Fixed nature and dynamic processes in Hahnemann’s thought

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aims. At least since classical Greek philosophy two opposite views are facing, the one of Heraclitus, affirming that all things are in a continuous flux, and the other of Parmenides, the assertor of changelessness. The aim of present contribution is to consider if and how the tension between such views continues to permeate several features of the culture, including the thought of S. Hahnemann.

Methods. This will be achieved through the examination of some cases in the natural sciences and human sciences, including Hahnemann’s writings.

Few examples are presented here. The living being can be viewed as a thing genetically determined, or as an open and dynamic complex of processes interacting mutually and with the environment at metabolic and informational levels. The central nervous system is seen to underlie both automatic, and creative behaviours. A species is considered a pure ideal type, or a historically varying population of similar individuals. The basic traits of human behaviour are attributed to an unchanging nature (better, a nature undergoing slow Darwinian changes), or to a culture evolving in a rapid Lamarckian way. Within an integrated view of the person one may consider both the four fixed human constitutions (see H. Bernard; M. Martiny; N. Pende; A. Negro), and their four changing constitutional stages (see H. Bernard). Classical culture highlights the paramount importance of universal principles, while postmodern culture highlights proteanism, liquid state, patchwork.

In particular, we may encounter such two views in the thought of Hahnemann on diseases. They are found in his writings respectively on the chronic diseases, and on the so-called non-miasmatic diseases. About chronic diseases, he wrote that they are primitive, deeply-rooted, underlying external symptoms, old, universal, always recurring, internal, and do not disappear even when external symptoms of acute diseases disappeared, while the whole symptoms of them must be extensively taken into account. About non-miasmatic diseases, he wrote that the complex of symptoms of a single case, which is always different for each individual case, cannot be foreseen, nor schematized, nor taken as a model, nor treated by an a priori chosen remedy or with a priori rules different from the strict application of the so-called law of similars, experimentally established.

Conclusions. We may conclude that Hahnemann’s integrated consideration of diseases takes into account both the fixed characteristics of the chronic ones and the dynamic processes of the acute ones, so that the two above views appear to be not opposed, but perfectly integrated.

Key words: chronic diseases, Hahnemann, historicity, nature, non-miasmatic diseases.