

# The fantastic superficiality

## (about homeopathy in the media)

Since the night of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, millions of viewers are being hoodwinked by the evocation, on a dominical TV show, that homeopathy would be “tested” and the test would result in millionaire money prizes. This fact only would be enough to cause some repulse. But, once more, mediocrity and the indecency of extreme superficiality interlined Brazilian TV tone.

A historical analysis demonstrates that the idea of “therapeutical contests” and “tests” always ends up in trouble to the homeopaths – consequently to the patients – until the point of requiring the interdiction of its practice, such as happened in Germany, France and USA. The same phenomenon occurred since 19<sup>th</sup> Century, repeated to researchers of 20<sup>th</sup> Century and keeps happening through the last 200 years.

What does happen to this discussion, that never becomes sufficiently elucidative? Why doesn't it mature? Why does the nature of this polemic always ends up in improvise and rough superficiality? Since we surpassed the phase of evocating conspiracy theories, remains the tendency to exam the incapacity that part of hegemonic science has to endure contradictions.

Does Homeopathy contradict certain rules of pharmacology? Does it challenge physic-chemistry postulates? Does it want to rediscuss what really is to cure? Does it think that a practice of medicine that considers the subject and not only disease should exist? Does it valorize the narration and the quality of medicine? Yes, and so what? Homeopathy is not alone. Epistemologists like Thomas Kuhn already demonstrated the floating nature of the paradigms that are not yet consolidated, and its substitution for others. Science is not only an aspect that deserves to be examined among others, such as, for example, psychological or ideological motivation of researchers. These fights can last centuries, and happened to several scientific theories. That would be a respectful explanation that would praise viewers' intelligence. But, unfortunately, what media looked for was the audience, not exactly the explanation. Denouncing what one judges it's a lure or a fraud is licit – maybe it's the most noble function of the media in a

representative democracy –but who will control the intention of the denounce? And, even more, who will control the results of the investigation?

Comparing homeopathy – as done in the first program exhibited by *Fantástico* (a famous Brazilian TV show, held on Globo network) – with unmasked “false psychics” and extol the ridiculous figure of a gentleman that has the courage – or the lack of self criticism – of entitling himself “magician and skeptic” puts all the project under suspicion. This gentleman – a professional magician, who earns his living doing a crusade to the technological faith – promises what he cannot fulfill: showing us, in the end, the final test: “homeopathy works or doesn't work”. That's a significant disservice. It's an outrage to millions of users and, why don't say?, an instrumentalization full of prejudice of public opinion. It would be very useful to say that homeopathy is a medical and pharmaceutical practice recognized by Federal Council of Medicine and Pharmacy, respectively. That it is taught at universities; that has several insertions on scientific community; that evolves as a valid knowledge in our times. That benefits millions of people and that PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) as well as WHO (World Health Organization) recommend it as a valid medical technology.

The tone of the second program was a bit softer, but even so it emphasized on the provisory and the quack evocation that the real test was still to come. If we wanted to be ironic, we could only groan. What a waste of time doing it in a series... Why don't define immediately the verdict, make the summary judgement as one uses to do: “about homeopathy, one cannot say that it works nor that it doesn't work”? By the way, similar is the result of the unfruitful and consuming strike between fanatic homeopaths and their irascible opponents, both surely mistaken.

In the third show, it was admitted that homeopathy could work, but due to human's own immunologic system, to a placebo effect or only because the deep homeopathic consultations themselves can help the organism to react. Once more, the show chose to be superficial.

There is a “small” problem here, because, after all, there shouldn’t exist, in science, the same kind of tension that exists in the imaginary of hooligans or political parties militants. The healthy tension that exists in science is literally from a different nature. It means to evaluate dialectically the facts, to test hypothesis. To expose them to contradiction, try to falsify them and let the pleas and the audience (and users) intelligence define what they will do in practical life with that information. To use or not to use. To trust or not to trust. Or even to trust doubting, to use mistrusting.

Exactly for this reason there will not be a final test, the crucial experience that will prove or disprove homeopathy, as well as never there will be a final proof to psychoanalysis and even to the biomedicine itself, and its lots of evident contradictions. It’s likely that homeopathy elucidates certain aspects of medicine and epistemology, and maybe it can be elucidated in other aspects by genetics, Nan technology and human sciences.

That’s the way that goes the thing another study from nurseries of scientific theories, Paul Feyrabend, called “methodological plurality”, something the scientists don’t understand, I mean, don’t accept. Under the monologic reason that guides them, it would mean to admit – as we already listened – that they would have to “tear their certificates”. In their reductionist vision, everything is black or white, right or wrong. To these minds, there aren’t contexts or conditions. There isn’t, at last, the possibility of the almost-true. They are, in the end, false skeptics, because they only believe in their dogmatic incredulity – which they defend as a cause – meanwhile the true skeptic doubts even of himself, but rather with good humor.

The experiments of the French doctor and researcher from INSERM Jacques Benveniste, published in the famous Nature in 1998 and mocked by characters such the mentioned magician<sup>1</sup>, were recently proved by

European researchers that demonstrated the presence – in ultradiluted substances – of information probably of electromagnetic character, in the mixtures solute-solvent, that was a lot above of the threshold of substance dispersion (known in science as Avogadro’s number).

Two years ago, in the first page of The Guardian, one of these researchers – who had vilified Benveniste and his researches by the episode of Nature – made a revision of the work and, in the traditional mea culpa style, affirmed that those experiments were retested and presented strong evidences of empirical verification, I mean, that he was right even if with inconclusive results. It’s true that Benveniste almost lost his reputation and admitted methodological failures in his own work, but in an interview to this magazine he affirmed that it worth take the risk, because he was dealing with the most unconfessible prejudices of science: the ignorance about what is the element water, which stable liaisons are still not explicable by any scientific known theory, and that made him formulate his famous hypothesis of “water memory”.

But will it maybe “confirm” or “condemn” homeopathy? No. That’s where the mistake stays. It shows only that a progress of enlightenment is happening – one of the characteristics of a scientific practice, according to Gastón Bachelard – and that will take us to perceive increasingly more clearly how homeopathy treats and which are its perspectives.

Homeopathy doesn’t intend to be hegemonic, even wants that its technique, its peculiar way of evaluate health and disease, can keep on being investigated in the same conditions of other therapies. And this, sure enough, surpasses the dimension of what is scientific.

In the end, homeopathy is popular because, welcoming diversity, brings anthropological, environmental, social and cultural questions, that overcomes a mere medical action of life: approaches the discussion of what is health to one of us. And this doesn’t have a price, or a prize.



www.homeo.com.br

**HOMEOPARMA**  
**CRISTAL**  
Farmácia Homeopática

Medicamentos Homeopáticos • Florais • Fitoterápicos

**Entrega em Domicílio**

Horário de Funcionamento: 2ª a 6ª das 9h00 às 19h00  
Sábado das 9h00 às 13h00 • Domingos e Feriados das 9h00 às 15h00  
R. Domingos de Moraes, 1382 - V. Mariana - Fone/Fax 5579.7979 - Fone: 5082.4387 - 5082.4371



**Farmácia Homeopática**  
**Ilúmina**

Garantia de qualidade no preparo do seu Medicamento.

www.ilumina.com.br  
horário de funcionamento:  
Seg a Sexta - das 9 às 21h  
Sábados - das 9 às 18h

**ENTREGA EM DOMICÍLIO**

Tel: 0-xx-11 5584-8094 e 5584-9372 e-mail: ilumina@ilumina.com.br  
Rua Caputira, 108 Mirandópolis São Paulo - SP CEP 04052-070  
PRÓXIMO À ESTAÇÃO PRAÇA DA ÁRVORE DO METRO