

Homeostasis and Homeopathy

The concept of homeostasis was born around 1929 when W. B. Cannon began to explore the “stable state,” or the “condition of a system when it is able to maintain its essential variables within limits acceptable to its own structure in the face of unexpected disturbances.”¹ To put it into simpler terms, homeostasis is the ability of a system to achieve balance after being influenced in some fashion. Homeostasis is further defined as “dynamic self-regulation.” According to natural law, all matter and energy seeks balance. Chaos Theory suggests that the fluttering of a butterfly’s wings on one side of the world can lead to a typhoon on the other, illustrating the potential of nature to unleash reaction after reaction across the globe – but homeostasis is the phenomenon responsible for “keeping the peace” or permitting systems to achieve balance after the influence of such disturbances (else the Universe might well tear itself apart). Fractals suggest there is truth to chaos theory (the certain decline or degradation of the universe), yet fractals also appear to be suggestive of homeostasis – fractals possess balance and repetition of pattern, so there is a certain ‘harmony’ even in chaos theory (thus, it might be suggested that the countering force to chaos is homeostasis!). Homeostatic systems are described as having three unique properties:²

- They are ultra-stable.
- Every aspect of a homeostatic system contributes to maintaining equilibrium.
- They are unpredictable (in other words, the symptoms of a particular action upon the system *may be opposite to those expected to be produced by the action.*)

In order to see how the properties of homeostasis apply to homeopathic philosophies of health, healing, and disease, it is necessary to explore the concept of duality in the light of natural law. A state, condition, or symptom cannot exist without its equal and opposing state,

¹ Homeostasis, Web Dictionary of Cybernetics and Symptoms, Principia Cybernetica Web; <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ASC/HOMEOSTATIS.html>, 10/23/2004

² Homeostatis, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeostasis>, 10/23/2004.

condition, or symptom; if the natural law of “equal and opposing forces” is true, then it must be true throughout all matter and energy in order for the ultra-stable property to exist. According to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, this law would apply regardless of time, space, or dimension. Thus, in relation to the physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual realms, there exists “equal and opposing forces” throughout, which can be understood from the following examples:

- In the material world, “equal and opposing forces” are more clear to us: if a log is on fire it produces an amount of heat energy equivalent to the energy required for the chemical reaction that turns it from a log into a pile of ashes; if I push a box across the floor, it “pushes back” against my hand in an equal amount relative to its mass.
- In the emotional world, a multitude of feelings in varying degrees exist for expressions that relate to the state of being: joy, sorrow, fear, anger, and so forth. The expression depends upon the state of being (or the condition of the vital force and to what degree it has been influenced.). As an example, a mother may quite normally express varying degrees of irritation and calmness with her children. When homeostasis is lost and the Vital Force is out of balance, then her expressions along this particular emotional thread (response to children, in this case) may increase from irritation to violent rage and from calmness to extreme indifference (still in equal and opposing forces) if she is susceptible in this area.
- In the mental world, states of intelligence, reason, logic, judgment and so forth exist, also in varying degrees. For instance, the ability to reason may vary between “quickness” and “dullness”. As in the emotional plane, the variation depends on the state of being (the Vital Force and whether it is enjoying homeostasis or a lack of it.). A patient may be highly intelligent with a remarkably quick ability to reason and deduce – and when stuck, this same patient may appear dim-witted, unable to think clearly, and/or failing in memory.

- Finally, in the spiritual world many states also exist through which people express their beliefs or lack thereof. It is not so much the beliefs that are important to the homeopath, but how they are expressed by the patient. Perhaps a patient expresses unusually strong feelings about “good” and “evil”, or “darkness” and “light,” or “right” and “wrong.”

It is important when attempting to understand the apparent “polarities” of a remedy or in attempting to distinguish the symptoms a patient is experiencing to note that the expressions related to the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual states of being are simply that – expressions – and not the actual state or “disease.” Joy does not exist without sorrow because joy and sorrow are not states by themselves, but rather the resulting expressions (feelings) of a particular state of being. For the homeopath, it is keenly important to determine how these apparently opposite emotional symptoms may relate to the state of the Vital Force. Perhaps a patient experienced a significant influence, a great loss that has impacted the vital force to such an extent that it cannot recover. Aspects of the patient susceptible to this influence now resonate at a different frequency than before and maybe he or she begins to have very strong symptoms of “more joyous joy” at times and “more sorrowful sorrow” at other times – times that seem inappropriate or out of proportion to circumstances (among several other symptoms, perhaps). For the practitioner, the real question is “*What state does the totality of the symptoms indicate?*” (Or what state is present to cause these inappropriate expressions?).³

George Vithoulkas describes the Defense Mechanism (of the Vital Force) as having the responsibility of providing balance, or homeostasis, between “processes tending to disorder the organism and processes that maintain order.”⁴

³ Sankaran, Rajan. The Spirit of Homeopathy. India: Homeopathic Medical Publishers, 1999. In this book, Dr. Sankaran suggests that case-taking and eventual identification of the correct remedy should include the polar states, even if the patient does not express them, and purports to have greater success with the health of his patients since beginning this approach to repertorizing.

⁴ Vithoulkas, George. The Science of Homeopathy. New York: Grove Press, 1980.

The Vital Force fuels the homeostatic energy required to “bounce back” from any given state on any plane. Typically, routine influences are managed and balance can be achieved without notice. But when significantly impacted by some influence (a mighty blow, a deep grief, a great shock to the system), the necessary energy to find the balancing point may not be available, thus the reaction or opposing force is weakened, delayed, or may be cut off entirely. The patient becomes stuck and succumbs to the disharmony created; the Vital Force becomes mistuned, its defenses misdirected.

Symptoms may vary depending upon the state of the patient at the time of the interruption and depending upon his or her susceptibilities; thus a patient could present with giddiness, high agitation, finding everything funny, and unable to sleep and another could present with sadness, exhaustion, finding humor in nothing, and wanting to do nothing but sleep – yet they could require the same remedy. In fact, in some remedies, the equal and opposing forces (duality) can reside in the same patient at the same time, resulting in feelings of duality or being “besides oneself” (Lachesis, as an example)⁵. Whether a patient experiences the “good” state or the “bad” state of a remedy, the fact is that either remains beyond the natural ability of the Vital Force to rebalance because homeostasis has been lost—once this occurs (and to what degree it is disturbing), it may well lead to long term pathological health problems for the patient *unless balance can be regained*.

Whatever the symptoms, they paint a unique portrait of the patient; a myriad of polarities through which the homeopath must sift and discern to arrive at the appropriate remedy. Once given, the remedy will evoke what Samuel Hahnemann referred to as the “initial action” or the impact of the medicinal substance.⁶ Suppose a patient suffers constantly from sensations of choking, the feeling of a lump in the throat, and a panicky feeling as a result of the physical

⁵ Coulter, Catherine R. Portraits of Homeopathic Remedies, Vol I. Maryland: Ninth House Publishing, 2002.

⁶ Hahnemann, Samuel. Organon of the Medical Art. Sixth Edition, edited and annotated by O'Reilly, Wenda Brewster. California: Publishers Group West, 1999. Paragraphs 63 – 65.

sensations. The remedy provided may initially provoke a stronger or tighter feeling in the throat as the vital force is influenced, and the patient may initially worry that she has been poisoned, or the wrong remedy has been chosen (more panicky feeling). When the “equal and opposing” force is applied by the defense mechanism (the after-action), the lump in the throat loosens, the choking sensation melts away, and the patient feels relieved that healing is taking place.

As treatment for the chronic condition continues, the patient gradually begins to notice subtle changes in her health and sense of well-being. Each time the remedy is taken, she first experiences what appears to be intensified symptoms, followed by very subtle, gradual easing of these symptoms and a corresponding increase in well-being. The “push-pull” affect or “action-counter-action” is actually the mechanism of homeostasis (equal and opposing forces) at work as the remedial action frees the vital force from its stuck state.