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Julian Winston criticizes the technical method of proving and evaluation by Nancy Herrick, and the 'anthropomorphizing' (the giving of human characteristics to animals or inanimate objects).

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Julian Winston

Book Review

Animal Mind, Human voices: provings of eight new animal remedies

by Nancy Herrick, PA

Hahnemann Clinic Publishing: Nevada City, CA, 1998, paperback. 407 pages, \$39.95.

ISBN 0-9635368-1-8

Reviewed by Julian Winston

This book was previously reviewed by Richard Moskowitz, MD, in the January 1999 issue of HT.

This is a beautifully presented book containing provings of eight "animal remedies". They are:

Sanguis soricis: made from the blood of *Rattus Norvegicus* - the Norway Rat.

Lac loxodonta africana: African elephant milk

Lac leoninum: Lion milk

Lac lupinum: Wolf milk

Lac delphinium: Dolphin milk

Maiasaura lapidea: Fossilized dinosaur bone

Limenitis bredowii: "California Sister" butterfly

Lac equinum: Horse milk.

The author points out that in our homeopathic materia medica of over 2000 remedies, only 14 are from mammals. She quotes J.T. Kent (from his lecture about *Lac caninum*) as suggesting that "all the milks should be potentized, they are our most excellent remedies; they are animal products and food of early animal life and therefore correspond to the beginnings of our innermost physical nature."

These provings were not done in the rigorous manner suggested by Sherr in his book *Dynamics of Provings* (i.e., 3 doses per day for 2 days or until symptoms appear; long-term follow-up; provers reporting to individual supervisors daily: etc.). Instead, there were between 7 and 20 provers, depending on the remedy. All got one dose of a 30th potency. None received placebo. There were no supervisors unless one was requested. All provers were "involved" in homeopathy. Says the author, "I trust homeopaths to record symptoms with

accuracy and to appreciate the value of detail, especially valuable information about the mental and emotional states."

The provers took notes for just three weeks, at the end of which they had a group meeting to summarize their experiences. At that time they attempted to identify the substance or the kingdom, The remedy was then revealed and a discussion ensued. The remedies were made either by the Quinn Pharmacy in the U.S. or DHU in Germany.

Each chapter of the book begins with a description of the animal, an analysis of the proving and details about the particular source.

There is then a section on "Major themes" with quotes from the provers, a section of rubrics (developed by David Warkentin), and finally the provers' journals.

The rubrics are graded as follows:

plain type: one prover had the symptom.

italic type: at least two provers had the symptom.

bold type: at least two provers had the symptom and one patient was cured of the symptom by the remedy.

This is, I think, playing a bit "fast and loose" with the idea of grading, and I would caution that *none* of these remedies are well proved enough or used successfully enough in a clinical setting to have any more than a plain-type entry into the *Kent Repertory*.

I write this review shortly after returning from Germany, and I hear the words of Dr. K-H Gypser in my ear - "The patients of today have a blindness for phenomenon. They come with many psychological inventions and few symptoms or modalities. These people (the early-provers) suffered for us. Just read their sufferings in the provings!" And I look at these new provings and do not see the level of "suffering" I see in the old provings. Could Gypser be right when he suggested that people no longer know how to feel physical symptoms? From the new-age touchy-feely community, we get a substitution of intellectualization for genuine feeling. Has the move in the 20th century toward understanding the mind pushed us out of the physical and into the mental? The provings in this book have some physical symptoms, but the emphasis seems to be on the mind and the dreams.

Hahnemann cautioned about "weaving empty speculations" and Hering warned us that "if our school ever gives up the strict inductive method of Hahnemann we are lost, and deserve to be mentioned only as a caricature in the history of medicine."

I am afraid that this collection of provings is guilty of the warnings of both men. If the book had just presented the raw data of the provers' notebooks, it would be different. The provings would stand by themselves, and each practitioner could use the information and piece together his or her understanding about the remedy. And eventually a "picture" of the remedy, developed through *use*, would emerge. In discussing *Lac caninum* Kent suggested that "some of its symptoms are doubtful and it would take a century to confirm them" (which it has!). But with this book, the author has attempted to weave together the "themes" of the remedies that are little more than empathic thinking and anthropomorphic speculation.

This anthropomorphizing (the giving of human characteristics to animals or inanimate objects) can be seen throughout the book. For example, the mating of elephants is described as: "The entire family goes wild around the couple, bellowing, rumbling, stomping. It is an all-out party atmosphere and everyone gets in on the act."

The author also comments that the theme of "Positive Emotion" is seen in elephant socializations with "obvious rejoicing" (on the part of the elephant).

The hungry young male lions trying to dethrone the head male of the pride is read as the theme of "problems with authority figures" and the female lion moving her cubs to prevent them from being killed by a new male in the lion pride is summarized as "concern about people and desire to help them, especially children."

The anthropomorphizing continues with such sentences as: "Dolphins love physical contact with each other. They rub their bodies together affectionately along their entire length while swimming and touch and pat each other through the day" (the theme of "play/pleasure") and the "California Sister" butterfly used in the proving is described by an entomologist as "a regal butterfly of dignified demeanor and exclusive habits."

This anthropomorphism reaches an ultimate level of extrapolation when discussing the remedy "Dinosaur". Made from a "small, pinkish, rough piece (of fossilized bone) that is not identifiable as to body part" it comes from the species *Maiasaura lapidea*. *Maiasaura* is described as a dinosaur that lived in the late Cretaceous period, 80-65 million years ago, whose native habitat was in what is now Montana. How the bone came to be found in New Mexico is not explained.

The finding of fossilized nests have led paleontologists to conclude that both young and old were together in the nest so, says the author, "she brought food and nurtured and protected the young for a long period of time until they were able to forage for themselves" (the theme of "helping/no one helping").

Paleontologists named this species *Maiasaura* - the "mother" (maia) "lizard" (saura) which somehow gains an additional word as the author refers to it as the "good mother lizard." The reconstructed skeletons of the *Maiasaura* show "... she was approximately 30 feet long, had a long snout-like face, a duck-like bill, and big, gentle eyes" while the "juveniles had short snouts and huge, helpless eyes." "Gentle"? "Helpless"? I can't help but think of the Gary Larson cartoon of the alligator in the witness box in the court-room saying to the lawyer "Of course I killed him in cold blood! I'm a reptile!"

The remedy proven is made from *fossilized* bone - how much of what we have is actual bone and how much has been mineralized?

The author, in her empathic manner suggests that nothing is known about the sexual behavior of the *Maiasaura* "but the proving may give us further insight ..." as the theme of "Decadent sexuality" is seen in *four* dreams of the seven provers.

Another theme is "Joy/Fun/Ecstasy." A prover says: "I was in a jovial state. I noticed a manic energy to it. I wasn't hurried. A pressure to have fun. Pleasant. Urge to garden. I don't have a garden so I rearranged potted plants on my deck."

Herrick looks at this (and three other sensations of "fun" and two dreams) as the theme of "Joy/Fun/Ecstasy" and asks, in a strange inverted logic "Despite tremendous hardships, did the *Maiasaura* enjoy her life?"

I am left wondering what it is all coming to. What has happened to the simple act of letting the symptoms stand on their own? Must we read into everything? To paraphrase Freud, "Can't a cigar just be a cigar?"

Perhaps some of the remedies in this book will become useful. If that happens it will take years (perhaps a century as Kent suggested), and they will become so based on their clinical use. But after reading the proving of *Lac caninum* and Kent's lectures about the remedy, I have my doubts that the provings in Herrick's book take the remedies as deeply as we read of *Lac caninum*. Says Kent: "The mental symptoms are prolonged and distressing. Provers felt symptoms for years ... A woman lay in bed for days with the fingers abducted and would go wild if they touched each other." Have we seen anything of that intensity here? Have we seen

anything like the changing sides of rheumatism, headaches, neuralgias, erysipelas, and sore throats that we see so clearly in the proving of *Lac caninum*?

Says Kent, of a great number of mental symptoms of some provers: "One or two provers had many symptoms, and so not all are reliable; but this remedy so intensifies the imagination and senses, it would be easy for them to imagine symptoms ..." Is that intensification of the imagination and the senses a "genius" of the "milk" remedies and something we are seeing here without recognizing it? Could it be that the real symptom of all these provings would be subsumed under the rubric "imagination, theorizing"?

This book, in my opinion, is an example of where we do not want to go in our homeopathic studies. There has been enough imagination and speculation, and it draws us deeper into itself. We need to back up and look at the phenomenon of the proving and leave empathic anthropomorphism aside.