

A Proving Weekend

by Kay Samuel

This is the first time in this country, so far as I know, that homœopaths have gathered themselves together to do a proving weekend workshop. The task was to begin the collation of the results of thirty separate provings; so we had to take these, join them together and transform them into a remedy picture, 'as if they were a composite picture of one person.'

The amount we all learned from this endeavour was tremendous, and extremely valuable for us, for our patients, and for homœopathy, since it will add two remedies, totally unknown and unused previously, to our materia medica. In order to avoid any bias or prior influence on results, nobody, except Jeremy Sherr, our proving director, knew what two substances were proved, and even he was unaware who was proving which substance, since the two substances chosen, were allocated by a number code via another person.

On the weekend of 9 and 10 September 1989 the supervisors who had monitored the provers gathered together; some of the supervisors had also undergone a proving themselves - though not during the period when they were monitoring other people. This was helpful, since any uncertain points could be discussed on the spot. Jeremy gave us a lead into the work with some useful tips from Hahnemann's *Organon*, especially §30 and 131, where Hahnemann says, concerning provings, that if the first dose be sufficiently strong, then the experimenter learns in what order symptoms appear, and can note this accurately, thus giving us an understanding of the genius of the medicine - as he delightfully puts it -, the primary and then the secondary actions. Quite a moderate dose is often enough, even a 6c we have discovered, to bring out

the reactions, if, he says, the experimenter is sufficiently delicate and sensitive in the attention he gives to his sensations.

Following these ideas, most provers only had one or two doses of the medicine, which was demonstrated to be sufficient in most cases to bring out symptoms; and no-one needing more than five doses in the two day period. Hahnemann continues that the duration of action of the drug can only be ascertained by comparison of several experiments.

§131: Supposing (if I may paraphrase), that in order to produce any symptoms, we have to repeat the remedy for several days in ascending, or, increasing doses; doubtless we learn the various morbid states it can produce, but not the order of their appearance, since a subsequent dose often removes, curatively, some symptom caused by the previous dose, or develops an opposite state - these symptoms should be in parentheses, as they are ambiguous, until purer experiments show if they are the organism's reaction and secondary reaction, or an alternating effect belonging to the medicine.

§141 talks of the value of proving medicines on oneself, for then it may be known from the inside, and without doubt, the truth of the sensation, for these may not be expressed so exactly in words. (It is worth reading Hahnemann's footnote here, too long for quotation now).

We divided into pairs for the analysis of the cases, the supervisor of the case under consideration, and an unbiased observer or colleague, who know nothing of the case beforehand. We still had no idea of the substance which had been used, so that there could be no philosophising

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about the results! We found the work of analysis difficult, fascinating, and we learned a great deal about case-taking. Each symptom had to be discussed and weighed in the balance, a decision made, great care used to be sure nothing important was missed; yet not be too verbose or repetitive, exasperating prospective users!

What a responsibility! We were uncovering the secrets of a new curative agent here, creating information which could be used by practitioners for the years ahead, to help not losing the natural, descriptive language of the prover, so as to bring to light a true and vivid portrait of the medicine. We tried to visualise somewhat - for this is only early stages so far - how the descriptions would look in a repertory, to be useful for practitioners to use, and see reflected in their patients.

It was all very arduous, one had to be patient with repetition, and not slash things without due thought. By the end of the day we were all exhausted, and marvelled at the great persistence and energy of Hahnemann! After a couple of hours of analysis, we would stop for discussion and a comparing of notes as to what picture was appearing in one of the substances being proved - all the cases for that substance. It was like being present at a birth, as Jeremy said: very exciting, several of the provers who were there came up with exactly similar experiences and feelings, then supervisors remarked: 'But my prover also had these feelings, which have gone on for three months, and only now beginning to go away and he's returning to normal' and so forth.

Not only with the mind and emotions, but physical symptoms which were an exact match of each other were appearing, some within ten minutes of taking the tablet. We could see the head of the remedy portrait, as it were, beginning to emerge, and some sort of colouring - clues as to the type of emotions and mentality coming into manifestation. Hahnemann, we discovered, was right - he usually is! - quite strong emotions and mental symptoms were coming up, from only one dose of the 6th potency.

Some of the effects were quite subtle, such as irritability or weepiness before menses - a common enough symptom, one might think too common to be used, but these effects were very much exaggerated under the proving, and came with their own particular flavour, which was typical more of the medicine, we discovered, than of the patient.

By the end of our second day of analysis, it was time to tell us what the substances were. Jeremy wanted to prove two things which were very basic, the first was, perhaps, not so basic to the third world countries, but certainly to the Western World, and therefore to many of the patients we are likely to see. The second thing is basic to the whole of humanity, whilst being much more ethereal.

So the first substance was 'chocolate', made from the best Swiss bitter chocolate, which is very dark and rich. Many of our patients, particularly women, seem really addicted to it, cannot do without it; often it seems to replace the love they are lacking, perhaps from childhood, or love that is locked inside and cannot be expressed. The provers, each taking one potency only, varying from person to person, between 6 and 200, experienced very similar symptoms, which were exciting; a strong physical symptom seemed to be a strange feeling of space between the tongue and the palate, pains in the nape of the neck and down the spine, quite sharp, were also noticed by several provers.

Emotionally there was irritability and anger; also an awful feeling of alienation or separation from their families, and at the same time a need to be hugged or to hug, to have some affection. One youngish man separated himself from his family, had no contact with them for two and a half months, refused to answer letters or invitations from them, and has only recently come back into normal contact with them. There were dreams of ropes or snakes, associated with being confined or that they had to climb up them; and as well as these dreams there was a desire for string shaped food, spaghetti, vermicelli, or as if the food were coming from tubes; and a desire to eat red food, also to eat beetles and other insects.

The work of this proving has only just begun, and already quite a vivid picture is emerging, it is fascinating and impresses one of the power of simple substances on the mental/emotional sphere and the physiognomy. It seems to be an extremely deep acting remedy with a very long duration of action, producing among other things, paranoid and suicidal states. However, this is only the very early stage, and there is still a tremendous amount of analysis and work to be done.

The other proving was not from a solid substance, but from a gaseous one, in fact the first material ever to appear in the universe, as it is the first material in the table of the elements: Hydrogen, the mother of all substances, without which life, as we know it, would not exist. We have not worked on these provings as yet, but there were signs that these also will be extremely interesting and we will let you know the results in due course.

These provings have been done by members of the Malvern Maniacs Homœopathic Group, and the Darlington Collective. We will probably need many more weekends to finish this work. In the next stage, Jeremy will computerise all the information, so that it can be arranged in many different ways, i.e. in order of schema, time, potency, etc. The plan and organization of this project had been going on for one year, before the actual provings were implemented. □