

Group and Proving Phenomena

Observations by Misha Norland

We have been conducting provings within groups at the School of Homœopathy since 1991. These experiences form the backbone of the generalised observations on the phenomena of dynamic influence which are presented here.

Understanding the healing potential within things rests upon the foundation stone of direct experience; that experience is gained during provings. Understanding, literally, standing under the influence of an outside agency, becoming permeated with its 'intelligence' and thereby living out its 'reality', is the process whereby we come to know.

The experience of a proving is analogous with that of becoming ill. When disease is in our house, when that usurper has possession of our power, then our vital reaction is directed by its 'intelligence', our sensations and functions becoming perverted. The artificial illness that proving initiates behaves in a similar way. Its influx alters inner states which are apprehended initially through changed sensations, images, feelings, dreams and the production of outer symptoms. It is a personal teaching, just as the extracted information of a proving group, becoming *materia medica*, is an impersonal teaching.

Both illness and proving experiences, in so far as they become involved in the process of consciousness, are learning experiences. I am as fascinated by those aspects of provings which are peripheral to writing *materia medica* and generating rubrics as I am to the revelation of a new healing agent: those aspects which relate to personal integration and healing. Also we learn respect for the power of the healing agents themselves, and for the relationship between sufferers and healers.

Jeremy Sherr has written, 'by doing a proving you may come to know yourself, realising your inner

being. This knowledge, true self knowledge, is the foundation of wisdom'. I would like to take this opportunity to honour and thank Jeremy for his generosity and help and for having written the seminal book on proving methodology. I wrote this verse about the celestial influence of the Muse, and therefore it is also about proving!

When I know You within me,
Real as You are when You walk down
the street,
Close as the sound of Your breathing
when You lie beside me in sleep,
Sweet as Your salt kisses when You
bend over me and whisper love in my
ears like wind blown before a storm,
Then I am that which I am,
Sown in fertile soils now ready to
reap: grain for the mill,
flour to knead,
Dough to bake for a working week.

The experience of being 'taken over' by the dynamis of a thing (substance or imponderable or indeed the personality of another) has at least two aspects to it. One is relatively objective, in that it involves 'noting changed sensations and symptoms. The other is highly subjective, involving, at least, changed perceptions and at most, plunging the prover into a new perceptual framework. Should this occur, then the prover cannot experience the 'new' state as new because their centre of being has become confluent with the other's, or thing's, being. To clock these changes, supervision is pretty close to essential, for someone needs to be outside of the prover's skin in order to appraise inner changes. After a considerable lapse of time it is usually more easy for the prover to get a handle on what has been going on.

(A technical point: it is a good idea to keep a proving diary and loose supervision going for at least three to four months.) The appraisal

after time has passed gives the prover an overview of the process. This is analogous to the course of healing, which, although initial effects are instantaneous, takes place over time. This is because the sick person is 'living out' the disease, singing the song of the disease, while, in healing, the unburdened Self needs time to reexperience itself and remember its 'true melody'. Throwing out the usurper takes time - it is according to Hering's Laws of cure and constitutes the healing crisis for which all natural therapies are famed.

The degree to which a proving 'takes' is, of course, related to susceptibility. Should the 'take' be dynamic and deeply rooted, then aspects of the inner being are brought to the surface. This, however unwelcome it may be, is healing. It is revealing of that which had formerly been hidden. It provides us with the opportunity to experience formerly occluded aspects of ourselves and to bring them into wholeness, into body/feeling/mind awareness. In this way we become known to ourselves as well as to those around us (also our supervisors who, like good homœopathic case receivers, are working to get our symptoms on record).

The learning is directly proportional to the 'take'. I have known provings 'move' folk towards their healing in a way no previously prescribed remedy ever had. This may be attributable to the new remedy action and also, perhaps, the sustained and focused attention and supervision which has been brought to bear upon the prover's state - this may be an in-depth healing experience. I have also seen prover's partners profoundly affected. As proving coordinator I have been held responsible, cursed and thanked, thanked and cursed!

At the School we have achieved results using a variety of stimuli:

using material substance, by holding it, looking at it, meditating upon it, as well as with the 30c to 200c potencies. We have invoked group provings by one member 'holding' the concept/image of a thing. We have carried out all our provings with unit doses. This stimulus, perhaps because it is amplified by the many coexperiencers, and its 'reawakening' at monthly 'gatherings' when experiences are recounted, is sufficient to produce long range effects.

In addition to following Jeremy's proving methodology, we record our experiences some minutes after beginning the proving. We get images (such as black grave stones, waterfalls, orange flowers, and responses to these images such as associated feelings, sensations or thoughts); feelings (such as joy, sadness, and their responses such as smiling or weeping); sensations (such as floating, burning, itching, and their responses such as restlessness or scratching); thoughts and concepts which in turn may evoke images, feelings and sensations. This then is our primary data.

It would be in accordance with tradition to say that proving responses are headed up by image at the top of a natural hierarchy which proceeds down the levels, through thoughts to feelings to sensations. But some provers vary here, for instance, by having a preponderance of sensation experiences, or feeling responses. This depends upon their innate personality structure, as would be described elementally as preponderances of either Fire, Air, Water, Earth.

During the course of the next two School days we take stock of thoughts, dreams, sensations, feelings and outer world happenings, while supervisors and daily proving diaries fill in from month to month.

I hold the proving phenomenon to have a similar dynamic to epidemic contagion. In both instances the influence overwhelms individuals, and personal idiosyncrasies are temporarily submerged under the common symptoms of the disease/proving. In so far as this is the case, a proving group reacts as if it were one. While each individual reveals only some aspects of the proving, the totality reveals most.

The action field manifests

immediately. Once established within the economy it continues for as long as it takes to exteriorise itself. The length of time a proving persists is directly proportional to the resistance it meets during its movement from centre to periphery. Should the prover provide, as it were, an unblocked passageway, then the proving experience is swift. If the passage is cluttered by past unresolved material, old pathology, then the proving experience may linger.

Naturally I felt obliged to run a proving of placebo. You see, I had speculated as to whether we were proving ourselves, our group psyche, whether a group's theme or themes would emerge. The result was that no theme emerged within the group. This was a distinctly different experience from being under the influence of the proving of a thing, where common imagery, feelings and sensations dominate.

A proving begins, in a literal sense, with the intention to prove a thing, with it being imagined, identified, obtained, and possibly potentised. Should the name of the thing be kept under wraps, double blinded, picked at random out of a hat, the proving date sprung upon the proving group, nonetheless the event field of the proving is the moment in time that intention arose. It is similar to dropping a pebble into a pond where the surface of the water ripples outwards into time from present to future.

Let me give an example. It is common experience amongst provers that certain individuals (who later reveal cardinal symptoms because of their affinity to the thing under test) develop symptoms which subsequently are confirmed as belonging to the proving before anyone else had 'taken' the thing. I have parenthesised 'taken' because those who meditate upon the thing come up with results which are no less pertinent. Furthermore, we have found that those individuals within the group who wished to remain outside of the proving have been unable to do so; they are automatically included.

The concept of participation mystique comes to mind in order to afford a description of this phenomenon. In the case of the School,

provings have become a recognised cornerstone of homœopathic training. This plus familiarity, shared endeavour and healing ideals combine to engender group consciousness and participation mystique. That those who did not 'take' the thing, that those who did not even know that the proving would take place within the group, had been affected, demonstrates the dynamic nature of the phenomenon.

It is only matter that is bound to space and time. The immaterial essence of the thing, actuated by the intention of the proving group, constellates the action field. Forgive me labouring the point: the thing that we are dealing with is essence, spirit, call it what you will, and is not bound within the constraints of space and time. Those who key into it are part of it irrespective of distance or time; they know it telepathically.

A group proving generates a gestalt to which everyone associated with the provers is connected and may be affected, depending upon their personal affinity with the thing being proved; their susceptibility and therefore their resonance. This gestalt has been named a 'morphic field' by Rupert Sheldrake. Telepathy is another term which covers this. For example, once one monkey discovers that a sea washed tuber is nicer to eat, other monkeys on other islands, who have not witnessed the event, also find themselves washing tubers. Another example is afforded by the well-documented event, especially noted during the Victorian era, of inventors rushing to patent offices hot on the trail of an invention before another got there, because once an idea was thought of, it was out 'on the ether'.

Another example was noted by crystallographers who saw that a new salt 'found' a characteristic crystalline structure simultaneously in laboratories situated in different global locations. Once one solution developed its particular crystals, all others followed suit. Morphic field resonance may begin once the intention to prove a thing arises, therefore individuals susceptible to this influence and belonging to the group may experience proving effects ahead of the identified proving event.

The spiritual dynamis of inten-

tion, having no material substance, is not bound to either space or time. Should we accept this, then it follows that proving experiences may not uncommonly predate a proving. However, the experiencer would not know what to make of these experiences for they must be held within the framework of the proving and given its context to make sense.

The action field of a proving is not necessarily set up by taking orally or sniffing, nor is it necessarily either substance or potency. It may be derived from and by these means or not. Directed meditation and attentive listening is sufficient to initiate and sustain a proving. We have invoked group provings by one member 'holding' the concept/image of a thing. (As an aside, practitioners often find themselves proving their fellow sufferers! This is what occurs when we become *en rapport* with them and empathetic with their suffering. Where this 'proving' keys into our own suffering, there is potential for our personal learning.) Rajan Sankaran experimented with music provings, while at the School we have experimented with 'thought' provings. In none of these was pharmacy involved. There was no use of potency, no 'memory' of water, no nuclear or crystalline patterning, because there was no substance.

In order that provings occur there has to be a receiver or receivers, and something which is sent and actuated by dynamisation or another kind of intention. Obviously there also must be innate susceptibility to rouse a response. This is analogous to resonance. To quote from my old *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: 'Resonance, a term used in physics and related fields denoting initiation, prolongation or increase of sound due to sympathetic vibration of some body capable of moving in the proper period (in other words, at the same or an harmonic frequency)'.

Postscript

And now another element: occasionally inanimate objects are involved in the resonance! Let me give you a recent example. In February 1998 we initiated a proving of *Positronium*. The stuff with which our proving was

conducted was made at the particle accelerator of the University of San Diego by Chris Kurz in the summer of 1997. Ethanol in a vial was exposed to the radiation of decaying positronium - approximately 1,000,000,000 annihilation events being captured over a 24 hour period. This was run up to 30c at Helios Homeopathic Pharmacy. This was the proving potency.

About positronium: it is formed of a positron (anti-electron) and an electron in mutual orbit; it is structured in a similar way to hydrogen, however it has almost no mass. In this configuration the atom is semi-stable although its components, electron and anti-electron, annihilate each other when they come into intimate contact. This annihilation results in a 'flash' of electromagnetic radiation.

Since positronium is made up of both particle and anti-particle, it assumes a position midway between matter and anti-matter. It has been postulated that when original matter 'came apart' in the Big Bang at the beginning of time, matter and anti-matter co-emerged. Each having opposite charge and spin, and moving in contrary motion, the one from time past to future, the other from time future to time past. It is therefore also postulated that somewhere there may be a parallel universe identical to our own but composed of a preponderance of anti-matter in which events occur in anti-time. Were we to meet with this anti-universe, then we would annihilate each other in one mighty flash!

Formal proving began amongst third year homeopathy students in February 1998. In May we video recorded the group at the School as they reviewed their proving diaries of the past three months. As we have come to expect, provers who had not taken the pill were also affected. Many of the recounted experiences were heavy. First thing next morning, before anyone had arrived, I played back the recording, finding that as the tape progressed the images began to break up. As a latter prover delved into her sensations of contraction, as if squeezed into impossible denseness accompanied by a sense of having touched pure evil, the video tape image blanked out entirely.

Her disembodied voice, however, continued to describe her descent into this darkest of places.

I stopped the tape, running forwards, to find that the end, the last provers accounts were technically fine: perfectly clear images. I put in another tape: no problem. I put back the proving tape and rewound it to the position of the blanked out prover: sound without vision. I marvelled at the phenomenon of the intense psychic field which the recounting of the proving had generated, interfering with the electronics or the tape in the cam corder.

When we had assembled for our morning teaching session the following day, we 'ran over' the physics of positronium, from Big Bang to anti-matter and matter, connecting the signature to the proving: the basic split which had so clearly emerged, the 'light' side of spiritual confluence with beauty and goodness which some had felt, or experienced as detachment from the gross physical aspects of the sensuous, and the 'dark' side which the 'blanked' prover had so vividly experienced. Then I explained about the video tape, the closing down ritual which we had initiated the day before and were concluding today. And guess what: the video tape image, while still breaking up somewhat, had begun to heal itself, the image had re-emerged!

Of course, there is a perfectly materialistic explanation for this phenomenon, namely progressive contamination followed by decontamination of the video head after repeated playings. However, the fact that this had been the first time that the head of this cam corder had clogged up and the fact that it now plays tapes perfectly, tends to mitigate against this explanation. Be that as it may, there must be a material component in order that the phenomenon could occur! In any culture other than our own it would be felt and understood as natural that water, wind, stones and leaves all 'speak' to us, as do birds and beasts, making our experience of the sensuous world about us that of a living, sacred organism without a split.

The proving data of *Positronium*, arranged schematically, and a repertory of same, will soon be available on the School's web site, alongside the proving and repertorisation of the nosode of the blood of an HIV positive male who subsequently died of AIDS related diseases. You will also be finding other provings as we add them;
www.homeopathyschool.com