

Editorial

Individualisation

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'What, O Monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, sickness is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering. Pain, grief, sorrow, lamentation, and despair are suffering. Association with what is unpleasant is suffering, disassociation from what is pleasant is suffering. Not to get what one wants is suffering. In short, the five factors of individuality are suffering'. (Buddha, the first noble truth)

As homeopaths we have taken it upon ourselves to reduce suffering in our patients caused by the very factors the Buddha mentions: birth, sickness, old age, death, pain, grief, sorrow, lamentation, and despair. We look for causes and address these as much as we can, but do we and can we transform the one cause that underlies all of them?

In this first noble truth the Buddha states that individuality—the quality or character that distinguishes one from others—is the source of suffering. Dividing the world in 'self' and 'other' causes suffering. The key to liberation then is to get rid of the identification as an individual. Although the archaic meaning of individuality is the 'state or quality of being indivisible or inseparable', today's meaning points to 'separate or distinct existence'.

As we individualise each and every case in homeopathy, are we then acting against the direction pointed out by the Buddha? Are we strengthening identification and individuality and so keeping our patients bound to the wheel of suffering? It may initially look that way, but it is not our experience. Instead, we witness a reduction of suffering in our patients. We witness our patients becoming free instead of bound.

Looking at it more closely, the idea that individualising our prescriptions strengthens identification of our patients as a separate individual is not supported by logic or by experience.

From the law of similars, it logically follows that we individualise to mirror the individualised state of the patient. By individualising for the person, we paradoxically reduce identification as a separate individual. Homeopathic remedies free us from the identifications that cause our suffering. They free us from the stressful thoughts and beliefs that prevent us from realizing our true nature. Delusions blur our clarity, distort our self-image and reduce us to a caricature of our real Self. And, while homeopathic remedies release us from the constraints of the separated individual identity, they free our uniqueness. Similar being the opposite of unique, the law of similars promotes uniqueness ... by breaking us free from the delusion of individuality.

'There is a difference between individuality and uniqueness. Uniqueness does not mean "separate from" but "one with, uniquely." Your hand is unique to the body but one with it. Living the incarnate life uniquely can be seen in the same way, for the truth of who you are is one with all of life. So, your place in life is unique and that uniqueness is part of the richness of life ...' (Joshua Ross, <http://journeysintolight.org>).

In the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha stresses the importance and merit of the transformation from individuality to uniqueness, from 'separate from' to 'one with': '... if someone filled worlds as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges with treasure and then gave it all away to support charitable causes, and someone else were to understand the truth that there is no such thing as "self" and "other" and wholeheartedly embody and live it, the merit gained by this second person would be far greater than the merit of the first'. (From the Diamond Sutra, in 'A Mind at Home with Itself' by Byron Katie with Stephen Mitchell, HarperOne 2017.)

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