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Planet Earth has an existence that is more than the sum of its parts

A systemic and ecological basis for homeopathy

by Dr Kenneth Silvestri



Dr Kenneth Silvestri is a psychotherapist and certified classical homeopath (CCH) in New York, USA. He offers a unique integrative and mindful approach to improving one's immune system by resolving emotional and physical problems. His doctorate is in anthropology and psychology from Columbia University. Dr Silvestri has published over 80 articles and conducted hundreds of workshops on interpersonal communication, forgiveness, stress management, family therapy and homeopathy. He is currently completing a book entitled *A Wider Lens: How to See Your Life Differently*, and is also an active black belt student of Aikido, a martial art based on peace and harmony.

A few years ago, I attended a seminar on Alternative and Complementary Healing. One of the presenters, who represented the American Medical Association (AMA) and was from a prominent university, discussed research covering over 20 alternative healing methods. Most of the healing methods were being rigorously and, in many cases, rightfully disputed.

When the presentation was nearly finished and with as yet no mention of homeopathy, I raised my hand and asked, 'What about homeopathy?' The speaker paused and smiled in a manner that was very different from his demeanour of the past 90 minutes. He then asked, 'Are you a homeopath?' I smiled back, and he continued to say that they were following several patients of homeopathy in San Diego and Rochester, all of whom were getting better from their presenting symptoms. He shrugged his

shoulders and said, 'Well, you guys spend much more time than the recommended 11 minutes that the AMA suggests for consulting with patients, therefore it must be the placebo effect'. His sheepish smile at that moment seemed incongruent amongst his many slick and extensive research charts.

A theoretical framework

What follows is, I believe, a theoretical framework that supports amongst many things, homeopathy. As homeopaths we need an

- ▷ epistemological basis to explain and advocate for our wonderful healing process.

I spent a week this past summer in Poland participating in the International Bateson Symposium. Nora Bateson, Director of the Institute, facilitated us through many profound thoughts and discussions. One such topic was how can we determine, in a systemic / ecological manner, the meaning of injurious patterns in our world with an emphasis on producing solutions that respect our human and environmental needs. Our informal and intimate dialogues truly dealt with the framework that Gregory Bateson expressed when he said: 'The major problems in the world are the result of the difference between how nature works, and the way people think.' The symposium covered Immigration, Health, Education, and Communication, all within the context of determining how patterns of communication connect, through 'the difference that makes a difference'.

My sense is that we encounter, in many forms, fragmentation in our culture which eventually leads to contradictions and problems. These instances are what we call paradoxes, some of which can be humorous and, depending on the context, very painful. A good stand-up comedian or an improv group will use these paradoxes to entertain you. In everyday life, working through these contradictions, as Carl Jung used to say, can be a means to self-fulfilment. The problem is that, if you avoid them, they can develop into 'double binds' – those times that can damn you if you do or if you don't. For instance, if you encounter a statement directed at you like 'Please disobey me,' whether you respond yes or no, you will conflict with that command. The dilemma is, how to get out of this unenviable predicament.

Why should homeopaths consider this? It is now recognised, even by the AMA in the USA, which previously had denied it for years, that all chronic illnesses

originate from over-stressing our nervous system. Using an ecological perspective such as homeopathy that emphasises context over content can make us less stressful, more comfortable, and apt to flow with the natural patterns that our remedies possess. This is what ecology and nature are about. In this framework, imposed fragmentation, dichotomies, or narrow

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myopic views have little meaning without understanding how actions and behaviour are interconnected. I previously wrote about this in my chapter 'Integrating Psychotherapy and Homeopathy' in *Homeopathy and Mental Health Care*.

My takeaway

Here is my takeaway from the symposium. It is clear to me that we have two basic choices about how to view and act in our lives.

Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) was an anthropologist, a social scientist, a systemic thinker, and one of the most important social scientists of the 20th century. Strongly opposing those scientists who attempted to 'reduce' everything to mere matter, he was intent upon the task of re-introducing 'Mind' back into the scientific equations, and wrote two famous books – *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, and *Mind & Nature* – as part of this task. His ideas were adopted by many thinkers in the anti-psychiatry movement because he provided a model and a new epistemology for developing a novel understanding of human madness, and also the theory of the double bind (adapted from <https://mri.org/gregory-bateson>).

One way is to work primarily from a predominantly linear western cultural framework based on cause and effect learning or reductionist reasoning. This framework, when solely used, has proven to be narrow and mostly ineffective in its application to health, education, environment, foreign affairs, politics and the economy. Each solution comes with the need to further resolve another resulting problem, and so on (such as a pharmaceutical pill that requires another to deal with its side effects). This view has unfortunately been assimilated by many of our decision makers.

However, an alternative framework, inherent in a homeopathic assessment, is to navigate life as one of being ecological and holistic. This is based on being mindful, respectful of relationships, and conscious of the importance of inter-relationships, as part of a whole process that takes into consideration all of nature's anomalies and differences. It is by applying this framework that we can use our perceptual lens to zoom in and out, simultaneously seeing the present (which can include patterns of everyday language and cultural constraints) and a wider perspective at the same time. With this lens, we can much more easily navigate and



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learn from the inevitable paradoxes we encounter every day as well as see and avoid injurious double binds, all leading to the unique and extraordinary symptoms which determine appropriate remedies which in turn balance our immune system.

Embodying an ecological, holistic or systemic framework (seen in art and poetry which are the human metaphors for nature) is lifesaving, less competitive, and more collaborative. This way of perceiving and behaving is based on our learning from each other in a mutual manner

as Nora Bateson advocates. This framework emphasises trans-contextual respect; meaning that – like a hologram – each part and every action we take or perceive is connected to our total existence. It does not depend on content alone but on our contextual environments.

It is here, in the relationships of our many evolving contexts / situations, that we evolve and create meaning through the subtle warm differences within those present moments. This provides a refreshing description and pathway as a

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basis of homeopathy to heal ourselves and our environment. The Greek word ‘Gaia’ refers to our planet as having an existence that is more than the sum of its parts; in other words, each action we as individuals take is connected to larger contexts of even larger contexts and so on. This, I believe, is how Hahnemann viewed homeopathy. The point is, stay mindful, be in the present, create supportive environments, celebrate the aesthetic, make necessary adjustments and respect nature.

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Nora Bateson, daughter of Gregory Bateson, is an award-winning filmmaker, writer and educator, as well as President of the International Bateson Institute, based in Sweden. Her book, *Small Arcs of Larger Circles*, released by Triarchy Press, UK, 2016 is a revolutionary personal approach to the study of systems and complexity. (<http://www.internationalbatesoninstitute.org/founder/>)

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