

**Review Article**

# Hahnemann's Vision of Vaccination: Literature of the Mentor

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**Abstract:** This short review, which goes through all the historical stages and analyses all the existing homeopathic literature on the subject, aims to illustrate Mentor Hahnemann's opinion on vaccination in an exhaustive and unambiguous manner, in order to provide a clear and objective view on the subject. In fact, by analysing all available historical writings on the subject, one can effectively understand the master's opinion, an opinion based on facts, on experiments, where there is no room for ideologies or preconceptions. In fact, Hahnemann always held a highly scientific attitude even with regard to smallpox vaccination, which he always supported as far as it belonged to the law of similarity, carefully explaining its benefits and risks, also trying to make it more effective and mitigate adverse events through the use of particular homeopathic remedies, being aware of their presence, and of the risk of side effects and damage that could not be accurately predicted. With this awareness, even though he was in favour of vaccination, being thoroughly familiar with the homeopathy he had codified, he never stopped recommending what he called homeoprophylaxis, the use of highly specific remedies for each infectious epidemic, called epidemic genes, both in the treatment of the infectious disease itself and in its prevention.

**Keywords:** Hahnemann, Smallpox Vaccination, Homeoprophylaxis, Law of Similarity

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## 1. Introduction

It is now 180 years since Prof. Hahnemann's last writing on vaccination, in particular vaccination against smallpox, the only vaccination practised in his time, and I believe it is appropriate, in the light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic and its mass vaccination [1], which has been made compulsory in many countries, and in the light of the current monkeypox epidemic [2], to retrace Prof. Hahnemann's historical and scientific steps, analysing his writings, to know exactly what he thought of vaccination as a prophylactic intervention in infectious diseases. Hahnemann, analysing his writings, to know exactly what he thought of vaccination as a prophylactic intervention in infectious diseases.

It is well known that in 1796, the period in which Hahnemann codified homeopathic medicine [3], Edward Jenner developed the smallpox vaccine consisting of pustular material obtained from lesions on cows suffering from the

so-called cowpox. This disease, caused by cowpox virus, confers cross-protection against human smallpox. Although there have been dense mysteries as to the nature of the origin of this vaccine [4], popularized by Louis Pasteur, and pushed through to eradication of the disease by Donald Henderson, its efficacy [5], from which the entire practice took its name and from which subsequent mass vaccination campaigns have been launched [6], is undoubtedly its efficacy.

In the present study of the Hahnemannian literature, it is easy to see that there is no room for any ambiguity with regard to Hahnemann's position on vaccination against vaccination, but only a scientific attitude and as a great researcher as Hahnemann was throughout his life.

Ever since Jenner's discovery of vaccination, Hahnemann supported the idea of vaccination and recognised its excellent value in smallpox epidemics in several writings [Table 1], from the first one dated 1805 [7], up to the last edition of the "Organon of Medicine" dated 1842 [8].

Hahnemann's most important observations on vaccination can be summarised, following a logical and historical thread, as follows.

**Table 1.** Hahnemannian literature on vaccination.

1805: The Medicine of Experience
1808: On the great necessity of a regeneration of medicine
1825: Hahnemann's letter to Von Gersdorff (26 August)
1825: Hahnemann's correspondence with Stapf (22 December)
1828: The chronic disease: Their peculiar nature and their homoeopathic cure
1831: Hahnemann's letter to dr. Schreeter of Lemberg on 19 December
1842: Organon of Medicine, Aphorism 46 and footnote 1 to 56 in 6 <sup>th</sup> edition

## 2. Smallpox Vaccination Follows the Principle of Similarity

Vaccination, in Hahnemann's opinion, is the closest discovery to the homeopathic principle of similarity, and the first observation can be found in the writing "Medicine of Experience" (1805), where he mentions the multiple phases of action of the "vaccine disease" [9].

A more categorical position can be observed in 1808 [10], in a footnote to his letter to Hufeland. He proclaims that vaccination is among the most fortunate of discoveries and that it is among the three or four positive discoveries in medicine since the time of Hippocrates. Surprisingly, he went on to state that, like all other real cures, vaccination also follows the principle of similarity. He says: ".....to these must be added that most fortunate discovery, the protection from variola by means of vaccination. Moreover, these three or four cures take place only according to my principle *similia similibus*. Nothing more of a positive character can be exhibited in the whole medical art since the time of Hippocrates; the cure of all other diseases remained unknown."

### 2.1. Hahnemann's Support for Vaccination Despite Severe Criticism Allopathic Guild

Hahnemann's support for vaccination came despite severe criticism from the allopathic guild, in fact one of the most astonishing revelations of this literature review was that Hahnemann had supported vaccination even when it was being heavily attacked by the allopathic guild itself.

In his letter to Stapf in 1825 [11], Hahnemann compares the criticism and hostility against homeopathy as similar to that of vaccination. In his opinion, both are of proven efficacy but are only criticised because they cause a great financial loss to the existing allopathic system.

He states: "*Just consider! How Jenner's vaccination against smallpox has proved itself everywhere and yet in England so many invectives in print were issued against it, that at one time I counted twenty – You cannot find any of those now – presumably the paper on which they were printed is used in grocers shops for wrapping up cheese. Moreover, yet how few incomes did Jenner damage with his invention, compared with what homoeopathy does. It puts to shame many*

*thousands of the allopath guild, most of whom, feel that they have forgotten too much, and are incapable of treading the new way any success. This makes the many thousands malicious to a high degree, they gush out poison and gall, transpose them with sophisms, misrepresentations and abuse. What harm does it do? It hurts them, not us. Truth continues its course quietly; and sensible people only think that those who use abusive language are in the wrong. Let us continue on the good road with equanimity, it will repay us."*

Hahnemann's great faith in vaccination is even more clearly manifested in his letter to Gersdorff in 1825 [12], in which he described the criticism of vaccination as completely futile. He says: "*Even the invectives which shower down on us in profusion can do no harm. What harm did the infamous antagonistic writings against cowpox vaccination achieve? None at all. They have more probably contributed to the investigation and recognition of its excellent value. Therefore, let us remain calm...In time, they will keep all the more closely to my words of experience."*

### 2.2. Hahnemann's Experiment for the Safest Vaccination Plan: Never Forget That Every Coin Has Two Sides

It is in his letter to Dr. Schreeter in 1831 [13] that Hahnemann makes it clear that he was aware of both sides of vaccination, in fact he supported vaccination as a prophylactic means for infectious diseases, but without ignoring the adverse and potentially harmful events in some cases, so he decided to experiment with vaccination precisely to make it more effective and with less risk, and began recommending unitary remedies such as *Thuja occidentalis* and Sulfur at potency 30c [14].

In fact for instance he suggested the use of remedies to minimise the adverse effects of vaccination in a sensitive child. He suggested the following: "*To provide the dear little Patty with the protective cowpox, the safest plan would certainly be to obtain the lymph direct from the cow; but if this cannot be done (children are also made more ill by it, than from the matter obtained from human beings), I would advise you to inoculate another child with the protective pox, and as soon as slight redness of the punctures shows it has taken, I would immediately for two successive days give Sulphur 1-30, and inoculate your child from the pock that it produced. As far as, I have been able to ascertain, a child cannot communicate psora whilst under the action of Sulphur."*

### 2.3. Baron Von Boenninghausen Takes up Hahnemann's Suggestions

It should also be mentioned that Hahnemann's favourite pupil, Baron Von Boenninghausen, also wrote about the use of *Thuja occidentalis* as a smallpox remedy.

The Baron in fact, in his "Lesser Writings" [15], reports a letter entitled "Concerning the curative effects of *Thuja occidentalis* in smallpox", which he published in the journal "Allgemeine homoeopatische Zeitung, vol. XXXVII" [16], where he recounts his experience with the use of the unitary remedy *Thuja Occidentalis* [17], using the 200th potency and

employing only a few dry globules, in the treatment of the smallpox that raged at the time, obtaining excellent results in both prophylaxis and therapy of infectious diseases, avoiding disfiguring scars, and a rapid disappearance of even the redness of skin spots.

#### 2.4. Hahnemann's Last Writing on Vaccination: *Organon of Medicine*

We then come to Hahnemann's last writing, the most important one on which the majority of homeopaths' opinions on vaccination have always been based, the *Organon* [8], in particular § 46 (one of the paragraphs never modified in the six editions), where once again the Master praises vaccination practice, a concept reiterated again in footnote 1 to § 56 (modified and supplemented from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition), where he further appreciates the great efficacy of vaccination in reducing severity and mortality to such an extent that new generations are not even aware of the frightening nature of the epidemic.

He says: *“This seems to be the reason for this beneficial remarkable fact namely that since the general distribution of Jenner’s cowpox vaccination, human small-pox never again appeared as epidemically or virulently as 40–45 years before when one city visited lost at least one-half and often three-quarters of its children by death of this miserable pestilence.”*

In § 56, however, Hahnemann also speaks of the danger of curing with the identical, with the isopathic method, therefore he praises the anti-vaiolous vaccination because it is based on the law of similarity, but he also and above all warns against the indiscriminate use of this practice, if carried out unconsciously and without following the law of similarity, because one runs the risk of giving the organism a dissimilar and iatrogenic disease that is then difficult to eradicate (§ 40-45).

He states in footnote 1 to §56: *“those who first brought isopathy to notice, probably thought of the benefit which mankind received from cowpox vaccination by which the vaccinated individual is protected against future cowpox infection and as it were cured in advance. But both, cowpox and smallpox are only similar, in no way the same disease. In many respects they differ, namely in the more rapid course and mildness of cowpox and especially in this, that is never contagious to man by more nearness. Universal vaccination put an end to all epidemics of that deadly fearful smallpox to such an extent that the present generation does no longer possess a clear conception of the former frightful smallpox plague.”*

#### 2.5. Hahnemann, *Organon of Medicine and Epidemic Genius as Homeoprophylaxis*

Lastly, let us not forget that Hahnemann, in all editions of the *Organon*, never stops talking about the epidemic genius, the remedy or remedies that cure and can help in the prevention of an epidemic infectious disease (§ 99-103, paragraphs never changed and remaining unchanged from the

1st to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition), a clear sign that although he was a supporter of smallpox vaccination, whose merits and theoretical belonging to the law of similars he recognised as a true scientist, he remained equally convinced of the goodness of his discoveries and of the use of diluted and dynamized unit remedies, used as homeoprophylaxis, as other authors have recently recalled [18].

### 3. Conclusion

Hahnemann's message is therefore clear: always take a scientific view of each practice, never rely on prejudices but on observation and experimentation, as well as on clinical experience, always weighing the risks and benefits of each practice very carefully, in the total interest of the individual patient and the community. This message emerges very clearly from his writings on smallpox vaccination, both when he defends it against the sterile attacks of the allopathic medical community, and when he acknowledges its potential risks and harmful effects, seeking to mitigate them. Finally, in all his writings he remains true to his findings on the law of similarity.

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