

Paul Houghton

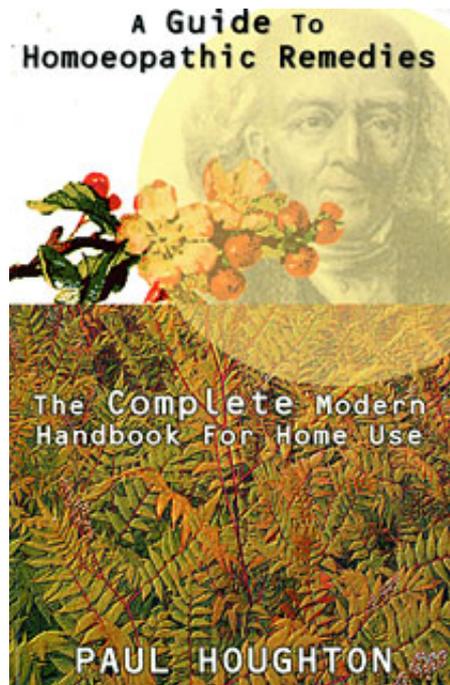
A Guide to Homoeopathic Remedies

Reading excerpt

[A Guide to Homoeopathic Remedies](#)

of [Paul Houghton](#)

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HOW DOES HOMOEOPATHY WORK?

Life-energy and matter

Try a simple thought-exercise. Think of a dead body, then of a living person. Compare the two. That which is present in one and absent from the other is what homoeopathy and all systems of medicine are concerned with. Oddly enough, we rarely think about it carefully and there is even some disagreement about what it should be called. Perhaps the best name for it is simply 'Life'.

As you can see, Life is a kind of energy, while the body on its own is inert matter. An essential thing about energy is that in itself it is invisible, we are only made aware of it by observing the effects that it has on matter. On the other hand, the essential thing about matter is that in itself it does nothing, it only moves or changes when energy causes it to do so.

The homoeopathic view of health and illness

From these certainties it is known that *whenever our health changes it is the Life energy that has changed, although the effects on the material body are all that can be observed.*

It is worth stressing this because it is the central point on which all the theory and practice of homoeopathy is based. The only way of telling what has happened to someone when they have become ill is to observe the changes in their body (including the subtle body called mind), simply because this is all that can be observed. But it is known for certain that the cause and beginning of the problem are not in the material body, simply because matter on its own cannot change or do anything. The cause and the real nature of the illness are a change in the Life energy, and it is this change that has to be identified and

removed in order to restore the patient to health. The whole business of medicine is how to use medicinal substances in order to achieve this. There are of course some conditions caused by violent damage to or deformity of the body, when physical intervention is essential. This is the domain of surgery and emergency procedures. Homoeopathy is a system of medicine concerned with the treatment of medical conditions, in the strict sense of that word. The need for surgery and its frequently wonderful results have no bearing on the validity or otherwise of homoeopathy in its own sphere. Medicine clearly has a support role in relation to surgery, and the benefits of homoeopathic medicines during and after surgery are well known.

The work of Samuel Hahnemann

Samuel Hahnemann, the eighteenth-century German doctor who founded homoeopathy, dedicated his life to seeking the best way of using medicinal substances to remove the disturbance in the Life energy which he understood to be the root of illness. He was one of those rare scientists who excel both in experimenting and in reflecting on the results to gain insights into the underlying laws at work in what they observe.

Hahnemann perceived that there is a problem with the usual method of using medicines that have the opposite effect to the symptoms of disease, such as giving preparations that cause diarrhoea to treat constipation, or those that cause coldness to treat fevers. He saw that because of the principle of equal and opposite action and reaction, at first the action of the medicine is to reduce the symptoms, but that then the reaction follows and the symptoms come back, often visibly worse than before. This is why bigger and bigger doses of medicine often have to be given.

He experimented with medicines that had an effect *similar* to the symptoms of the disease, and the results were very pleasing. He conducted many experiments himself and also studied the medical literature available at the time, producing a great body of empirical evidence to support his idea that the best way to remove disease is to give a medicine with symptoms similar to those of the disease.

However, he still faced the problem of how to get the benefits from a medicine without suffering the harmful effects as well. He experimented with diluting the preparations and found that it was easier to control the effects. He persisted in this line and to his own surprise made a remarkable discovery. If he diluted the medicines repeatedly,

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to the point where no material trace of the substance remained, and vigorously agitated the solution before each dilution, then not only were the harmful effects eliminated and the benefits retained, but also a whole new dimension of medicinal powers was revealed, sometimes in substances that were quite inert in their original form. This way of preparing medicines is known as potentisation.

The result was very surprising, but Hahnemann made many careful experiments and repeatedly confirmed that it was true.

How homoeopathic medicines take effect

For a long time Hahnemann thought that he was still working with the principle of action and reaction, only using it in the opposite way to conventional medicine. He thought that when the homoeopathic remedy was given it had an action like the symptoms of the disease, and that then the equal and opposite reaction happened, which was the opposite of the symptoms, so the patient got better.

Then, near the end of his working life, he perceived a new explanation of how homoeopathic remedies work. He reminded himself again that *whenever our health changes it is the Life energy that has changed, although the effects on the material body are all that can be observed.* And the task of medicine is to remove that change.

He therefore came to this conclusion: Disease is just a state of the Life energy. The effect of a potentised medicine is just a state of the Life energy. If the effect of the medicine is accurately similar to the effect of the disease, then the effect of the medicine takes the place of the disease, which thus ceases to exist. Then the effect of the medicine is exhausted, and the Life energy is left free of both, so long as there is no maintaining cause present to renew the disease.

It is not a matter of action and reaction. Actually, it is more like a simple push: the effect of the medicine displaces the disease in the Life energy.

One might ask, why are the two effects not combined, like two sounds or colours? There is no reason in principle why it should not be like this, but experiments repeatedly suggest that what happens is more like what happens when a big wave displaces a small one.

This is the stage Hahnemann had reached in his understanding by the time he ceased work. His theory is perfectly scientific in the sense that it is the simplest and most complete explanation that has yet been proposed to account for the observed facts, it is rigorously logical, and it is supported by a large body of experience.

The current state of understanding

Since Hahnemann died no substantial progress has been made towards a further understanding of how homoeopathic medicines work and exactly how they should be used in all situations. Luckily he himself had achieved enough to enable his followers to do much good. One reason for this lack of progress is that the final version of Hahnemann's treatise on homoeopathic principles was lost for a long time and was unknown to the great homoeopaths of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who shaped the way homoeopathy developed and became established during this period. Even today, versions of the action-reaction theory are presented in many of the schools of homoeopathy. Also, developments in conventional medicine have brought great benefits which any workable theory of homoeopathy must acknowledge and incorporate.

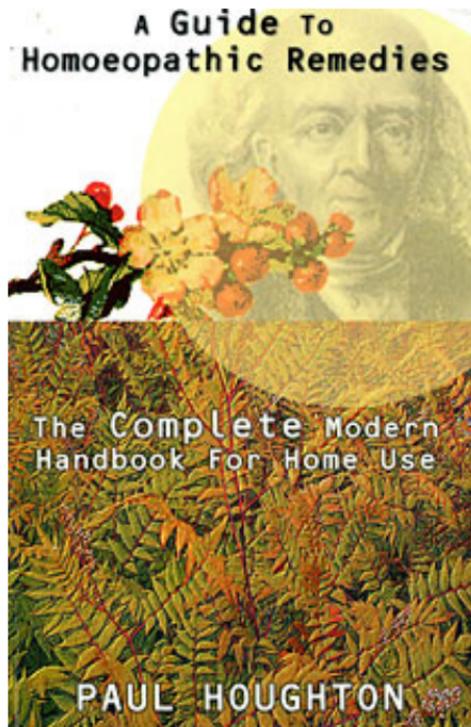
Homoeopaths are acutely aware of the need for progress in this area. At the moment there is some optimism that developments in quantum physics will yield answers, but there is not much enthusiasm for seeking new insights through reflection, along the lines indicated by Hahnemann himself. Exactly how best to proceed is an urgent and fascinating question which lies outside the scope of this book.

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