

AH: One of the things I am struck by is your knowledge of the materia medica. I am inspired by it as I am sure many others are. Can you tell me how you learn about a remedy?

I think that I learned the most important things about remedies from my own cases. What I like most, is to have a living picture of a remedy. The material that we have in our books and in the repertories, is mostly very "cold" and not so instructive - at least apart from the so called polychrests. When I was first learning most teachers gave just their opinions, which often were mere repetitions of repetitions of repetitions. Very few were able to deliver authentic and reliable information, which I believe were steps to a deeper understanding of a remedy picture.

I was astonished to see how little connected to the reality of cured cases the teaching could be. I have been to many seminars where people had in fact very strange ideas about certain remedies. They were able to speak in an amazing, brilliant and fantastic way about these ideas but mostly they were not attached to the reality of cured patients.

So now I insist that more important than to have brilliant ideas, is to have good cures, at least this is what Hahnemann taught us, and these cures should be documented.

I consider a well-documented case to be the story of the patient, his suffering and his healing process, reported over a long time (at least 1-2 years), in his own words and *not the simple connection of symptoms*. I am very disturbed when I read case-reports that are nothing but a list of symptoms. I totally disagree with this. I think that this is allopathic, not homoeopathic thinking. We criticize the allopathic doctors for making their diagnosis only on some pathological symptoms, but it is exactly the same attitude when you come to a homoeopathic remedy-diagnosis by saying that this patient has a fear of thunderstorm, a desire for salt and a desire for ice-cream and therefore it is a case of Phosphorus. It is like saying that there is this or that amount of red blood cells, protein, sodium etc.; it is exactly the same way of thinking. From this you cannot derive any *understanding* of the patient which is essential for me. I believe that the only way to

get a vivid experience of a remedy picture is to collect well documented cured cases.

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This is, I think, the only way in which everyone of us can develop a clear experience with a remedy. Until you have seen a cure from a remedy, using all your senses to see what was really healed - what the process was - how can you have a clear experience of such a remedy, and moreover, how can you dare to teach and pretend to know?

So, to come back to your question: I have collected those of my cases, that were running well, by which I mean that the remedy had worked in both the patient's chronic and acute conditions and this for a long time. Then I studied thoroughly this material for a better (and more often for a first) understanding of a remedy. I tried to find out what was common in the cases and in the stories of the patients, in their words, explanations and descriptions of their state and the history of this state. This, I believe, is crucial and absolutely necessary if you want to develop as a homoeopath and not only repeat and rely on very dry second-hand-information. Your own work is your best teacher.

AH: You talked about developing a vivid picture to learn remedies. What would you suggest to students for studying materia medica?

As I said, the best way to study materia medica is to study well-taken and well-treated cases and you can call yourself lucky if you find a teacher who follows this very practical model of teaching.

Additionally it is very useful to have an idea what the substance is, with what you are dealing. I don't think you can use Aurum successfully without knowing that Aurum is gold, you can't use Bufo without knowing that Bufo is a toad.

Unfortunately our homoeopathic literature gives very little information about the substances, therefore you have to find sources yourself and we do have a lot of very useful biological, chemical,

physiological, pharmacological and - what is also very important - anthropological and medical historical information about the relation of all these minerals, plants and animals with human life. All this information is of the utmost interest to us and can very often lead directly to the center of a much deeper understanding for the use of a homoeopathic remedy.

These studies must include all relevant material wherever it may come

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from and without any prejudice; old mythological narratings and fairy tales which center around a plant, for example, can be very instructive. Very often you can detect an essential focus of this remedy in the history of its use, or in its name or you might get very precious information about indications for a snake remedy through studying the life of these animals.

My third suggestion concerns our homoeopathic materia medica itself. When studying remedies, we have two problems. Very often, when they are well known, we have too much information. On the other hand, when they are not well known we have too little information. The challenge is to gather the information in such a way that you either enrich or reduce it by grouping it as "themes". By this I mean to collect a group of symptoms that have something in common, in which there is a connection, which can help you to understand the remedy. I think, the most important reason for this work is to arrive at a level of information that is very characteristic for this substance. Here you have two classes of symptoms in a remedy: those symptoms, belonging to the central "themes" and the others which don't. A symptom, which can be connected to a central theme is more likely to be of value in prescribing that remedy than any other symptom because it is closer to the core of that remedy.

My approach to studying remedies - and to make these studies more vivid - is therefore a threefold one: to use both homoeopathic and non-homoeopathic material as I said and to study well cured cases. I think that our model of thinking is a very complex one and if you

focus only on the proving- symptoms and nothing else it becomes one-sided and much less efficient.

AH: I think you have made studying the remedies very fun.

[laughing]Yes.. if I don't have fun I can't practice anything; it is an essential part of life. If you don't have pleasure in what you are doing it becomes senseless.

AH: What do you think is the biggest weakness or downfall of the way homeopathy is practiced these days?

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I think there are many.

First of all, I have the general impression that the difficulty of practicing this wonderful method is widely underestimated and many who work in the field are mere amateurs and poorly prepared to do the job. This is mainly due to unappropriate teaching.

Secondly a focussing on psychological analysing of cases, patients and remedy-pictures with very little professional experience. We are somewhat overflooded with ready-made, self-created, homoeo-psychological interpretations. I think that psychology like medicine is a science which has to be studied and the psychological and medical handling of a patient is a very difficult matter for which you have to be trained thoroughly and this is even more true if you do it in a homoeopathic way.

Another big threat to our profession is the carelessness and irresponsible attitude with which quite a few publications present remedy-pictures or provings. Without presenting their sources, without any sufficiently observed and documented cases, the authors claim to the homoeopathic public the detection of cores, essences and whatsoever of new, newest and latest remedies as if they were partaking in a race. In these discussions I am missing the patience as well as the patients.

AH: Do you think we are in a transition right now?

Homoeopathy has been developing for more than 200 years and has always been in transition. Now we have to consider is that it is time to practice it in a contemporary and very professional way, using the tremendous knowledge coming out of other scientific fields and realizing finally that our possibilities of individualizing have been used far beyond the method`s borders.

I think there has been a good step forward in that most of us no longer believe that it is possible to cure 80 % of the diseases with a dozen remedies, as some homoeopaths once taught. But instead of proving one new remedy after the other, I would prefer to increase and concentrate our work on elaborating information about the 1500 "known" remedies, most of which are more unknown than known, in my view.

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AH: So do you think we are doing too many provings?

I don't think we should stop doing provings in general; they are very interesting and the basis of our work. But instead of constantly inventing new remedies we need to also discover more things about those we already have. I think that it is a disease of our era; that we are feeling that we don't have enough, we have to have more all the time. But the results at this moment don't show a better quality of understanding of our cases. The delusion that the more we have the better is, I believe, real pathology. I would prefer to go deeper with what we have.

AH: How does a student make studying the plants as interesting as studying the animals?

There is no principal difference between the study of a plant or the study of an animal if you know how to find material. There is certainly much more material about snakes or spiders than about some rare plants, but on the other hand we have such wonderful plants as the solanaceae which deliver a huge amount of detailed

anthropological and historical and pharmacological (toxicological) information. Read the book "Plants of the Gods" and you will be cured of your doubts that the study of plants might be boring.

AH: Did you just finish a book?

I am very lazy about this. This first book, I should have finished four years ago. I have rewritten it four times.

AH: Is it published?

No, not yet, it should be finished by the end of this year. I hope.

AH: Which book is this?

A book about Spiders in Homoeopathy

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AH: Is it written in Italian?

No, it will be published in english and german first.

AH: Good! What is your next book?

Probably a book about the Solanaceae or what we can call the Solanaceae -family in homoeopathic terms. It will be a book about the remedies close to Belladonna which are not only plants from the botanical Solanaceae-family. My idea about families is something larger and not exactly the same as in biology and the botanical system although sometimes it may appear as if I would think so and I have often been misunderstood.

Indeed in the beginning of my teaching I presented coherent biological groups like the spiders or snakes. So people thought a biological relation alone would suffice to make a homoeopathic

relationship. This is sometimes but not always true and moreover a true homoeopathic family integrates members from other kingdoms easily if their themes are related.

To give you an example: Lyssinum is a nosode from the saliva of a dog with rabies but from its themes in terms of homoeopathic materia medica it belongs definitely to the Solanaceae-family. This can also be underlined by the fact that Belladonna, Hyoscyamus and Stramonium are well known for their healing properties in the rabies disease.

AH: How do you find time to write?

This indeed is a problem, considering that I have a family . And then there are my two horses and some other animals too. It is absolutely necessary to protect your private life and to have time for yourself to recover and recreate your energy.

When in the beginning I decided to give seminars it was just for fun and because I wanted to share some experiences. I did not feel like a teacher.

Since then teaching has become an important part of my work and I can even say of my life, and it takes many many week-ends.

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Sometimes it has become a burden because I received so many invitations and I have a hard time saying "no!" to somebody. Therefore I have had to learn to use my time in a more economical way, giving breaks to myself and enjoying some feeling of freedom from too much responsibility.

AH: Do you have a third book brewing?

I have enough material for quite a few books. The snakes around Lachesis , the spiders around Tarentula , the sea remedies around Sepia , the umbelliferae around Conium, the compositae around Arnica , the coniferae around Thuja and not to forget the so-called drugs like Cannabis, Opium, Anhalonium etc. substances that were traditionally used as drugs in different cultures. Each culture in

different parts of the world has it`s own special drugs and they are all so different; Coca in South America, Anhalonium in Middle America, Cannabis in North Africa, Opium in the Middle East, Agaricus in Sibiria, Kava-Kava in Polynesia. It is very interesting, because originally these substances are used to alter consciousness, to discover one's relationship with God.

The idea of God is different all over the world and each culture uses a different substance and a different approach although they also have many important features in common. I have researched this material and good cases too and I would like to work more on it. I think it will all depend on the result of the first book. If it is not a great financial loss I will take some time away from my practice to write.

AH: You have spoken about the importance of us studying well documented cases, you have mentioned that you are working on the Delphi Project?

Yes, it is something I am seriously involved with because I have to say that I am really fed up with this mass of material that we have and which contains just copies of copies of copies of other books. I think this is totally useless. I don't understand, why homoeopaths need to write books on remedies that don't belong to their own range of experience. It's

stupid and it is also risky. If you have good ideas and good experiences about some remedies, it is better to write about them and nothing else.

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Thus many good informations from old times are diluted and further diluted until it`s just a watery soup.

In our Delphi Project, which is still in it`s initial phase, we are collecting cured cases where both the case report and the follow-ups are carefully documented. I think, what our time needs most is authentic and valid information about experiences with remedies in cured people. After a certain number of cases have been collected the aim is to review them and to publish the essentials or themes which

could be derived from such cases. This alone can be the material of a real *materia medica viva*.

AH: Recently people have been concerned about a school of thought that is teaching that there is not only one simillimum. How do you feel about that?

This discussion is going on since the time of Hahnemann. It is a typically senseless theoretical dispute.

Similarity means similarity and not identity. Life is an individual phenomenon unless you clone an organism.

Therefore it is very clear that similarity can be something more or less, from this view or that view, and there is no precise method to judge similarity in homoeopathic terms in any other way but to give a remedy to the suffering organism and see how the vital force reacts. The law of similars is a law that exists in reality but a simile (a possible remedy in terms of similarity) as well as the simillimum (the best possible remedy in terms of similarity) are both theoretical constructs or hypotheses referring to a diseased state and not existing in reality until you can demonstrate a cure. The quality of the cure can be judged best by the patient; he will say I am better or I feel cured. This is the difference between the simile and the simillimum.

AH: So you think there is one simillimum and that the other remedies are on the way to it?

Again: nobody can say, how many similes and how many simillimums a disturbed vital force can theoretically respond to in nature. I think that this idea of the simillimum is a theoretical concept; it is something you fix your attention on. You look where the arrow is pointed. The simillimum is both the center of your target and your arrow. But there

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are other targets and other arrows. The simillimum happens when you are able to shoot your arrow close to the center. Sometimes it happens but maybe not in the majority of our prescriptions.

AH: So ultimately you still do believe in the simillimum?

I believe that the simillimum is what you think about the simillimum and that there is a range of remedies close to this. I still believe the simillimum is a working-hypothesis we use to get close to a cure.

AH: How do you find homeopathy in North America. Any impressions?

It is very difficult to say. I sense people are lively, enthusiastic and open minded. This is my first impression.
But I also feel that the cultural background, the education is very different from my own. In fact, I cannot really judge what is happening here and I would like to have more time to observe.

AH: Do you have any words of advice to a new student?

My first advice is to not be too impressed by big names and old mens` talk because many old teachers in homoeopathy are very dogmatic and could easily make you give up your sensitivity and critical attitude in front of their authority.
Especially from South America there comes this strong wind of dogmatism which is a mixture of religious narrowmindedness and the pretention "to know, what Hahnemann really thought".
This approach is absolutely liveless and contraproductive. I can say this, because I fell amongst those teachers in my beginning and it was an awful waste of time.
Endless discussions about the miasms, a theory, that Hahnemann developed but which nobody has ever really understood in it`s practical value, I believe. This is the reason why I don't like the approach about miasms; it`s just mere theory and has most probably not much to do with our reality today.

AH: So don't study miasms?

No, I wouldn't go that far. But I would like to warn a young student to avoid becoming fixed in this kind of theoretical studies and discussions. It's nothing, but a historical model of understanding, a possible explanation, but an old one. I don't want to give you the impression that I totally refuse these thoughts of Hahnemann. But I believe that we have other and better knowledge today which renders this approach quite unnecessary.

AH: You were telling me that in the morning you shovel shit and contemplate life. Tell me about this...

It is true, I have two horses, a male and a female of course, and I have to take care of them.

They are Pintos, spotted white and black and I chose these horses, because they are not well known and not so much appreciated in Italy. I live in the countryside but close to Modena in northern Italy. I bought an old farmhouse there but could not imagine how much time, energy and money would be needed to restore it!

AH: You have two children?

Yes.

AH: Tell me about your children.

They are the most important thing in my life. I assisted at their births. They were born in my house. I am very close to them.

AH: A girl and a boy?

Yes, the girl, Magdalena is 10 and the boy, Samuel is 8.

AH: Do they ride horses as well?

My daughter would like to but she has some fears of riding even though she is very attached to the horses. My son would like to ride a lot;

he is very vivacious, but his legs are not long enough. He will have to wait. I like that they are in contact with animals: dogs, cats, horses. I was in Milan until I was 8 years old and I had no contact with nature. To me this was a disaster. I suffered a lot for this. So I wanted to offer this to my kids. This is the reason why I moved to the countryside.

AH: So the shit in the morning?

Ah, the shit in the morning! If you have a horse you have to clean the stable. It is very nice, because you remain very attached to the ground and to the shit of your animals. I can think for half an hour while I use my hands and I even have a product, something I can use for my garden, which is very good for the ground I am living on. I believe it is a good exercise, a kind of meditation, and it is good for your physical body, too. And finally, it reminds you of what you are doing here on earth.