

## “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who in the land is the wisest of all?”

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As expected [1], 2010 began full of news! And also of controversies! 2010 opened with the publication of the special issue (part II) of journal *Homeopathy* carrying many interesting original and revision articles [2], thus, bringing into the scientific community new boundaries, standards, models and challenges. Few weeks later, hundreds of skeptics took an overdose of homeopathic medicines to protest against the sale of homeopathic remedies, believing that in this way it would be possible to prove that such substances have no scientific basis [3], a manifestation as funny as senseless, since it was unable to address any of the points claimed by the participants. Not too many weeks had passed before the Science and Technology Committee of the United Kingdom House of Commons gave a report concluding that homeopathy is not more efficacious than a placebo effect, the explanations of the mode of operation of homeopathy are scientifically implausible and that further clinical trials of homeopathy are not be justified [4], a really worrying decision with potential far reaching consequences to science and public policy, no matter how tendentious and flawed was the argumentation used! For some, it was nothing but an unjustified political decision disregarding all scientific evidence! For others, a belated but right decision.

These events spread out all over the world, feeding discussions, prejudices, dogmas and many varieties of scientific and lay discourse. Each one of us has his or her own beliefs and reasons to take sides in this controversy. It can be one more facet of the never-ending mythic struggle between “good and evil”, as in fairy tales. If so, then the problem would be to know who is who!

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who in the land is the *wisest* of all?” someone might ask like the Queen in Snow White, so sure of her top qualities. What about us? Are we ready to listen to the answer? One could try: “Queen, indeed, you are very wise, but there is someone wiser than you.”

I do not believe the House of Commons is the wisest, nor are the skeptics! Neither are the homeopaths or their followers. As a fact, it is not a struggle between “good and evil”, and we are not talking to a magic mirror!

What we are doing is **science**. We are building an emergent field included within the current scientific framework, but on the other hand, not restricted by it. I agree with any skeptic on that the phenomenon of High Dilution does not have a scientifically plausible explanation (yet, I hope!). However, any skeptic must concede that unexplained phenomena push science forwards, whereas bans to question concepts hitherto well-established and the pruning of new possibilities and models make science stuck in time! (as it has already happened!)

The current challenge for the HD scientific community is not to convince skeptics, scientists or politics with evidences they will reject on arbitrary. Nor to explain HDs based on speculations or unverifiable hypotheses. We need high quality research in order to characterize the phenomenon before any explanation can be attempted at. And high quality science requires high quality critics, skeptics and reviewers.

At first glance, a magic mirror would seem so good: we would ask it for the truth or at least for some tracks to follow. It would solve many conflicts. But it would also destroy the pleasure in making science, in discovering new things and managing our life and beliefs.

Fortunately, magic mirrors do not exist. And I suspect that even if they would exist, people probably would not follow them, whenever "truth" would not seem convenient. That was exactly what happened to the Queen, thus, she ordered a hunter to take Snow White into the woods and kill her. But this is just a fantastic fairy tale... or not?

## References

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