

Look at, then See the Case

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Abstract: Students of Hahnemann's *Organon* often find an aphorism that catches their attention the most. The first part of §104 interests me. What exactly does a homeopath do after going to great pains to investigate the complete case? The English translations vary widely in their answer. What modern homeopaths actually do in practice varies even more erratically. What are the words that Hahnemann actually uses? Every translation involves a personal interpretation.

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Introduction

Each student of Hahnemann's *Organon* finds something that is especially interesting. Many people like the sweeping mission statement of §1 and §2, and often quote those lines. Other practitioners appreciate the historical perspective offered by Hahnemann when he compares the deficiencies of all previous forms of medical therapeutics. Those who like the mystery of the unknown may relish the details of preparing a medicine with no more original substance in it. The homeopath who has emphatically rejected the narrow view of mechanistic biomedicine may make a religion out of the vital force of §9. The far-ranging thinker calls the first part of the *Organon* a philosophy rather than real, verifiable experimental conclusions. One group of homeopaths cannot bring themselves to translate some of the noun objects named in the *Organon*. They leave the words "gestalt" and "wesen" untranslated, for instance, as if these terms are just too important to say in English.

To me, the *Organon* is a "how to" manual. How to verbs are the most important words for me. The first part of the *Organon* establishes principles of practice based on experiments and observations. Practice is practical. The action verbs in the *Organon* tell me what to do. "Help; heal; cure; make sick people well" is what §1 and §2 say to me.

My favorite aphorism is the first part of §104. It is telling me to do something that I don't know how to do. That is, what I did in the last case won't work in the next case. I shall explain further.

The "How to" Part of Aphorism 104

The practical part of the *Organon* begins with §82-

104. These aphorisms devote considerable effort listing the necessary skills of the investigation of a person's diseases. Hahnemann instructs the curing artisan to be complete, thorough and ask about past symptoms as well as present symptoms; and to include all circumstances, such as other treatments, life habits or family traits. Homeopaths routinely do this now, but it was quite an innovation to be so complete for a chronic disease case; it was not done before Hahnemann.

This case taking section of the *Organon* ends with the statements in the first part of §104. This aphorism tells us how to turn a list of facts or bits of information or a list of seemingly unrelated symptoms into a meaningful picture ("bild") or a living whole ("ganz") or a "gestalt." We must determine the characteristic symptoms. How does Hahnemann define "characteristic symptom?" I originally learned it as "rare, strange and peculiar." However, Hahnemann uses multiple different German words to convey the multiple aspects of meaning. Table 1 lists the translation of several different German words (see Table 1 next page) that describe characteristic symptoms.

What does Hahnemann actually say to do with the totality of symptoms? He never uses the word "analyze." The dictionary says that "analyze" means "breaking up something complex into its various simple elements."⁽¹⁾ This process covers how we analyze a person's whole disease, and break it down into its component parts, which we call the totality of symptoms. The discovery of the characteristic symptoms from the totality of symptoms is another, different process. What is that technique? We will consult eleven versions, ten different ones in English, to reach

Table 11
Characteristic Symptoms

§153-154, 151, 104, 102, 130, 164, 178, 67a, 82, 83, 86, 211-213

Peculiar	Prominent	Exceptional
Special	Strange	Singular
Particular	Unusual	Odd
Uncommon	Marked	Rare
Distinctive	Distinguishing	Genius of the medicine
Eminent	Clarified	Individualized
Intense	Striking	Mental/emotional

a greater realization of what to do.

Eleven Different Versions of §104

§82 “When once the whole complex of symptoms, the picture of any particular kind of disease, is exactly drawn out, then the most difficult part of the physician’s task is finished. Then he has it always before him: he can study it in all its details, in order to discover an effective opposing force, an artificial counter disease-force, similar to the existing disorder, chosen out of the symptom-lists of all the medicines which are known to him...”(2)

§XCVII “The totality of the symptoms, which characterize a given case—or, in other terms, the image of the disease—being once committed to writing, the most difficult part is accomplished. The physician ought ever after to have this image before his eyes to serve as a basis of treatment, especially when the disease is chronic. He can then study it in all its parts, and draw from it the characteristic marks, in order the oppose to these symptoms—that is to say, to the disease itself—a remedy that is perfectly homoeopathic...”(3)

§104 “When all of the prominent and characteristic symptoms, collectively forming an image of a case of chronic, or of any other disease, have been carefully committed to writing, the most difficult part of the labor will have been accomplished. The image which has now been construed, forms the basis of treatment, particularly of chronic diseases. This image is always accessible to the physician, whom it enables to oversee all its parts, to mark its characteristic signs represent-

ing the disease, and to prescribe a homeopathic remedy...”(4)

§104 “When the totality of the symptoms that specially mark and distinguish the case of disease or, in other words, when the picture of the disease, whatever be its kind, is once accurately sketched, the most difficult part of the task is accomplished. The physician has then the picture of the disease, especially if it be a chronic one, before him to guide him in his treatment: he can investigate it in all its parts and can pick out the characteristic symptoms, in order to oppose to these, that is to say, to the whole malady itself, a very similar artificial morbific force, in the shape of a homoeopathically chosen medicinal substance...”(5)

§104 The Dudgeon translation is used by Boericke word for word.(6)

§ 104 “When the picture of any case of disease, i.e., the totality of symptoms particularly defining and distinguishing it, is precisely written down, then the most difficult part of the task is already accomplished. In his treatment, especially of chronic disease, the physician can always refer to it. He can peruse it in all its parts and pick out the characteristic symptoms so as to counter them; i.e., counter the complaint itself, with the appropriately similar artificial disease agent, the homoeopathic remedy...”(7)

§104 “Once the totality of symptoms that principally determines and distinguish the disease case – in other words, the image of any kind of disease – has been exactly recorded, the most difficult work is done. During the treatment (especially of a chronic disease),

the medical-art practitioner then has the total disease image always before him. He can behold it in all of its parts and lift out the characteristic signs. He can then select..."(8)

§104 "If now the totality of the symptoms preeminently determining and distinguishing the case, or in other words, if the picture of the disease of any kind exactly noted down for once, the most difficult labor is done. The healing artist then has it always before him laid down as the basis of treatment especially of the chronic disease, he can penetrate it in all its parts and mark the characteristic signs, in order to oppose them..."(9)

§104 "Once the picture of the disease has been accurately sketched, the most difficult part of the physician's task is accomplished. A record of the totality of the symptoms, especially those that mark and distinguish the case of disease, is now always available to the physician as a complete picture of the illness to guide him in his treatment. He can pick out the characteristic symptoms in order to oppose..."(10)

§104 "When the totality of the symptoms that specially mark and distinguish the cause of disease or, in other words, when the picture of the disease, whatever be its kind, is once accurately sketched, the most difficult part of the task is accomplished. The physician has then the picture of the disease, especially if it be a chronic one, always before him to guide him in his treatment. He can perceive it in all its parts and can pick out the characteristic symptoms..."(11)

§104 "Ist nun die Gesamtheit der, den Krankheitsfall vorzüglich bestimmenden und auszeichnenden Symptome, oder andern Worten, das Bild der Krankheit irgend einer Art einmal genau aufgezeichnet, so ist auch die schwerste Arbeit geschehen. Der Heilkünstler hat es dann bei der Cur, vorzüglich der chronischen Krankheit uf immer vor sich, kann es in allen seinen Theilen durchschauen und die charakteristischen Zeichen herausheben, um ihm eine gegen diese, das ist, gegen das Uebel selbst gerichtete..."(12)

A Tally of Two Verbs

Hahnemann says to do two actions with the totality of symptoms in §104. We "herausheben" the characteristic symptoms. The most popular translation for this is "pick out" according to Boericke, Kunzli, Hamlyn and Hochstetter. "Lift out" says O'Reilly; "mark" says Fincke and Wesselhoeft; "chosen out of" says Wheeler; and "draw from it," says Devrient. One German dictionary defines it as "lift out"(13), and another dictionary mentions "lift or take out; render prominent, make conspicuous, lay stress on; throw into relief, set off..."(14)

Hahnemann "herausheben's" the characteristic symptoms from the totality of symptoms by doing what? He says to "durchshauen" the symptoms.

"Study" say Wheeler and Devrient; "oversee" says Wesselhoeft; "investigate" says Boericke; "peruse" says Kunzli; "behold" declares O'Reilly; Hamlyn says "guide;" Hochstetter says "perceive; and Fincke mentions "penetrate." Some of these words don't seem to be related to each other in any meaningful way. Three different German dictionaries offer: "to see through, to see clearly, to understand;"(15) "to look through, to see through, to penetrate;"(16) "see through, look through, penetrate, understand, grasp, see into the heart of..."(17)

Some of the words that the translators choose emphasize the senses: "oversee, behold, perceive." Other words emphasize thinking about the symptoms; such as, "study, investigate, peruse, guide." Remember in §6 that Hahnemann says to observe what is "outwardly discernible through the senses..."(18) He does not want us to think up symptoms or say, "I think I understand the symptom," or make hypotheses or interpretations of the symptoms. We are to use all the perceptible signs and symptoms of the diseases in the individual. We use all five of our senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing and sight to perceive the totality of the symptoms of the disease. We do not think the characteristic symptoms; we see them.

In German there are two words "to see:" "schauen" and "sehen." In English we can perhaps compare these two words with "to see" and "to look." Here are some examples:

We can look at a list or look through a list of symptoms.

We can look at something and not really see it if we don't pay attention.

We can look through a window because it is transparent.

Or we can see through a window, which implies that we actually noticed something that we looked at through the transparent glass.

We don't look through a person unless we are Superman, but we can see through a person if we realize their unstated motivations or intentions.

Looking at or looking through a list of symptoms of a disease is not enough.

We must see through the symptom totality and realize the living whole.

To see the whole we stay with the symptoms; we stay within the symptoms; we stay with the concrete observable symptoms only. We do not attempt to see beyond the symptoms, as if we can see over the horizon and extrapolate the reality. We do not try to see something behind the symptoms that seems to just elude our senses, because we do not believe that the signs and symptoms are enough. We do not reach above the symptoms looking for universal ideas or concepts. These acts of the thinking mind that separates itself from the seeing mind only introduce theories and hypotheses. Exam-

ples of ideas that we can think up include taxonomy categories, psychological categories, and periodic table themes. These are all preconceptions, assumptions and suppositions borrowed from other sciences. Choose, instead, to stay with the actual perceptions.

One homeopathic practitioner hints that we can see the whole case and recognize the characteristic symptoms if: "A preparation for this labor involves the task of making acquaintance of a good repertory and mastering as far as is possible the peculiar genius of the best proved drugs. This latter achievement is no slight task..."(19)

A New Translation of §104

For the word "herausheben," I choose the definition "make conspicuous." The dictionary definition is to make "clearly visible, obvious, plainly evident, attracting notice, remarkable, noteworthy."(20)

For "durchschauen" I use the words "make transpicuous," defined as "that can be seen through, transparent, lucid."(21)

I choose a bullet point format to make the aphorism more perspicuous; that is, "easily understood, clearly expressed."(23) Here is my translation of the first part of §104:

- Accurately noting down the totality of symptoms that determine and distinguish the case is the most difficult part of the task.
- After several conversations, the doctor sketches the disease picture of the patient as completely as possible.
- The curing artisan can then refer to his notes at any time.
- Make transpicuous all the parts.
- Make the characteristic symptoms conspicuous.
- Distinguish the most striking and peculiar (characteristic) symptoms.
- Then choose the appropriate artificial disease agent – the homeopathic medicine – the best possible similarity to the signs to begin the cure.

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