

Review Article

Richard Hughes's homoeopathic philosophy: A short review

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Received : 02 August 2020
Accepted : 29 November 2020
Published : 24 December 2020

DOI
10.25259/JISH_30_2020

Quick Response Code:



ABSTRACT

Background: After Dr. Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann, several stalwarts appeared on the horizon of Homoeopathy, one of these was Dr. Richard Hughes who practiced in the 19th century and stood out because of his philosophical approach. He was a staunch supporter as well as a critic of Hahnemann. He incorporated the latest scientific developments of the time in his practice, making his philosophy unique and progressive. We believe his philosophy will inspire the present generation of homoeopaths to explore homoeopathy in the light of cutting-edge scientific inventions.

Methods: A search of literature, including writings, lectures, and articles written by Dr. Hughes, was done. Web pages, Google Search, etc., were explored related to him between April 2020 and July 2020 based on the search results an idea about Hughes's homoeopathic concept and philosophy was constructed which has been highlighted below.

Results: Dr. Hughes strongly endorsed Hahnemann's Similia principle, but rarely used other theories such as Theory of Miasm, Theory of Vital force, and Doctrine of drug dynamization. According to him, similarity should be established between the drug pathogenesis and disease pathogenesis. He advocated low potency prescription, pragmatic, antimystical Homoeopathy and followed the 4th edition of Organon of Medicine. More stress on pathology, opposition to clinical symptoms, and drug proving on animals were the main features of his philosophy. He aimed for the middle path between Homoeopathy and orthodox. He was respected in the homoeopathic and allopathic fraternities and was known as the 3Xer or Half Homoeopath.

Conclusion: The understanding and teachings of Dr. Hughes regarding Homoeopathy are pragmatic, transparent, and simple. He endorsed and practiced only symptom similarity between patient and medicine. He criticized the baseless explanations of homoeopathic theories and interpreted phenomena in the light of scientific development and inventions.

Keywords: Homoeopathy, Philosophy, Pathology, Animal proving, Organon of medicine, Psora theory

INTRODUCTION

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that the best concept and knowledge about anything can only be had by someone who has seen it growing through time,^[1] for a better idea of Homoeopathy, we need to study the philosophies and insight of different homoeopathic stalwarts. After its discovery in Germany, Homoeopathy rapidly spread globally. Physicians worldwide started turning to Homoeopathy approach, philosophy, and mode of practice who contributed immensely in the development of homoeopathy as system of therapeutic. Some physicians fully endorsed Hahnemann's doctrines, while some explained them in the light of their own understanding and contemporary scientific developments. Gradually different stalwarts came up round the globe who propounded their homoeopathic philosophies. among

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those philosophies Hughes's philosophy stands distinct. He was a contemporary of noted homoeopaths such as Constantine Hering (1800–1880), Samuel Lilienthal (1815–1891), Henry N. Guernsey (1817–1885), Robert E. Dudgeon (1819–1904), Dr. Wilhelm Schuessler (1821–1898), Carroll Dunham (1828–1877), Henry C. Allen (1836–1909), Timothy Field Allen (1837–1902), Eugene Beauharis Nash (1838–1917), James Compton Burnett (1840–1901), and Ernest A. Farrington (1847–1885).^[2]

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Richard Hughes was born in London in 1836. His father, Phillip Hughes, was a retired war office clerk. Dr. Hughes received the title of MD in 1860 from the American College. He lived primarily in Brighton with his wife Sarah and his six children. He switched from allopathy to Homoeopathy and became a physician at the Brighton Homeopathic dispensary. He was also Editor of the British Journal of Homoeopathy and permanent secretary of the Organization of the International Congress of Homoeopathy Physicians. He was appointed Lecturer in Materia Medica by the British Homeopathic Society. Dr. Hughes was very much concerned about the due respect to be given to the noble soul of Hahnemann. He supervised the reburial of Hahnemann's body in famous cemetery of Père Lachaise Cemetery in 1898.^[3] He died in 1902.

The sweeping changes in medicine in the 19th century like development of microscope, cell theory, germ theory, Koch's postulates etc significantly affected the Dr. Hughes's concept of medicine which is reflected in his writings and lectures.

METHODS

We searched for literature written by or related to Dr. Richard Hughes on databases and web pages such as forgottenbooks.com, Amazon Books, and Google Scholar. Books from library of Regional Research Institute for Homoeopathy, Guwahati, were explored. Materials derived from above sources were analyzed. Subsequently, an idea was formulated regarding Dr. Hughes' Homoeopathic concept and philosophy.

RESULTS

On examining the available literary resources, we determined that Dr. Hughes was an admirer and critic of Hahnemann. He created his unique philosophy without fear of criticism from Hahnemann's followers. His progressive, out of the box philosophy, has shown how modern scientific developments can be imbibed while explaining and practicing Homoeopathy. The Homoeopathic philosophy of Dr. Hughes can be projected through the following points.

LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

Dr. Hughes's contribution to Homoeopathy was not confined to critical discussion of Hahnemann's writings. His most important undertaking was undoubtedly his attempt to revise and purify the Homoeopathic contemporary *Materia Medica*, which yielded the *Drug Pathogenesis*. Four volumes took 7 years to prepare (1884–91). It was a joint enterprise between the British Homoeopathic Society and the American Institute of Homoeopathy. Dr. Hughes's intention was to include all the reliable information available in his day apart from Hahnemann's writings. He assisted Dr. T.F. Allen in preparing "Encyclopaedia of drug Pathogenesis" and Dr. Robert Ellias Dudgeon in translating Samuel Hahnemann's *The "Materia Medica Pura"* into English. His important works are listed below.

1. A Manual of Pharmacodynamics (1867)
2. Manual of Therapeutics (1869)
3. Hahnemann as a Medical Philosopher (1881)
4. A course of Lectures on the Knowledge of the Physician (1884)
5. A Cyclopaedia of Drug Pathogenesis (four volumes) (1887)
6. The Principle and Practice of Homoeopathy (1902)

After going through the works and writings of Dr. Hughes, the characteristic features about his philosophy can be presented through the following [Figure 1].

HUGHESIAN PHILOSOPHY IS PRAGMATIC AND ANTI-MYSTICAL

Dr. Hughes followed a practical approach. It was not based on empty speculations. He strongly believed in and supported the *Similia* principle (*Similia Similibus*). According to him, knowledge of disease comprises the symptoms including available pathology. Similarly, knowledge of medicine comprises the symptoms produced by the medicine during drug proving on humans or animals. He was concerned only with matching the medicinal symptoms to the disease symptoms.

HOMOEOPATHY IS A THERAPEUTIC METHOD

According to Dr. Hughes homoeopathy is a system or method of therapeutic based on symptom similarity and Hahnemann has introduced his own method of achieving symptom similarity. Being practitioner we should focus on method rather individual. so we should follow the system i.e., Homoeopathy instead of any individual.^[5]

VIEWS REGARDING THE ORGANON OF MEDICINE

Dr. Hughes had respect for the Organon of Medicine considering it a master piece created by Hahnemann.

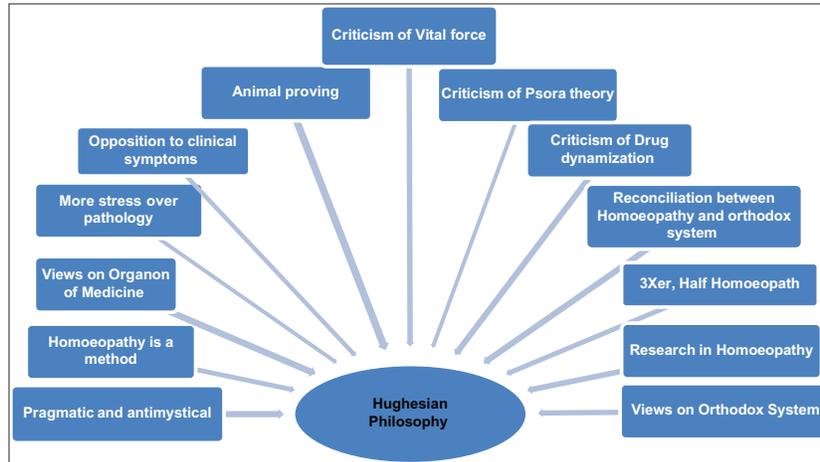


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of Dr. Hughes's philosophy.

However, in order to achieve a proper understanding of this landmark work, we must know the changes and deviations that occurred in subsequent editions.^[6] Dr. Hughes analyzed the Organon from a practical point of view. In contrast to his contemporary homoeopaths, Dr. Hughes, stressed that the Organon was useful only till the 4th edition after this some of the author's fancies and follies were incorporated in the Organon. Homeopathy is a mixture of both art and science. He advised to interpret "Similia Similibus Curentur" as "let likes be treated by likes" instead of "likes are cured by likes." In my opinion, this is where some of Dr. Hughes' limitations come through, because where his thought process ends, Hahnemann's principles and thinking start. The theory of vital force, doctrine of drug, posology, theory of chronic diseases, and theory of miasm were derived by Hahnemann after years of experimentation. After the apparent failure of the Similia principle in chronic cases, Hahnemann postulated the theory of miasms, which is described in later editions.

Scientifically, Dr. Hughes wanted to substantiate Organon with the prevalent scientific explanations so it would be accepted by his peers. This is how he defended Hahnemann by referring disease-causing microorganisms as miasm.

MORE STRESS ON PATHOLOGY

Dr. Hughes was significantly influenced by the latest medical developments of his time. His belief in the dynamic cause of the disease was very weak as he opposed the miasmatic theory. According to him, pathology is not a part of disease. A physician must select a medicine that covers the disease pathology as well. For example, in a patient with ulcers, we should select a medicine that is known to produce ulcer. Due to this, he was later granted the moniker of pathological prescriber.^[7] While compiling the Cyclopedia, Dr. Hughes decided to eliminate all the proving symptoms gained from the drugs taken at potencies above 6C. He said that, "It is

necessary to understand the pathology created by the remedies on the organic level and it is the pathology level which has to be treated." His writings and lectures are full of examples where medicines against the various nosological diseases have been administered resembling the allopathic approach. He justified the use of medicines administered by Hahnemann citing similarity between symptoms of the medicine and diagnostic symptoms of the diseases such as Belladonna for scarlatina, Camphor for cholera, Cuprum for 2nd stage of Cholera, and Baptisia for typhoid.

OPPOSITION TO CLINICAL SYMPTOMS

We know that there are different types of symptoms in our Materia Medica such as proving symptoms, clinical symptoms, and symptoms of poisoning, but Dr. Hughes used and accepted only the symptoms of medicines which were developed during drug proving. In his book Cyclopedia of Drug Pathogenesis, he gave only proved symptoms. He purified homoeopathic Materia Medica by collecting only proved symptoms and discarding other symptoms such as clinical symptoms. Proved symptoms have more value than other symptoms as symptoms may be speculative and not genuine.^[8]

ADVOCATE OF ANIMAL PROVING

Dr. Hughes greatly admired the drug proving process described by Hahnemann. After Haller and Alexander, it was Hahnemann who utilized drug proving in medical use. Dr. Hughes referred Hahnemann as the father of experimental pharmacology. He was a staunch supporter of proved symptoms because they are credible and based on evidence; hence for collection of proved symptoms, he supported proving on animals. According to him, symptoms produced in animal proving have the same value as those produced in human being. He himself proved drugs on different animals. For example, he proved Drosera on cats

where tuberculosis like symptoms were produced; at present, we see that Drosera is a very good medicine for patients with a history of tuberculosis.^[9]

CRITICISM OF VITAL FORCE

The concept of the vital force, which was introduced in the 5th edition of the Organon, is one of the theories that Dr. Hughes criticized. According to Hahnemann, the vital force controls every cell of the living organisms. Hughes criticized vital force by citing the view of modern science regarding living organisms. According to him, *“Recent science is to regard the organism as no monarchy, wherein some Archeus lives and rules, but as a republic in which every part is equally alive and independently active, the unity of the whole being secured only by the common circulation and the universal telegraphic system of nerves. It is unfortunate that Hahnemann introduced Theory of vital force in later editions of Organon and one would have been glad if the Organon had kept itself clear of such questions and had occupied only the solid ground of observation and experiment.”*^[10]

CRITICISM OF PSORA THEORY

After the apparent failure of the Similia principle, especially in acute diseases, Hahnemann devoted 12 years to determine why acute diseases reappear after few days of treatment suitably selected homoeopathic medicine. He concluded that miasms are the fundamental cause of disease. Seven-eighth of diseases are caused by Psora, which develop due to faulty treatment of scabies like eruptions. The remaining diseases are caused by the suppression of venereal diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhoea.^[11] Dr. Hughes criticized miasm or Psora theory in the following words *“now it is easy for us, knowing what we know (or suppose we know) about itch to make merry over this theory of Hahnemann’s but to condemn or ridicule him for it is a gross anachronism.”* He further adds *“in reading the Organon let us determine to ignore it, or to translate its language in the way I have suggested; we shall do greater justice to the main argument of the treatise.”*^[12,13] Dr. Hughes logically established that the theory of miasm is equivalent to the germ theory of modern science, at least in infectious diseases. According to him, Hahnemann has held the invisible living creatures as the cause of cholera referring them as cholera miasm. Naturally, minute organisms have been referred as miasm.^[14]

CRITICISM OF DRUG DYNAMIZATION

Drug dynamization is a process, invented by Hahnemann through which the finer symptoms and dormant properties of a drug come into play. Dynamization can be done using two processes: Trituration and succussion (§269–271). Dynamization develops the latent, hitherto unperceived, as if slumbering hidden, dynamic powers, which influence the life principle and change the well-being of animal life. It is

among the seven cardinal principles on which Homoeopathy depends. Dr. Hughes criticized this doctrine as *“Hahnemann’s dynamization in the light of science must be held untenable.”* He further says *“I must advise you to reject these preparations, not so much upon the grounds of science and reasons as upon those of pharmacy. They are simple impossibilities. It has been calculated that to make the millionth potency of a single medicine according to Hahnemann’s instructions would require 2,000 gallons of alcohol, and would occupy more than a year in the process which is practically impossible.”*^[15,16]

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN HOMOEOPATHY AND ORTHODOX SYSTEM

Having a background of the orthodox medical system, Dr. Hughes imposed some limitations on his practice and concept of Homoeopathy. He only believed in matching between disease symptoms with the proved symptoms of medicine. He discarded some important theories that were introduced after 4th edition of Organon of Medicine. Before accepting anything, he measured it on the scale of the prevalent scientific theories. He believed that the orthodox system of medicine has some footing in the science, he accepted some of its practices. He developed and practiced his own form of Homoeopathy. In his later years, he wanted to develop a system that combines the orthodox system and Hahnemannian Homoeopathy. He wanted some kind of reconciliation between the two for the sake of humanity and stated that the patient should receive any treatment that can help him in a better way. He quoted, *“I write especially for practitioners of the old school, who desire to acquaint themselves with and furnish themselves for our practice. I felt accordingly the need of some mode of communication which should be colloquial rather than didactic. And moreover I wanted to have always before me the mind of our confreres, wedded to old notions, bristling with objections to anything new, and requiring explanations to the fullest degree.”*^[17]

A LOW POTENCY PRESCRIBER

Dr. Hughes mainly prescribed lower potencies (3X, 6X up to 30C) he believed that higher potencies have no scientific evidence to support them. He primarily used 3X potency, due to which he was known as the 3Xer and a half homoeopath.^[3]

EMPHASIS ON FURTHER RESEARCH IN HOMOEOPATHY

Dr. Hughes was research oriented. He continually revolted against some theories of Hahnemann solely because he felt they lacked scientific validation. He sought acceptance by utilizing the new scientific theories and research outcomes of his time. He compelled his followers in the following words, *“To most of my readers I hope that the specimens I exhibit will*

excite a thirst for farther research of their own, rather than a less worthy content with the results of the labor of others."

HIS VIEWS ON THE ORTHODOX SYSTEM

Dr. Hughes believed that the orthodox system was the mere empiricism of applied science, but lacked the art, which was its weakness. He felt that the system had deviated from its original motto of helping suffering humanity in the true sense. He stated that the maladies are studied with the eye of the naturalist rather than of the artist and the student is turned out thoroughly equipped for their diagnosis but helpless in their treatment.^[18]

DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT HUGHESIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Thomas Skinner, a critic of Dr. Hughes' approach, stated, "His concept of low potencies was ideal for those who need not wish to stay far from their allopathic training"^[19]
- J. H. Clarke said, in regard to Dr. Hughes' concept of low potencies, "If it were put forward on the grounds that it meets, the requirement of those who haven't acquired the necessary gifts to practice the higher grades and not being a scientific improvement on the Hahnemannian method, then little be said against it"^[20]
- Sue Young said in her work titled Sue Young Histories, "The essential character of Hughesian homeopathy was that it lay at the 'scientific' end of the homeopathic spectrum of opinion. That is, it was pragmatic and antimystical."^[3]

CONCLUSION

In the words of Dr. R. E. Dudgeon, Dr. Hughes was the greatest, ablest, and most faithful exponent of the great therapeutic truth revealed by Dr. Hahnemann and the most zealous, enthusiastic, indefatigable, and clear-headed disciple of the illustrious founder of the great medical reformation.^[21] Homoeopathy, a rational system of medicine, encompasses science, art and philosophy in it. Following the path shown by Hahnemann, different stalwarts worked on and explored Homoeopathy. Some stressed on the scientific aspect, whereas some stressed on the philosophical domain of this natural system. Dr. Hughes attempted to explain Homoeopathy in the light of the contemporary modern science of his time. He practiced Homoeopathy in his own style as mentioned above. Now, it is up to the reader to understand the real motive of Dr. Hughes and accept his concepts as per their judgment.

Declaration of patient consent

Patient's consent not required as there are no patients in this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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How to cite this article: Sonny R. Richard Hughes's homoeopathic philosophy: A short review. J Intgr Stand Homoeopathy 2020;3(3):70-4.