses in symptoms the very disease itself? He can never see the immaterial element, the vital force causing the disease. He need never see it; to cure he needs only to see and understand its morbid effects.

What kind of *prima causa morbi* is the old school looking for in the hidden depths of the body if it rejects and haughtily disdains the comprehensible and clearly perceptible manifestations of disease, i.e., the symptoms speaking in understandable language? What else do they want to cure in disease but these symptoms?

7

Since one may know a disease only by its symptoms, when there is no obvious exciting or sustaining cause (*causa occasionalis*) to be removed," it is evident that only the symptoms, together with any possible miasm and additional circumstances, must guide the choice of the appropriate, curative medicine (par. 5).

So it is the totality of symptoms, *the outer image expressing the inner essence of the disease, i.e., of the disturbed vital force*, that must be the main, even the only, means by which the disease allows us to find the necessary remedy, the only one that can decide the appropriate choice.

Briefly, in every individual case of disease the totality of the symptoms* must be the physician's principal con-

cern, the only object of his attention, the only thing to be *removed* by his intervention in order to cure, i.e., to transform the disease into health.

a. It is obvious that every reasonable physician will first of all remove the *causa occasionalis*; after that the indisposition usually disappears on its own. For instance, he removes from the sickroom the strong-smelling flowers that have brought on faintness and hysterical manifestations; he removes from the cornea the foreign body that is producing ophthalmia; he loosens and readjusts the tight bandage that threatens to cause gangrene in a wounded limb; he uncovers and ties the severed artery that is causing shock; he tries by emetics to void the Belladonna berries, etc., that have been swallowed; he removes the foreign objects introduced into the natural openings of the body (nose, throat, ears, urethra, rectum, vagina); he crushes the stones in the bladder; he opens the imperforate anus of the new-born infant, etc.

b. Usually not knowing what else to do, the old school has always tried to combat and wherever possible suppress through medicines *only one* of the many symptoms that diseases present—a *short-sighted method* called symptomatic therapy.

This has justly earned general contempt, not only because it does not do any real good but because it does much harm.

A single symptom is no more the whole disease than a single foot a whole man. This method is all the more objectionable because it treats a particular symptom with an opposite remedy (in a merely enantiopathic and palliative way) with the result that it returns much worse than before after a short alleviation.

8

After the elimination of all the symptoms and perceptible signs of disease, one cannot imagine or demonstrate by any experiment in the world that anything but health remains, that anything but health could remain; nor can one doubt that all the pathological changes inside the organism have been neutralized.⁰

a. When someone has been cured by a real physician, so that no sign or symptom of disease remains and all the indications of health have permanently returned, can one without affronting human intelligence possibly maintain that the disease continues to dwell somewhere in the economy?

Yet this is what a past authority of the old school, Hufeland, maintained when he said (*Homeopathie*, p. 27,1. 19): "Homoeopathy can remove symptoms, but the disease remains." He said this partly out of spite because of the progress of homoeopathy for the good of mankind and partly because of his still totally materialistic conception of disease. He could not conceive of it as a state of being of the organism dynamically untuned by a disturbed vital force, as an alteration in the state of health, but considered it as a *material thing*, which could, after a cure, remain hidden in some secret corner of the organism to reveal its material presence at a later date, breaking out at will right in the midst of flourishing health!

Such is as yet the blindness of the old pathology! After all that, no wonder it has no other therapy to offer than "sweeping clean" the poor patient!

9

In the state of health the spirit-like vital force (*dynamis*) animating the material human organism reigns in suprême sovereignty.

It maintains the sensations and activities of all the parts of the living organism in a harmony that obliges wonderment. The reasoning spirit who inhabits the organism can thus freely use this healthy living instrument to reach the lofty goal of human existence.

10

Without the vital force the material organism is unable to feel, or act, or maintain itself." Only because of the immaterial being (vital principle, vital force) that animates it in health and in disease can it feel and maintain its vital functions.

a. Without the vital force the body dies; and then, delivered exclusively to the forces of the outer material world, it decomposes, reverting to its chemical constituents.

11

When man falls ill it is at first only this self-sustaining spirit-like vital force (vital principle) everywhere present in the organism which is untuned by the dynamic^o influence of the hostile disease agent.

It is only this vital force thus untuned which brings about in the organism the disagreeable sensations and abnormal functions that we call *disease*. Being invisible, and recognizable solely by its effects on the organism, it can express itself and reveal its untunement only by pathological manifestations in feeling and function (the only aspects of the organism accessible to the senses of the observer and the physician), i.e., *disease symptoms*.

a. What is dynamic influence, dynamic force? We see that the earth causes the moon to revolve around it in twenty-eight days and a number of hours by some invisible mysterious force and that the moon in its turn produces in the ocean at regular intervals alternating tides of ebb and flow (with some variations at the full and the new moon). We see this and are amazed, because our senses do not realize how it happens. Obviously this is not produced by material means or by the mechanical contrivances of men. And we see about us a great many other events caused by the action of one substance upon another without being able to detect any visible sequence of cause and effect. Only a cultivated man accustomed to comparison and abstraction can intuitively form an idea of this phenomenon: upon reflection he sees it to be beyond material and mechanical influences. He terms it the *dynamic, virtual* action of forces, that which takes place by the absolute, specific, pure power that one force exerts upon another.

In the same way, the dynamic force with which pathogenetic influences act on healthy individuals and the *dynamic* force with which medicines act upon the vital principle to restore health are nothing but a contagion devoid of any material or mechanical aspect. A magnet powerfully attracts a piece of iron or steel near it in a similar way: one sees that the piece of iron is attracted by a pole of the magnet but does *not* see *how* this takes place. The invisible force of the magnet does not need any mechanical (material) means, such as a hook or lever; it attracts the iron or a steel needle by its own pure, nonmaterial, invisible, spirit-like force. We have here a *dynamic* phenomenon. Moreover, it invisibly (dynamically) transmits magnetic force to the steel needle, which in turn becomes magnetic even without being touched by the magnet,

even at some distance, and is then able to transmit the same magnetic quality to other steel needles (dynamically).

In a similar way a child who has smallpox or measles will transmit them to a healthy child by approaching him, even without touching him. This contamination takes place invisibly (dynamically) at a distance, with no more transmission of any material particle from one to the other than from the magnet to the steel needle. A specific, spirit-like influence communicates smallpox or measles to the child nearby, just as the magnet communicates magnetic force to the needle.

The action of medicines upon living people must be judged in a similar way. Natural substances that have been found to be medicinal are so only by virtue of their power (specific to each one of them) to modify the human organism through a dynamic, spirit-like effect (transmitted through sensitive living tissue) upon the spirit-like vital principle that governs life.

Those natural substances that in a narrower sense we call medicines are so only because they have the power to bring about changes in animal life. These medicinal substances capable of acting on the organism exert their nonmaterial (dynamic) influence only on the spirit-like vital force. In the same way the magnetic pole communicates to the steel needle, as if by contagion, *only* magnetic force and not other qualities, such as increased hardness or malleability, etc.

Thus any particular medicine will change the condition of a person's health (by a sort of contagion) in its own specific way and not in the way some other medicine would act, just as certainly as the proximity of a child with smallpox will communicate to a healthy child smallpox and never measles.

The influence of medicines upon our organism is exerted *dynamically*, as if by contagion, without the transmission of the slightest partiele of the material medicinal substance.

When indicated, the smallest dose of a properly dynamized medicine—in which calculation shows that there is only an infinitesimal amount of material substance left, so little that it cannot be imagined or conceived by the best mathematicians—exerts *far* more healing power than strong material doses of the same medicine. This very subtle dose, which contains almost nothing but the spirit-like medicinal force released and freed, can bring about, solely by its *dynamic* power, results impossible to obtain with crude medicinal substances, even in massive doses.

The specific invisible medicinal force of these highly potentized remedies does not depend on their material atoms or on their physical surfaces—ideas that are the product of useless and still materialistic theorizing about the higher power of potentized remedies. On the contrary, it is the invisible energy of the crude substance released and freed to the highest possible extent which is to be found in the minute impregnated globule or its solution. Upon contact with living tissue, this medicinal force acts dynamically on the whole organism in a specific way, without communicating to it the smallest material partiele, however subtle; and it does so more and more powerfully as it becomes freer and less material through progressive dynamization (par. 270).

In our time, which boasts such enlightened and deepthinking souls, does it have to be so impossible to conceive of a nonmaterial dynamic force when we see around us every day so many phenomena that cannot be explained in any other way? Is it through taking substantial doses of an emetic to bring about

antiperistaltic movements in the stomach that we feel nausea at the sight of something sickening? Is it not exclusively the dynamic action of seeing something revolting upon our imagination? Do we need a lever or a visible material contraption to lift an arm? Is it not exclusively the nonmaterial dynamic force of the will which lifts it?

12

It is only the pathologically untuned vital force that causes diseases."

The pathological manifestations accessible to our senses express all the internal changes, i.e., the whole pathological disturbance of the *dynamis*: they reveal the whole disease.

Conversely, the cessation through treatment of all the symptoms, i.e., the disappearance of all perceptible deviations from health, necessarily implies that the vital principle has recovered its integrity and therefore that the whole organism has returned to health.

a. How does the vital force bring the organism to produce symptoms, i.e., *how* does it make disease? Such questions are of no value to the physician. The answers will always be hidden from him. The Master and Lord of life has revealed to his senses only what is necessary and completely sufficient to cure diseases.

13

It follows that disease (excluding surgical cases) is not, as the allopaths believe:

an entity, however subtle, hidden in the interior of the organism separate from its living totality;

or an entity separate from the vital force, from the dynamic power that gives life to the organism.

Such a phantom" can be conceived only by materialistic minds. It is this phantom that has for millennia pushed official medicine along the deadly road it has traveled, making it an art of darkness incapable of healing.

a. Materia peccans!

14

There is no curable disease or morbid alteration hidden in the interior of the body which does not announce itself to the conscientiously observant physician through objective and subjective symptoms. This is what the omniscient Preserver of human life has provided in his infinite goodness.

15

In the invisible interior of the body, the suffering of the pathologically untuned spirit-like *dynamis* (vital force) animating the organism and the totality of perceptible symptoms that result and that represent the disease are one and the same.

The organism is the material instrument of life; but it is no more conceivable without the life-giving, regulating, instinctively feeling *dynamis* than this *dynamis* is conceivable without the organism. The two are one, even if thought separates them to facilitate comprehension.

16

Outer malefic agents that harm the healthy organism and disturb the harmonious rhythm of life can reach and

affect the spirit-like *dynamis* only in a way that also is dynamic and spirit-like.

The physician can remove these pathological untunements (diseases) only by acting on our spirit-like vital force with medicines having equally spirit-like, dynamic" effects that are perceived by the nervous sensitivity everywhere present in the organism.

So it is only by dynamic action upon the vital principle that remedies can restore health and the harmony of life after the perceptible changes in health (the totality of symptoms) have revealed the disease to the carefully observing and inquiring physician fully enough to be cured.

a. See footnote to paragraph 11.

17

Cure, which is the elimination of all the perceptible signs and symptoms of disease, means also the removal of the inner modifications of the vital force which underlie them: in this way the whole disease has been destroyed.⁰

Consequently the physician has only to eliminate the totality of the symptoms in order to remove simultaneously the inner alteration, the pathological untunement of the vital principle, thereby entirely removing and annihilating the *disease itself*.^b

Now, when disease is destroyed, health is restored, and this is the highest goal, the only goal of the physician who knows the significance of his calling, which is to help his fellow man, not to indulge in pretentious prattle.

a. It is possible to create a very grave disease by acting on the vital principle through the power of imagination and to cure it in the same way.

A prophetic dream, a superstitious fancy, or the solemn prediction of death on a certain day or at a certain hour have often produced all the worsening symptoms of disease, even to the point of leading one to expect early death—indeed, even to death itself at the predicted hour; this would not be possible without the simultaneous production of an inner change equal to the visible outer one.

By a similar influence, such as an artful pretense or a countersuggestion, it is often possible to banish all the signs announcing early death and to restore health promptly. This would not be possible if this exclusively psycholpgical remedy did not remove the inner and outer disturbances leading to the expectation of death.

b. God, the Preserver of mankind, reveals his wisdom and goodness in the cure of sickness afmeting humanity by clearly showing the physician what he needs to remove in diseases in order to annihilate them and restore health. But what would we have to conclude about his wisdom and goodness if (as the old school maintains, affecting an oracular insight into the hidden nature of things) he had instead clouded in mysterious obscurity what has to be cured, locking it up inside and depriving the physician of the possibility of clearly recognizing the trouble and curing it?

18

It is an indubitable truth that there is absolutely nothing else but the totality of symptoms—including the concomitant circumstances of the case (par. 5) by which a disease can express its need for help.

We can categorically declare that the *totality of symp-*

toms and circumstances observed in each individual case is the one and only indication that can guide us to the choice of the remedy.

19

Since *diseases* are only *deviations from the healthy condition*, and since they express themselves through symptoms, and since *cure* is equally only a *change from the diseased condition* back to the state of *health*, one easily sees that *medicines* can cure disease only if they possess the power to alter the way a person feels and functions. Indeed, it is *only* because of this power that they are medicines.

20

It is impossible only through the efforts of the intellect to recognize the spirit-like force itself, which, hidden in the intimate essence of the medicines, gives them the power to change the way people feel and thereby to cure diseases.

It is only through its effects on the human economy that we may experience and clearly perceive it.

21

Beyond question, the curative essence of medicines cannot be recognized in itself. Pure experiments conducted by even the most perceptive observer can reveal nothing to explain why medicinal substances cure except that they bring about evident changes in the human economy, specifically that they provoke a number of definite symptoms in and upon the *healthy*. It follows that when remedies cure they do so only through their ability to alter human health by causing characteristic symptoms.

Therefore we should concern ourselves exclusively with the disease symptoms that medicines bring about in the healthy, the only means by which they reveal their inherent curative virtues, to discover each one's disease-producing power and thereby its curative power.

22

To change diseases into health the only thing that must be removed is the totality of the subjective and objective symptoms.

The curative power of medicines consists exclusively in their propensity to produce disease symptoms in the healthy and remove them from the sick.

It follows on the one hand that substances become remedies and are able to destroy disease only by arousing certain manifestations and symptoms, i.e., particular artificial disease conditions, which are capable of eliminating and destroying the symptoms that already exist, i.e., the natural disease being treated; and, conversely, that for the totality of symptoms to be cured, one must seek that medicine which has demonstrated the greatest propensity to produce either *similar ovopposite* symptoms.

Now, whether to treat disturbances with *similar* or with *opposite* medicinal symptoms to remove existing disease symptoms and restore health as gently, surely, and permanently as possible is something that only experiment will reveal."

a. In addition to these two possible modes of treatment there is a third, the *allopathie method*, which prescribes medicines having symptoms with no direct pathic relationship to the disease condition, symptoms neither similar nor opposite but completely heterogeneous.

As I have stated elsewhere, this method plays with the life of the patient irresponsibly and murderously, with its massive doses of dangerously violent drugs of unknown action chosen upon mere conjecture, its painful procedures that are supposed to divert sickness to other parts, its exhaustion of the patient by emptying him from above and from below, by making him sweat or salivate, but worst of all, in accordance with the present fashion, by blindly and relentlessly wasting his irreplaceable blood. . . . All this is done on the pretext that the physician has to imitate and assist the efforts that diseased nature makes to restore itself, and without the understanding that it is senseless to try to imitate and assist the very imperfect and most often inappropriate efforts of the purely instinctive and unreasoning vital force. The vital force was given to us to sustain our life in harmony as long as we are healthy, not to heal itself when diseased, for if it possessed an ability so worthy of imitation, it would never allow the organism to fall ill.

When afflicted by disease agents, our vital force can express its untunement only through disturbances in the normal functions of the organism and through pain, whereby it calls for the help of a wise physician. If such help is not forthcoming, it tries to save itself at all costs by increasing the suffering and especially by violent evacuations, often at the cost of tremendous sacrifice, sometimes at the cost of life itself.

The pathologically untuned vital force has so little ability to cure that it certainly does not deserve to be imitated, since all the symptoms and changes it produces in the organism are precisely the disease itself! Would any reasonable physician who is unwilling to sacrifice his patient try to imitate it in order to cure?