

Brazil

Passing the baton – not an academic scientific paper

First, I would like to thank Dr Bonato for asking me to talk to you. I don't have good academic credentials and this talk is not a rigorously researched and peer-reviewed piece of cutting-edge investigation.

I understand that Dr Bonato asked me to talk for two reasons. The first is that I gave myself permission to arrange the first international conference two years ago and this talk is a way to pass on the baton and maintain some continuity. The second is to offer one person's view of the activity beyond South America in the field of homeopathy for plants. I'm not aware of one single person who has a comprehensive view, and I am aware of huge holes in my own knowledge, but I will briefly mention several interesting centres of practice on foreign shores. I have given myself permission to add a third strand to this talk, and that concerns the very fact that there is a department for studying homeopathy for plants here in a Brazilian university and the view looking in on that very fact from beyond Brazil.

Ongoing history



I live in the UK. My children go to a Waldorf School where Lili Kolisko worked after fleeing Germany in the 1930s. As far as I am aware her extraordinary work, inspired and originally overseen by Rudolf Steiner, is the first that used homeopathic remedies and potentised biodynamic preparations on plants. Kaviraj read that von Boeninghausen may have made some experiments on his own farm but even in his archive of unpublished materials further evidence of this has not yet come to light. I thought you'd be interested to see the walled garden at the house where she worked. She must have worked indoors more to make the famous graphs of potencies of various substances measured against root and shoot lengths of seedlings.



In the next image you can see, behind Dr Iftikhar Waris Shah and I, The River Severn with hills beyond. Lili did her work from the 1930s onwards in those hills.

Some examples from abroad to Brazil

Dr Waris is one of the researchers who has taken on the work with potencies, but without connection to the biodynamic work. He is a successful homeopath who took Hahnemann's instruction in the Organon seriously concerning 'maintaining causes'. Pakistan is a country greatly reliant on its agriculture for exports but a lot of the people who come to Dr Waris' clinic come because of the effects upon the workers



from applying the chemicals considered necessary to bring the cotton and wheat crops to harvest. Therefore, removal of the maintaining cause requires finding alternatives to the toxic chemicals. You may ask Dr Waris if I have understood him correctly because he is here today, but I believe that

this was one of the main reasons he began to experiment with homeopathic remedies to address the needs of cotton growers. I mention Dr Waris in particular because his remedies against mealy bug were tested by independent experts on cotton and its pests and diseases, over two years and upon two cultivars in comparison with a water control and the industry standard chemical – a neonicotinoid. The results were spectacular. Using the control as a benchmark of zero the remedy that is now known as Ventage gave mortality rates on nymphs and adult mealy bugs of between 90 and 100%. The figures for the neonicotinoid were broadly the same as for Ventage. These expert-run experiments in 2008 and 2009 offer themselves as proof of concept because they are rigorous, independent and statistically significant using remedies well beyond the Avogadro threshold.

I would also like to show you some in-house work from New Zealand by Glen Atkinson mainly because the images are available and striking, and because we are fortunate that Glen too is here today so you can ask him more (and indeed about much other inspirational work for which I don't have time now). I've highlighted the three kale (*brassica oleracea - acephala group*) plants for clarity.



These three plants came from the same batch of seedlings and were sprayed with the intention of sending the first towards continual leaf production, the second towards flowering and seed production, and the third starting one way and then sprayed later to bring the plant the other way. This control of the plant was achieved with potentised biodynamic preparations. This shows the potential for control of the life phases of a plant to complement other work with pests.

A third type of control one can demonstrate is perhaps less useful for growers (perhaps useful for market stall holders) but I am showing this because the images are thought-provoking and essentially self-explanatory. This work comes from northern Italy and the eco-village known as Nuova Terra where Enzo Nastati is the prime mover (but who cannot be here due to other commitments). The images show a salad chicory that is split in two with one half sprayed with a potentised preparation called M11 and another sprayed with water as a control. They are then observed over several hours.



I've put in the next picture because the vegetables that are grown in the eco-village are of astounding size and health – all on an airfield recently reclaimed from the cold war allies.

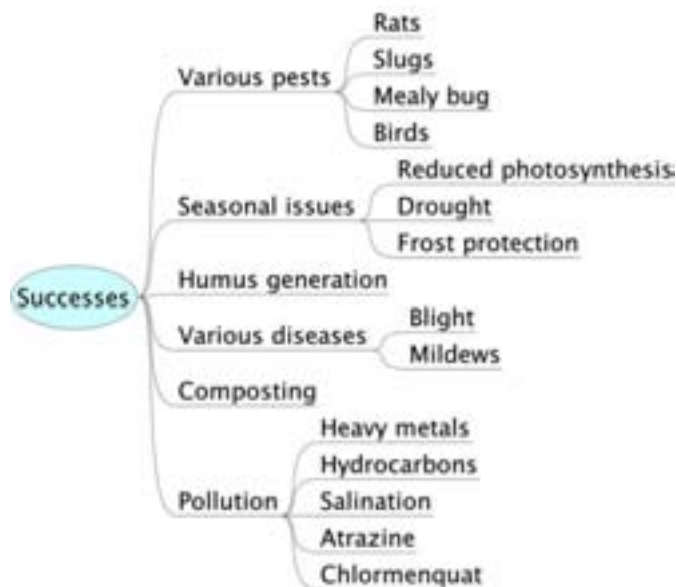


I hope that any or all of these images and tales encourage you co-workers in Brazil that inspirational work from around the world is already underway. I am delighted that once again this conference has the idea of 'faster alone and further together' as a guiding thought and hope that you will feel that you want to make contact with those responsible for what you have seen.

I have made a (non-exhaustive) list of the main regions in which I am aware of relevant work through the contacts that I have made. An intermittent Googling of appropriate terms shows me that other work is frequently emerging. An Iranian university has shown activity recently and also in Vietnam there is a new initiative. I am sure that there will be activity of which I am not aware much as I know so little of what you have been doing here.



There is not time now to go into all of these and the endeavours in which they are engaged but I have put in a second list to indicate a few of the issues which potencies have addressed.



I would be delighted to point you towards the relevant teams if any of these particularly grab your interest.

The quality of the evidence - Brazil

With more familiarity with the details you may consider that much of this work cannot be accepted because of the lack of scholarly scrutiny. Many of these investigations have not been conducted by academics. Not all of these claims have been tested by disinterested experts who have rejected the null hypotheses at the 99% level with controls and so forth. (Much of the evidence arises from the work of university graduates and undergraduates, or the results have been measured by independent professional laboratories, or the preparations have met the stern test of the market insofar as people whose livelihood depends on the efficacy of such sprays have continued to purchase these products year after year.)

Indeed, I think that in this situation it is particularly good to be crystal clear that the majority of the items in the list above must be categorised, from the academic perspective at least, as anecdotal rather than as proof. I am sure that you are all aware that raising a promising new treatment to full credibility is a very expensive undertaking – and that is before discussing the regulatory barriers to the market.

It is for this reason that in talks I give to interested people outside of our discipline I often mention Brazil, and that there are university departments here dedicated to studying and researching homeopathy as applied to plants. I don't know if you are aware of this but the very fact of your existence is a powerful reality when one discusses our heretical discipline both to those of us who are working in the field and to those who require academic ballast before giving any new discipline serious consideration – especially one involving forays beyond Avagadro's threshold. I know that in my country we are currently about as likely to be embraced by any university that values its reputation as someone suggesting a chair in ouija boards. Homeopathy is not considered seriously within academia because there is so little in our education to suggest how it might work – indeed the opposite.

In preparing myself to come and meet and talk to you for the first time I realise that when I mention that there are university departments dedicated to our discipline I have certain assumptions and entertain hopes about that department. I thought I would make those assumptions and hopes explicit here as a way of considering future collaboration and what we have to gain by aiming to become a fully fledged science. I hope you will indulge me in airing these assumptions and the attendant hopes.

I am assuming that there are a many carefully designed and executed trials so that there is a minimum of doubt possible that the determining factor between the control and the test is the homeopathic spray. The single variable is isolated and doubt as to its impact is minimised to the point of being dismissed – as with any other agricultural trial. I am sure that many of the papers of our colleagues this weekend will be of this type. At this youthful stage in our discipline's growth this is exactly what is needed and I thank you now for your rigour and application.

My second assumption is that you are asking yourself the third of the questions that always arises when I talk to my mainstream peers. The three questions that arise when initially discussing homeopathy for plants are:

1. What is it?
2. Does it work?
3. How the hell does it work?

If we are to forge a fully rounded scientific discipline much depends on the answer(s) we forge to this last question. It has the power to unite us and to explode us apart but I think it is one that we must ask ourselves and attempt to answer.

Consider almost any other scientific discipline and there will be first principles. Engineering would not get far without the laws of stress and strain, thermodynamic axioms and so forth. Medicine would not be a science without anatomy and pharmacodynamics.

But homeopathy does not present itself well here. There is discussion about the 'memory of water' which, I for one, find an imperfect analogy. We struggle to embrace realities such as the 'contamination' of even the most sterile glassware, alcohol and water used in making the remedies. Whilst we all have examples of efficacy to help us across this problem we struggle to convince our sceptical peers to follow us because of this lack of agreed first principles.

Some researchers into homeopathy will attempt to look for ephemeral yet robust (!) forms in pure water to explain the mechanism of a potency and thus remain within the materialist assumptions that underpin the mainstream understanding of reality. If they do so only certain very strict sequelae are consistent in terms of pharmacy practice and application. Other researchers will hypothesise peripherally based vital forces and again this would suggest different practices. Whilst Hahnemann's "spirit-like dynamis" is often invoked, it is a 'black box' term that needs to be opened and examined in detail if we are to understand it and draw the right conclusions from it. Hahnemann seemed to want to distance himself from the work of the alchemists – despite *Hepar Sulph* and *Carbo Veg* and so forth – but in this direction we can find some context for what is totally unacceptable to the mainstream of academia, at least in the UK. Would that devastate our claims to be a science?

Theory

This is a troublesome issue but without it I foresee that our discipline will hit external and internal walls before too long. The external ones are the lack of a plausible explanation, even as a tenable hypothesis, with which to build bridges to our peers in physics and maths and the disciplines founded on these two. The internal limits are more to do with the inability to determine if our failures are to do with the wrong remedies and preparations or the quality of those preparations. Just imagine if we could fully understand the parameters of the discipline with which we are involved to be absolutely certain of the variables. Then we would always be able to suggest the right remedy at the right potency made in the right way so that we would be the 'go to guys', the default for new and long standing problems so that poisonous agrochemicals would no longer be maintaining causes of disease and contamination. Our discipline would be mature if we met a new agricultural issue and could specify the right remedy from first principles.

I have talked to several people who have the confidence that they have this system already, but I have not yet felt convinced. I remain delighted to listen and debate on this and hope that this university is a place where such a discussion in lively passionate and thoughtful. I will finish with one startling example from someone who backed up their confidence with action just as a discussion provoker.

Practice

But before that I would like to go back to another step that I consider important for the development of our discipline, and it is one that I think Hahnemann and his students got right. I refer to the *materia medica*. We may talk for ever about the answer to the third question I mentioned above but less equivocal are the successes we have witnessed. I would make a plea for sharing results in the same form that the homeopaths for humans have created over 200 years. I suspect many of you know that I have trawled for years to build one around the nucleus that Kaviraj developed. This is available and ever-growing at considera.org – but it needs more of us to trust it or replace it and thus improve it if it is to become really useful.

I also realise that apart from the rather clunky design, its incompleteness, questions about the reliability of the entries, and – for some – contamination by biodynamics, there is a great fault and this is that I am the only one with the passwords to the database. In theory I could close it down tomorrow, or perhaps I could and do take bribes to put in one person's information and remove their competitors, and so forth. My point is that it needs to be owned and nurtured by a larger group of people than me so that it is beyond such suspicion. Therefore, can I repeat what I said 2 years ago at the first international conference, that I would really like to hand over this start of a *materia medica* and repertory to a team – to which I would like to belong – so we can improve it, build it, redesign it and so forth. It should be common wealth. This independence would make it a living example of '*faster alone and further together*'. If anyone wants to support and be part of this, please let's talk.

A closing veterinary example

A farmer in the north of England had a cow that had delivered a dead calf. She also retained the placenta and was clearly getting worse. The vet could not help her. The farmer rang Enzo Nastati with whom the farmer had recently studied and, in desperation, asked if he had any ideas. Enzo said, "Yes: take one of the biodynamic preparations that is normally used for making compost (502 made with *achillea millefolium*) and stir it for 60 minutes in alternating vortices in a farm bucket. Then give it to the cow to drink." This was done and within 20 seconds of drinking the water the cow stood, spread its back legs, lifted its tail and squirted a stream of hot purulent discharge. The clarity came back to the cow's eyes and two days later it passed a healthy looking placenta! The farmer called back to Italy and asked how Enzo had known this was the thing to do. Enzo explained his thinking involving guidance from Rudolf Steiner's agriculture course, the peripheral origin of the forces of life, and eurythmy movements! On that basis he said that mammalian reproduction can be considered in three parts: coming on heat and acceptance of the bull, gestation, and the processes around birth. Each, he said, needs the same preparation but stirred for different durations. For first stage issues stir for 20 minutes, for the main gestation stir for 40 minutes and, for the issues at parturition, stir for an hour. Then he made the connection to the method of trituration for making remedies of insoluble mother substances. He said that Hahnemann knew this too and so in his Organon he suggested that the sac lac be added to the mortar in thirds so some was ground for 20 minutes, some for 40 minutes and some for the whole hour. Thus the whole was addressed within one remedy. Until this point I had assumed that Hahnemann's technique was just a practical laboratory hint. The startling efficacy in the cow made me consider that maybe Enzo was right. Both Hahnemann and Dr Steiner were exposed to esoteric ideas, of this I have no doubt. Both drew from the same European

stream and in examples like this it seems one finds the connections appearing in practice.

I don't expect or want you to be inspired by such stories so that you study what I have studied but I hope that you are asking yourselves the same questions about our common discipline, its origins and what it would be like if it were mature and able to address all sorts of agricultural issues from first principles. I'm currently inspired to slipstream Drs Steiner and Hahnemann and am delighted to be invited to share my experiences but I imagine others of you are happier on other paths and will have different stories. Great, but let us bring the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together and see if we can fit them together to build the bigger picture, to reveal more of the context in which our pieces make sense. In this way our individual 'faster alone' efforts could take us all further. It will require courage to be rigorously scientific but not be too hampered by trying to confine ourselves within the assumptions of the current mainstream.

Thank you again Dr Bonato and all who are carrying this discipline. I hope to learn much from you in this weekend.