"FREE FROM SCIENCE, FREE FROM THEORIES:"
THE FLOWER REMEDIES OF EDWARD BACH, MD

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Do these people need medical attention?

The jovial, cheerful, humorous people who love peace and are distressed by argument or quarrel, to avoid which they will agree to give up much. ... they hide their cares behind their humor and jesting and are considered very good friends to know. They often take alcohol or drugs in excess, to stimulate themselves and help themselves bear their trials with cheerfulness.

Those who are quick in thought and action and who wish all things to be done without hesitation or delay. When ill they are anxious for a hasty recovery. They find it very difficult to be patient with people who are slow, as they consider it wrong and a waste of time, and they will endeavor to make such people quicker in all ways. They often prefer to work and think alone, so that they can do everything at their own speed.

Those who are very mindful of the needs of others; they tend to be over-full of care for children, relatives, friends, always finding something that should be put right. They are continually correcting what they consider wrong, and enjoy doing so. They desire that those for whom they care should be near them.

If you were acquainted with the work of Edward Bach, MD, you might recognize in these descriptions people who would benefit from a course of treatment with essence of Agrimony, Impatiens, and Chicory, respectively. According to Dr. Bach, these "Flower Remedies" would be needed in each case to correct mental conditions, which, if untreated, could manifest sooner or later as physical disease.

There are thirty-eight Bach Flower Remedies, each a specific for a particular "imbalance" in the personality. The Remedies are believed by some people to be the key to physical health and emotional well-being, and to be an aid in spiritual development. The Remedies were developed in England in the 1920s and 1930s. They are claimed to be entirely benign in their effects and to be compatible with any other therapeutic agents. The preferred practice is to administer them before physical disease has appeared, but they can be used in the presence of disease.

It was Bach's belief that since an individual's personality determines
how a given disease will manifest in that individual, it is a mistake to treat
disease as though it has an identity apart from the individual patient. Treatment
in the Bach system requires an assessment by a physician or lay healer of the patient’s
mental condition, based entirely on an interview with the patient and perhaps with
a few people close to her or him. The appropriate essence or essences are then
mixed and dispensed from the practitioner’s supply. Dosage is a few drops of flower
essence, taken anywhere from a few minutes to several hours apart and for as long
as the patient feels the need of it. This typically ranges from a few days to a
few months. The Remedies are administered usually by mouth, or they may be used
topically in the form of lotion. Treatment can consist of one essence or any com-
bination of them. The Remedies can change during the course of treatment as the
patient’s condition -- that is, the state of mind -- changes.

Bach stressed that, in his system, the healer’s role is not primarily to
prescribe medication. He believed that in the future, as medical practice came more
in line with his ideas, the healer would have responsibilities for spiritual guidance
of patients:

... the physician of the future will have two great aims.
The first will be to assist the patient to a knowledge of
himself and to point out to him the fundamental mistakes he
is making, the deficiencies in his character which he should
remedy, and the defects in his nature which must be eradicated
and replaced with the corresponding virtues... The second
duty of the physician will be to administer such remedies as
will help the physical body to gain strength and assist the
mind to become clam, widen its outlook and strive towards
perfecting, thus bringing peace and harmony to the whole per-
sonality.

The essences are prepared in England either by boiling or by steeping the
blossoms of selected flower specimens for several hours. The extremely rarified
solution obtained in this way is diluted further according to the homeopathic prin-
ciple that dilution strengthens a mixture. It is then mixed with brandy (as a pre-
servative) before dispensing.
The originator of this unusual system was Edward Bach (1886 - 1936), an English physician of conventional background who was educated in the customary manner. He began his career as a bacteriologist, but in 1930, he left his London practice to devote the rest of his life to perfecting his system of medical therapy. Not a great deal of information is available about Bach's early life. His biography was written by Nora Weeks, who became his chief assistant and carried on his work after his death. She says that he decided to be a doctor "while still a schoolboy," and that he dreamed even then of a simple, universal cure for disease. She adds, perhaps whimsically, that he was an "acutely intuitive and sensitive" child, due to a "Welsh strain in his blood."  

Bach entered Birmingham University to study medicine in 1906 and finished his medical training at University College Hospital, London, where he qualified in 1912. He obtained other degrees, as well: the Conjoint Diploma of Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Licenciate of the Royal College of Physicians in 1912; the Diploma of Public Health in 1914. From 1913 to 1917, Bach worked as a bacteriologist in various London hospitals. Weeks mentions that he was ill health during this time and that in 1917, he suffered a grave illness. Recovery left him with the profound conviction that "an absorbing interest, a great love, a definite purpose in life was the deciding factor of man's happiness." This incident may have been the beginning of his interest in the non-physical aspects of disease and cure.

Bach's early work involved investigations of intestinal toxemia, which he sought to treat with vaccines made from bacteria found in the intestines. This work appeared in such publications as the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine and the Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology, and it follows standard scientific procedures. Bach gave this interest in intestinal toxemia a homeopathic slant during 1919 - 1922, when he worked as a pathologist and bacteriologist at the
London Homeopathic Hospital. Here, he attempted to treat the condition with nosodes, or oral vaccines, which he made according to homeopathic principles from intestinal bacteria. But finally, Bach moved away from research with bacteria, looking for a more aesthetically appealing source of therapeutic agent. His writings took on a progressively less rigorous tone, and they came to be published in far less prestigious journals, such as the Homeopathic World. Eventually, according to Weeks, Bach took out advertising to make his ideas known because newspapers and magazines refused to publish his articles.

In 1928, Bach followed an “urge” to go to Wales, and this was where he found the first of his Flower Remedies. He gave up his practice in London in 1930, and settled permanently in Wales, where he remained until his death in 1936. Weeks describes the way he spent his time there, locating plants that would serve as his remedies:

Bach spent the day long examining the great variety of plants, noting where they grew, what soil they chose to grow upon, the colour, shape, and number of their petals, whether they spread by tuber, root, or seed; sitting for hours by a single plant... Learning all he could of the habits and characteristics of each flower and plant and tree.

She says that he “tested” flowers by holding a petal or bloom in his hand or on his tongue. With his great sensitivity to “vibrations and power,” he could feel the effects that a particular plant would have as a therapeutic agent.

Bach is an especially interesting figure in the history of medicine because despite his position in the dominant culture of medical practice, where he obtained a measure of success, he turned to a system which rejects the scientific bases of medical practice. In The Twelve Healers, the book in which he gave specific instructions for using his system, he says:

No science, no knowledge is necessary apart from the simple methods described herein; and they who will obtain the greatest benefit from this God-sent gift will be those who keep it pure as it is; free from science, free from theories, for everything in Nature is simple.
It would be interesting to discover how this highly-trained person came to change his orientation so completely. Unfortunately, in the literature by and about Dr. Bach, there is no direct, satisfactory answer to this question. Bach does say that his system of healing "has been Divinely revealed unto us," and Weeks speaks often of his intuition as a source of knowledge. There is no way to dispute such claims, but they are not much help with the question of what mundane influences there may have been on Bach's inspiration. There are, however, several suggestions in both Weeks' biography and Bach's own writings as to possible sources of influence on the development of the Bach Flower Remedies. The most interesting of these, in terms of the history of medicine, is homeopathy, another unconventional system of medical therapeutics with which Bach had a considerable degree of familiarity and affinity.

Homeopathy was founded in the eighteenth century by a German physician, Samuel Hahnemann. He was born in Meissen, in what is now East Germany, in 1755. He practiced in Leipzig until 1821, when the conventional medical establishment of that city forced him to leave. Apothecaries were especially hostile to him, perhaps because he advocated the use of very small doses of medicine. He died in Paris in 1843.

Hahnemann was outraged by the medical practices of his day, which involved drastic and debilitating treatments such as frequent and heavy bloodletting of patients, inducing of vomits and purges, and administering very large doses of toxic substances such as mercury, arsenic, and lead. Hahnemann, and others such as Thomas Sydenham of England, criticized the excessively theoretical justifications for these treatments and worked a return to the Hippocratic system of clinical observation as the best means of understanding disease and establishing appropriate therapy.

The system of homeopathy was based on Hahnemann's observation that quinine given to a healthy person produced symptoms similar to those of malaria, for which it was the cure. From this he derived the "law of similars," which bears a super-
ficial resemblance to immunological theory. Hahnemann's idea was that disease should be treated by giving minute doses to the sufferer of drugs which produced symptoms of the particular disease in healthy people.

Since the treatments recommended by Hahnemann were considerably more benign than many of those current in the late eighteenth century, he initially attracted a large following in Europe and America, and he is credited with having contributed to the improvement of conventional medical practices. Homeopathy no longer has the influence it once did, but homeopathic physicians still practice. In England, they are registered in the same way as conventional physicians are, and in fact, they all have had conventional medical training as well as post-graduate instruction in the homeopathic system. Some doctors combine conventional and homeopathic treatment in their practices.19

It is known that Bach read the Organon of Medicine, which is Hahnemann's treatise, while he was working at the London Homoeopathic Hospital,20 but the nature and extent of homeopathic influence on Bach's work has not been discussed. Weeks mentions a few, and actually rather minor, points of similarity between Bach's ideas and those of Hahnemann,21 but a reading of the Organon in conjunction with Bach's writings suggests a much more pervasive relationship.

It appears that homeopathy influenced Bach on two levels, a general, philosophical one and a specific, procedural one. As his work with the Bach Flower Remedies developed, he departed more and more from homeopathic philosophy and practice, but Bach's Remedies continue to be part of the homeopathic pharmacopoeia, and some of his most fundamental philosophical tenets remain at one with those of the homeopathic school.

Procedural similarities between Bach's method and that of Hahnemann are important because they show Bach's lack of confidence in scientific procedures and his openness to methods which had become by his day recognizably unscientific. Even
homeopathic doctors no longer accept Hahnemann's ideas about making solutions
stronger by increasing the degree of dilution or by more thorough mixing. A current
text says:

In the late 1700s and early 1800s it was taught that the
dilution, succession, and trituration liberated, inten-
sified, and enhanced the curative powers which were
taken to reside in the drug. Subsequent research, how-
ever, has compelled a revision of the homeo-methodology
in accordance with the facts.22

Raca, however, accepted and used these methods of "potentizing" his Remedies.

Bach's therapeutic procedures changed as he developed his system, but several
are obviously derived from Hahnemann's. Among these are the giving of exceedingly
attenuated doses of medicine; the reliance on medicines that can do the patient no
harm; the technique of repeating the dose only after all discernable benefit from
the previous dose has worn off -- rather than giving medication at regularly-scheduled
intervals -- and the method by which the medicines are prepared. Bach began by
following Hahnemann's practice quite closely in this regard but eventually moved to
his simpler method of boiling or steeping the blooms in sunlight. Bach's preference
for giving medications by mouth is also the same as Hahnemann's. Both laid great
stress on interviews with the patient and perhaps with people close to him or her as
the sole basis for diagnosing a complaint and prescribing appropriate medication, and
both held to the practice of altering the medication to be given solely on the basis
of the patient's reports of changing symptoms during treatment.

So far as philosophical influence is concerned, it may be that, as Weeks seems
to believe, Bach and Hahnemann were simply two minds with but a single thought. Bach
may have arrived at his philosophy of medical therapeutics quite independently of
his exposure to Hahnemann's. But Bach himself makes many approving references to
Hahnemann, and refers to both Hahnemann and Paracelsus -- who is claimed to have been
the ultimate creator of homeopathic medicine -- as his teachers.23 The sheer number
of philosophical similarities between Bach and Hahnemann is quite striking, also;
it seems too large for coincidence.

These philosophical similarities include the belief that all disease has one cause, which is not a material agent; a belief that a simple, universal method of therapy exists for all disease complaints; a belief in the divine character of the healer; the belief that theory is unnecessary and undesirable for medical practice; the belief that the patient’s attitude, especially the patient’s willingness to be ill, is an important part of the cause of illness. They also share a critical attitude toward conventional medicine, which both believe is limited by its materialistic interpretation of disease to a merely palliative, not truly curative, role. Likewise, both Bach and Hahnemann take a holistic view of disease manifestation, believing that this must be understood in terms of the patient as an individual and that circumstances such as mental attitude and physical environment must be taken into account in finding a cure.

Also, many homeopathic remedies are specifics for mental symptoms as well as for physical ones. For example, aloes is recommended for “irritability; moroseness; sadness.”\textsuperscript{24} aconite is for “fear of death; anxiety; restlessness.”\textsuperscript{25} belladonna is for “overexcitement and too great sensibility of all the nerves;”\textsuperscript{26} chamomile is recommended for “anger; irritability; impatience; obstinacy; aversion to company; capriciousness; sadness; absent-mindedness;”\textsuperscript{27} and rue is for “feeling of intense lassitude, weakness, and despair.”\textsuperscript{28}

In comparing the philosophies of Bach and Hahnemann in detail, it is interesting to note that it is Hahnemann, whose work preceeds Bach’s by roughly one hundred years, who has what we would recognize as the more scientific approach to medical therapeutics. Consider, for example, the question of a single cause for all disease. Hahnemann says that disease, regardless of its symptomatic manifestation in a particular patient, is the result of an imbalance in the “vital force” of an individual. He defines this vital force as an unreasoning sort of tendency to self-perpetuation possessed
by all living things. The vital force can be disrupted by a variety of things, ranging from worry through overeating to moral inadequacy, and the effects of these will be different for different individuals. Hahnemann uses the facts that not all individuals react to diseases in the same way and that some people do not get sick when others do to justify his contempt for the "materialistic" explanations of disease given by conventional medicine. Although he says that disease is "spiritual," he seems to mean this in the sense that it is "dynamic," a process, rather than a concrete entity with consistent properties which will always be present when the entity itself is.

To explain chronic disease, Hahnemann postulates three kinds of "miasms," which he terms syphilis, sycosis, and psora. These are "infecting agents" which the vital force cannot overcome without the aid of homopathic remedies. Syphilis is responsible for venereal disease; sycosis for warts; psora for virtually everything else:

... the psora, the only real fundamental cause and producer of all the other numerous, I may say innumerable, forms of disease, which, under the names of nervous debility, hysteria, hypochondriasis, mania, melancholia, imbecility, madness, epilepsy and convulsions of all sorts, softening of the bones (rachitis), scoliosis and cyphosis, caries, cancer, fungus haematoxes, neoplasms, qout, haemorrhoids, jaundice, cyanosis, dropsy, amenorhoea, haemorrhage from the stomach, nose, lungs, bladder and womb, of asthma and ulceration of the lungs, of impotence and barrenness, of megrim, deafness, cataract, amaurosis, urinary calculus, paralysis, defects of the senses and pains of a thousand kinds, etc., figure in systematic works on pathology as peculiar, independent diseases.

Although it is not completely clear, Hahnemann seems to say that these miasms, and especially psora, are always latentely present in people. They can be activated by a variety of causes, both internal and external to the patient, and both physical and mental.

In contrast to this, Bach's explanation for the cause of disease, whether acute or chronic, is much more what we would understand as "spiritual." It is that
the sufferer's "personality" or "mind" is out of attunement with his or her

"Soul." Bach says:

Disease will never be cured or eradicated by present
materialistic methods, for the simple reason that
disease in its origin is not material... Disease
is in essence the result of conflict between Soul and
Mind, and will never be eradicated except by spiritual
and mental effort. 35

Bach gives five "fundamental truths" which explain this in more detail. He defines
the Soul as "our Higher Self... a spark of the Almighty... invincible and
immortal." This Soul is one's true self, and it knows how we should live and
behave so as to fulfill our destiny on earth. The personality is defined thus:

... we, as we know ourselves in this world are
personalities down here for the purpose of gaining
all the knowledge and experience which can be ob-
tained through earthly existence, of developing
virtues which we lack and of wiping out all that
is wrong within us, thus advancing toward the per-
fection of our natures. 36

Conflict between these two aspects of an individual is the cause of disease and
also of unhappiness. Bach goes on to add an additional cause, which is "cruelty
or wrong to others." This causes disease because it is "a sin against Unity."

"Unity" is the name he gives to the "fundamental truth" that everything is created
by Love and is connected to everything else thereby. "Thus any action against
ourselves or against another affects the whole, because by causing imperfection
in a part, it reflects on the whole..." 37

Hahnemann's ideas about a "vital force" and "chronic miasms" date from a
time before science had produced the germ theory of disease and before there was
any science of immunology or any true understanding of the body's defenses against
disease. Although his ideas would seem fantastic to most people today, Hahnemann's
system is convincingly worked out, logical and thorough. He attempts to account
for observed phenomena with the best information available to him. His system can
more properly be called pre-scientific than anti-scientific. He constructed a theoretical framework for his observations where none existed that was satisfactory. He was later proved wrong, but so were many of the ideas held by the conventional medical practitioners of his time.

The same cannot be said of Bach's system or of the state of scientific knowledge about medicine in his time. The germ theory was well established by the time Bach took his medical training. And even though the techniques of vaccination were controversial from the time of their introduction in the late nineteenth century until the 1930s -- the Swine Flu fiasco of the 1970s shows that controversy has not entirely died away even now -- theories of immunity had made substantial progress by Bach's time. Bach was himself a bacteriologist; so, the following statement from Heal Thyself is really quite surprising:

The knowledge of bacteria and the various germs associated with disease has played havoc in the minds of tens of thousands of people, and by the dread aroused in them has in itself rendered them more susceptible of attack. While lower forms of life, such as bacteria, may play a part in or be associated with physical disease, they constitute by no means the whole truth of the problem . . . Materialism forgets that there is a factor above the physical plane which in the ordinary course of life protects or renders susceptible any particular individual with regard to disease . . . Fear . . . paves the way for invasion, and if bacteria and such physical means were the sure and only cause of disease, then indeed there might be but little encouragement not to be afraid. But when we realize that . . . the real cause of disease lies in our own personality and is within our control . . . we can put all fear of physical means alone as a cause of disease out of our minds, knowing that such anxiety merely renders us susceptible, and that if we are endeavoring to bring harmony into our personality, we need anticipate illness no more than we dread being struck by lightning or hit by a fragment of a falling meteor.39

This statement demonstrates that despite his exposure to more scientific explanations than were available to Hahnemann, Bach ultimately chose to reject scientific explanation for the cause of disease. His language is not scientific; his premises are not derived from empirical observation; his conclusions are the product of imagination.
-- or perhaps intuition -- not testable in any scientific way.

Because the mystical orientation evident in the passage above and in all of Bach's later writings came to replace science as the basis for his understanding of the nature of disease and its cure, it is important to try to see what kinds of spiritual influences Bach is likely to have come in contact with and to try to identify their impact on the development of his system of therapy. Since there is no direct discussion of this aspect of Bach's life in the writings by or about him, no definite conclusions can be drawn about the sources of spiritual influence. However, certain themes and probable origins can be traced.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of great social ferment in Europe and America. Advances were being made in both scientific theory and its application which were changing people's lives dramatically. From Darwin's theories, which required profound re-evaluations of religious truth, to the invention of the telegraph and the automobile, with their implications for increased speed of communication and increased personal freedom of movement, this was a time of rapid and stimulating change. But, as seems often to be the case, along with these strides in rational understanding and control of the world, there was also at this time what might be called a "backlash" against rationality. Cults and fads sprang up everywhere, promoting everything from fresh air and exercise to communication in table-rapping seances with those who had "passed over." Nudism, Theosophy, Christian Science, and many other unorthodox movements began during this period.

In addition to these often extreme and original groups, there was also the beginning of meaningful contact with orthodox non-Western religions at this time. The growth of the British Empire had brought an awareness of religions besides Christianity, but often the initial contact had been one of puzzlement at best for Westerners. As Edward Conze says of the interpretation of Buddhism:
It took a long time to get to the bottom of Buddhist thinking or to even understand the terminology they employed. At first we were in the position of Egyptologists who, with all the priests dead, have to guess wildly... Likewise to the first interpreters -- proconsuls, missionaries, military men and financial administrators -- the Buddhist religion seemed to be ludicrous nonsense... By the 1930s things began to fall into shape, and we can now be fairly confident to catch the spiritual meaning which the Buddhist authors wished to convey. 39

It is evident from the numerous allusions Bach makes to the concepts of reincarnation, karma, ahimsa (acting so as to do no harm), and meditation, that he had been exposed to concepts of Eastern religion in some form. He may have been involved with an orthodox-type Buddhist group, such as the Buddhist Society, or he may have come to this outlook through an organization like the Theosophical Society. It is even possible that he was involved in both kinds of organizations. It is probably impossible to distinguish the sources of his exposure to Eastern religions, since Theosophy and its offshoots drew on Buddhism and Hinduism for much of their teachings.

Theosophy is a likely source of information for Bach about Eastern religious ideas. The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by the Russian Helena P. Blavatsky in New York City, but it was headed from 1907 to 1933 by a colorful Englishwoman named Annie Besant, under whose direction it reached the height of its visibility and influence. By the early part of the twentieth century, there were Theosophical groups in major European and American cities, as well as in India.

Theosophy was a "pioneering movement,"40 perhaps the first to combine Eastern religious ideas with Western occultism. It is probable that Bach was acquainted with Theosophy simply because of its widespread influence in his time, but there are also clues in his writings suggesting that he was familiar with Theosophical "wisdom" specifically.

Bruce Campbell says of Theosophy:

Theosophical teachings... are a synthesis of the idea of evolution with religious concepts chiefly from Hinduism and Buddhism. The appeal of these century-old teachings is that
they respond to two significant challenges to religion in the modern world: how to reconcile the claims of various religions of the world and how to integrate religion with the findings of modern science. Theosophical teachings were presented as consistent with recent scientific discoveries in geology, astronomy, and biology. The unifying idea of evolution corresponded with the enlarged notions of the age of the earth and the size of the universe. Theosophy "spiritualized" the idea of evolution by suggesting that all things develop over vast periods of time to a state of pure spirit.

Bach makes frequent reference to this idea of the evolution of the soul in his discussion of the causes of disease. Here is a representative passage from "Some Fundamental Considerations of Disease and Cure," in which he presents ideas that were later reworked and laid down as the basis for his philosophy in Heal Thyself:

Under the guidance of our Spiritual Self, our Immortal Life, Man is born to gain knowledge and experience, and to perfect himself as a physical being... However we learn slowly, one lesson at a time, but we must if we are to be well and happy, learn the particular lesson given to us by our spiritual self... During our sojourn in search of perfection, there are various stages. To transmute self into selfless, desire into desireless, separateness into unity is not done in a moment but by gradual steady evolution, and we have to master stage by stage as we progress. Some stages may be comparatively easy, some exceedingly difficult, and then it is that disease occurs, because it is at those times that we fail to follow our Spiritual Self, that the conflict arises which produces illness.

Theosophy also makes use of the metaphor of life on earth as a "school," and Bach uses the same metaphor in Heal Thyself. Another clue is Bach's frequent references to "Mother India." Theosophy had important ties to India beginning a few years after its founding, and Annie Besant is important for the work she did in the cause of Indian independence.

Bach's division of the human entity into mortal personality and immortal Soul also follows Theosophical ideas, although Bach's presentation is simpler than Theosophy's seven-part human constitution. Other instances could be given of
correspondences between Bach's mystical thinking and the Theosophical system, but all of the evidence is finally suggestive rather than conclusive.

As in the case of homeopathy, where Bach found ideas and practices of interest to him, then modified and simplified them according to his own apparently intuitive perceptions of truth, so with the spiritual or mystical component of his system. Bach took the ideas discussed above and added to them his own ideas about the way disease should be, or could best be, cured. Here he contrasts his method with that of Hahnemann, and shows that his mystical understanding of the cause of disease requires a different approach to treatment. This passage shows his unique synthesis of diverse ideas.

The genius of Hahnemann realising the nature and reason of disease, used like remedies, which, by temporarily intensifying the illness, hastened its end. He used like poisons to repel the poisons from the body. But having contemplated where his genius left us, let us advance a step further forward, and we shall see that there is even now a new and better way. If a patient has a mental error, a conflict between spiritual and physical self will result, and disease will be the product. The error may be repelled, the poison driven from the body, but a space exists where it has been situated. The perfect method is not so much to repel the adverse influence, as to draw in its opposing virtue; and by means of this virtue flood out the fault.

Bach can be seen to have "spiritualized" disease and its cure in a way similar to the way that Theosophy "spiritualized" the scientific idea of evolution. Bach endeavored to see disease as a means to spiritual perfection of the individual. His Flower Remedies are an aid to harmonizing the personality with the dictates of the Soul or Spiritual Self. They are designed to help in developing the virtues needed to overwhelm those faults, such as greed, envy, self-absorption, and fear, which he believed to cause disease in the first place.

Bach's influence continues to be felt. The Bach Flower Remedies are used today, by both conventional physicians and lay healers. Information about Bach's
system, including training for lay readers, is available from the Edward Bach Centre in England and from the National Association of Bach Counselors in New York City. There is a group in California, called the Flower Essence Society, which is working according to Bach's principles to identify Flower Remedies among the native plants of their area. They are not affiliated with or sanctioned by the Bach Centre, however.

John Diamond, MD, a conventional physician who uses the Bach Flower Remedies in his practice, says:

The flower remedies have a great role to play in the more psychosomatic type of illness... It is true that these remedies are more for healthy people rather than very sick people... These remedies are most helpful in preventing a physical illness that is about to attack. The thoughts or attitudes which create illness may be present for twenty or thirty years before they show up as physical disease. In that time they can be treated. One should not wait until the disease has become physical, and then try to change attitudes overnight.44

Diamond does not rely exclusively on the Bach Flower Remedies, nor does he neglect physical examination and other standard diagnostic practices which Bach thought unnecessary.45 Perhaps he has found the best use for the Flower Remedies, for essentially healthy people who are not as happy as they could be.

The sense one gets from Bach's writings is that he was an idealist with strong aesthetic impulses and a great desire to help people. He wanted people not only to be free of physical suffering but of mental and emotional distress, as well. His insights into the relationship of negative attitudes and disease are interesting in the light of recent research on the effects of stress of various kinds on human beings. Research on 'Type A' and 'Type B' personalities might also be claimed to vindicate Bach's ideas to some extent. Certainly, Bach gives good commonsense advice in Heal Thyself when he urges people to think less about themselves and more about helping other people.
Any effectiveness of the Bach Remedies may be due to the will of the patients to believe that they are effective. This phenomenon has been observed and documented scientifically, but as yet, it is without a satisfactory scientific explanation. The role of the physician or prescriber, so important to Bach, may be a significant factor in success with his system. As Hahnemann was correct to point out the excesses of his conventional contemporaries, it may turn out that Bach was moving in the right direction with his emphasis on listening to the patient and taking the patient's mental attitude into consideration in forming a diagnosis. His theoretical structure may have been as flawed as Hahnemann's, but the increasingly wholistic orientation of much medical care today is an indication that Bach's views were not entirely inappropriate.

Bach's abandonment of science remains a mystery, which perhaps only he could have explained. The movement of his thinking away from the rational and materialistic mode of science to a mystical mode influenced by both pre-scientific homeopathy and pseudo-scientific Theosophy -- or something like it -- is clear from an examination of his writings, but regrettably, it is something he never discussed in print. If that central mystery is unsolvable, perhaps this introduction to Bach and his system has at least succeeded in showing some of the sources Bach drew on in the articulation of his singular understanding of the purpose of disease, its cause, and its cure.

2Twelve Healers, p. 98.

3Twelve Healers, p. 105.


7Weeks, op. 9-10.


9Weeks, p. 23.

10Weeks, pp. 20-21.


12Weeks, p. 28.

17. Twelve Healers, p. 83.
18. Twelve Healers, p. 82.
23. Heal Thyself, p. 28.
26. Baker, p. 44.
31. Hahnemann, pp. 5-6.
36. Twelve Healers, p. 29.
37. Twelve Healers, p. 31.
38 Heal Thyself, pp. 66-67.
41 Campbell, p. 51.
45 Diamond, p. xiv.


Works Consulted, cont.


Homeopathy was founded in the eighteenth century by a German physician, Samuel Hahnemann. He was born in Meissen, in what is now East Germany, in 1755. Hahnemann's father was a procelain painter, and the young Hahnemann was educated at home. He later attended school in Meissen and studied medicine in Leipzig, Vienna, and Erlangen, where he received his medical degree in 1779.

He practiced in a number of places, settling in Leipzig in 1810. In addition to his medical practice there, he became a member of the university faculty and taught medical theory. His ideas about therapy, including his advocacy of the use of very small doses of medicine and the use of only one medication at a time, made him unpopular with the conventional medical establishment of the city, especially with the apothecaries. In 1821, following the death of a patient in his care, he was forced to resign from the university and was forbidden to dispense medication. He soon left Leipzig altogether. Despite this setback, Hahnemann's fame increased and his writings were widely distributed and frequently revised in the following years. He moved to Paris in 1835, where he remained until the end of his life and where he had a large medical practice. He died in 1843. 18A

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