

# The proof is in the pudding

## *An exploration of Jan Scholten's element theory*

By Jackie McTaggart

As a proponent of Scholten's work I will explore the efficacy and value of this methodology and advocate why it is an indispensable tool in the effective prescribing of the organic and inorganic chemicals, salts, acids and metals – some previously unknown – in the mineral kingdom.

### **Introduction**

This article has been inspired by a breakthrough in my own homeopathy practice, understanding and results. The inspiration arose most significantly after studying with Jan Scholten in Dublin 2007. I attended his seminar on the periodic table with specific reference to the Lanthanides. A decade earlier I had been much enthused by his teachings on element theory at his seminar in London. I was admittedly a fledgling practitioner then, but over the years I have made many prescriptions using this theory to aid my choice of remedies from the mineral kingdom. In retrospect my prescribing was essentially two-dimensional and this was subsequently reflected in my mixed results. What I now know is that true understanding and depth of cure – the simillimum – largely eluded me, because I had a limited knowledge of the system and its scope. It explains why I misinterpreted or mistakenly confused some of the concepts, as I was largely teaching myself from the book, interpreting quite literally at times. My new understanding has enabled more dexterity, a newfound ability to move around the periodic table with confidence and ease, and to prescribe with greater clarity and precision.

### **Classical Philosophy**

The basic tenet of homeopathy is the law of similars i.e. every remedy can only cure its own disease. Simply stated as 'like cures like' when we receive a simillimum, this law enables cure.

The physician's highest and only calling is to make the sick healthy, to cure, so it is called. (§1, *Organon*)<sup>1</sup>

How we discover the simillimum is the subject of great debate within the homeopathic community, yet each methodology reflecting classical philosophy seeks to find workable tools towards this shared goal. The study of homeopathy makes it clear that all remedies, and thus diseased states, have a central disturbance, a source from which all symptoms are generated. This diseased state is not a collection of chaotic, irregular symptoms but a whole state with a central theme or problem. All the expressions carry in them the same pattern originating from the essence and this pattern is repeated in all kinds of parts, small and great, and in the whole. We learn that from the essence, the whole remedy picture can be understood.

### **Different ways to determine a remedy picture**

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Provings</b>                   | Homeopathic knowledge consisted of drug pictures – the information coming from provings, and of clinical experience. The development of remedy pictures is a continuous process as (even with recently-proved remedies) clinical information is still being added all the time to increase the depth and breadth of the pictures |
| <b>The Doctrine of Signatures</b> | The nature of the original substance and its specific properties provide important clues to the general picture.   |
| <b>Clinically Cured Cases</b>     | If a remedy can cure a certain picture then that picture must belong to that remedy.   |
| <b>Classifications</b>            | When a group of remedies show certain characteristics we may assume that the unknown remedies in the same group will also show those same characteristics.   |

Hahnemann observed that the pattern of symptoms produced by a remedy is also reflected in disease patterns or inherited dispositions to disease and as such classified these disease patterns into miasms. Over the last twenty years some homeopaths have embraced new systematic methods of classification of remedies. Instead of pictures of remedies having to be sourced solely in our materia medica – often illustrating a set of seemingly unrelated symptoms – classification has meant that coherent remedy pictures can be deduced. For example, Vithoulkas developed his essences, Sankaran his delusions leading on to the vital sensation; Mangliavori his themes; and Scholten his concepts and essences.

These methodologies reflect a process of abstracting from the symptoms, with the aim of developing a central theme from which all symptoms can be deduced logically. This increasing generalisation has made predictions possible – to create simplification and greater depth of understanding.

Using Scholten's work *Homeopathy and the Minerals*<sup>2</sup> as an example, it was only after publication and through the introduction of the *group analysis method* to the homeopathic community that a whole new arena of previously unknown mineral remedies began to emerge. Due to generalisation and group analysis, theories were formed and remedies compared and classified so that the information has some connection. This process assumes that there is order in the symptoms of a remedy, that they are not simply random but that there is logic in nature and therefore logic and structure in remedy pictures. Einstein too had a deep conviction in the rationality of the universe.

Combining elements with salts opened up new and exciting possibilities for a much more precise simillimum than the repertory could ever provide.

The beauty of the group analysis method is that:

- It is easier to remember a larger number of remedies in groups.

- It is easier to remember the remedy pictures because there is a sequence and a structure to the basic concepts.

- It is easier to see which symptoms are relevant.

- It is easier to find a real simillimum rather than 'making do' with a remedy that is approximately but is not exactly right.

## Element Theory

Scholten eventually applied his understanding of group analysis to the whole periodic table, the table of elements or atoms that is the basis of chemistry and the entirety of known minerals. It is a continuation of the group analysis method and it opened the doors wide to the possibility of being able to prescribe all the elements whereas previously homeopaths had only used a fraction of them.

“Every mineral and salt differs from all others, in its external as well as its internal physical and chemical properties (which alone should have sufficed to prevent any confounding of each with the other). As certainly do they all differ and diverge among themselves in their pathogenic, consequently also in their therapeutic effects, so that among them there can be, from a medical point of view, no equivalent remedies whatever, no surrogates.” (§119 *Organon*)<sup>3</sup>.

With the discovery of a pattern behind the periodic table and the essence of the rows and columns within it, came the possibility to predict the picture of each. As his thinking evolved, Scholten equated the pattern of the periodic table to the pattern of life and the development of life in the sequence of the elements<sup>4</sup>. This theory allowed him to classify the remedies in groups or families, identifying the series (horizontal groupings) and stages (vertical groupings) of the periodic system in order to find the most suitable pattern that is similar to the patient's suffering. At the beginning Scholten prescribed these lesser-known remedies sometimes on only one or just a few symptoms or just on a prediction of a picture. So the picture of each had to be ascertained from scratch. As his understanding developed he was increasingly able to prescribe well-indicated remedies and from clinical evidence the picture could grow and be enriched according to the response in the patient.

## Case analysis

We learn that patients needing mineral remedies present with a one-sided case; structured, straightforward and systematic. There is a desire for certainty and stability. Structure comes naturally to them so they may not necessarily talk of it but they will see the value (self worth) of their life through the structure of their life. This understanding at its most basic level is purely a key to the right kingdom and thus a key to this methodology. The

most effective way to prescribe from the periodic table is on the essence of the case. To get to the essence you have to go to the core of the case and understand the order, as the essence brings structure and makes all the symptoms logical. Our understanding as homeopaths is that the essence of disease is in the mind and not in the body, and in the essence everything comes together – it can be seen anywhere and everywhere. So our aim is to follow the line to the feeling and deduce the thread, which runs through the totality.

### **Stages**

Next we must determine the stage. We learn that every stage has a typical expression. It is the way a person handles a problem so how they manifest this process indicates which stage. The patient often does not tell you the stage so we have to deduce it. Our best confirmation is to trust our own intuitive sense and knowing how to place that feeling on the table. To pinpoint the stage of a patient on the periodic table – on the right or the left side, how far along – are all part of the deduction process. My own efforts to find the correct stage improved first through seeing many video cases of Scholten at his seminars and subsequently through my own personal experience, working endlessly with my patients, to whom I have much gratitude. It has been a steep learning curve and many times earlier on in the use of this methodology I relied too heavily on the patient's language rather than on the way they handled a problem.

### **Salts**

Next we learn that finding a combination salt to accompany the previous element reflects the expression i.e. the modalities and is Scholten's most frequent approach to prescribing on the periodic table. The combination is usually with the upper period elements – the *Carbon*, *Silica* and *Ferrum* series. The most common salts used are *Carbon*, *Nitricum*, *Oxydatum*, *Fluoricum*, *Phosphoricum*, *Sulphuratum*, *Chlorum*, *Bromatum* and *Iodatum*.

Obviously remedies such as *Phosphorus*, *Sulphur* and the *Muriaticums* are widely used by homeopaths and have been since Hahnemann's provings were conducted in the early days of homeopathy. Clinical experience – based on evidence through two centuries – has contributed to fuller and more complete pictures. Fifteen years ago Scholten's group analysis

methodology extended the pictures even further enabling us to reference our remedy selection from the materia medica alongside this new addition to our understanding of the polychrests. The novelty of prescribing salts, such as *Fluoratum*s, *Oxydatum*s and *Bromatum*s – previously administered only occasionally in my practice – has been especially rewarding and in turn these remedies have been great additions to my materia medica knowledge.

With astute case taking and perception the practitioner is able to arrive at the right kingdom, series, stage and combination salt to mirror the patient's state, i.e. the simillimum. I will always prescribe at the end of the consultation, as I know that if I have not understood the patient at that point I will not understand the patient at a future point. There is no force, just ease. So the real beauty of this methodology is in its simplicity.

### **Lanthanides**

It is as a result of exploring this new row of remedies that I have had the opportunity to revisit this methodology in much greater depth and ultimately with much greater understanding. The Lanthanides are an addition to and an extension of the other series in the system. They have been unknown until recently in homeopathy and each has their own unique picture, Scholten's first prescriptions often depended on inspiration and growing enlightenment around the themes of the series. The decision taken by *Remedia*, the Austrian homeopathic pharmacy, in 2003 to potentise this series of remedies, took Scholten's work further. This enabled him to prescribe more clearly and precisely, allowing his growing clinical experience to develop and enrich the pictures.

The Lanthanides are a series of soft, silvery, white metals, chemically very much alike. They were previously unknown, found hidden in chemicals and salts, never occurring as a pure metal. They were found deep underground between rocks. Each has strong magnetic qualities, far stronger than iron, and strong light effects. The strong magnets necessary for computer components are only possible with Lanthanides and their refractory qualities are particularly useful in light equipment, lenses, CDs (where light detects the pattern of holes), and in colour television. They are members of the group 'rare earth' metals. Although called 'rare' they are quite common. Only one, *Promethium*, does not exist on earth as it decays radioactively.

Others are less rare: *Cerium* is more common than copper and *Thulium* is more common than silver.

With their indispensable role in electromagnetic equipment and in our daily lives, the Lanthanides are found everywhere in our high tech culture. In an article reviewing Scholten's book *The Secret Lanthanides*<sup>5</sup> Ai-Ling Makewell comments on their pervasiveness in the modern world and puts forward a more esoteric connection<sup>6</sup>. Makewell looks at the development of postmodern Western societies and where a shift in the colour, shape and the feeling of the era can be perceived. 19<sup>th</sup> century diseases were predominantly infectious – typhus, cholera, yellow fever, plagues – yet more recently, alongside these new developments in humanity, we can see clearly changing manifestations of disease.

“Now we have a disease pattern that has changed from mass infection disease to the highly individualised and differentiated hybrid autoimmune diseases.”

So diseases become ‘epoch-specific’; Makewell traces a theme that allows us to understand, that as evolving human beings, the development of our consciousness is reflected in every sphere of our activity. When our social environment, changes so the nature of disease alters. It is unsurprising then that the remedies required for healing alter to become essentially remedies for our time. Diseases that seemed difficult to help in the past, now may respond to a new remedy. This returns us to the law of similars, under which for every disease there may be a similar remedy, and now we may help patients suffering from many contemporary conditions. According to Makewell, there are several environmental factors which potentially interfere with the immune process such as radiation, vaccinations, pesticides, pollutants, life stress, crowded populations, all of which are characteristic of a modern society.

Having undertaken this work, Scholten discovered an emerging theme in relation to these metals, which he sought to verify. He observed that patients needing these remedies had an inner struggle for self-realisation, to define “who I really am” in relationship to the external social and collective values. He postulated that a key word for Lanthanides is ‘self’ and that from this word we can see the whole picture. It is a desire to know who we are, a

desire for self-knowledge and for self-control. Thus he concludes that the main theme of the series is 'autonomy' (auto - self, nomos - law): a desire for self-determination, self-actualisation and self-realisation. Other characteristics common to the series are: sensitivity, searcher in their inner world, and for truth and freedom. There are aspects of light and dark, shadow, reflection, hidden, on the edge, a desire to serve, integrity and humanitarian concerns. Many aspects of the patient will point to these traits ranging from lifestyle choice to profession or spiritual practice. The clues are always to be found if we are alert to looking at every level.

In my opinion, Scholten's element theory has transformed the way homeopaths can access the simillimum for patients requiring remedies from the mineral kingdom. He has created the framework to take us from a rubric-centred system to a person-centred approach and has opened up a great number of previously inaccessible remedies for our use. It is the true marriage of art and science; the right brain and the left brain, the intuitive and the logical; the ying and the yang - all necessary to understand the patient at the deepest level of their life story. I urge the profession to embrace this methodology, particularly with respect to this previously unknown group of remedies, the Lanthanides, and to remember that the proof is in the pudding.

## Case study

This is a case of an 8 year-old girl who had previously come to see me four years ago. I had given her *Tarentula* and *Medhorrinum* in the past, but with only partial results so it is always refreshing for me to see an old case with new eyes. The story is the same and the presenting complaint is the same. It has just got increasingly intense, especially over the last couple of years.

She is hyperactive; fears to go to sleep alone; and is very overweight. In the consulting room she is lively and restless, wandering around picking things up and quickly putting them down again. Her concentration is very poor and she seems very agitated. She is clearly very angry towards her mother if she does not like what she is doing or saying and shouts loudly in her face to tell her to shut up. I, in turn, feel the intensity and aggressiveness of the situation and the girl's state and prepare myself for a tough consultation, just as I had done four years ago.

She has a great amount of energy. She is always on the go and is completely obsessive about cleaning – anything and everything. She can be very violent towards her sisters with little or no reason – as if she lives in a state of raging anger. This means she is always in trouble at school and has frequently been disciplined for bullying other children, even children two or three years older than her. She always bare-facedly denies any involvement in what has happened. Her mother described her as:

"purposefully defiant. If she wants to do something she will go right ahead and do it regardless of the consequences. If she wants to watch a film she will watch it over and over again. If she wants to go somewhere she will go on and on and on, like a dog with a bone, until she gets her way. She is so steely and undeterred by anything – she doesn't flinch when she says really hurtful things to me or to her sisters. It's really unnerving.. All her games involve fighting play or playing goodies and baddies. She can be very funny and entertaining too and loves being the centre of attention and making people laugh. There are times when she completely withdraws and sits in the corner under the table and nobody can reach her. This is almost as distressing as her aggressive behaviour because she looks so alone, almost blanks out. She completely cuts off and disengages with what's going on around her. She also exhibits quite overt sexual behaviour".

She massively overeats, has huge portions and loves junk food. She is extremely sensitive to sugar. For the mother, it feels like everything is a battle - meals, bath time, bed time, going to school She is chilly but sweats excessively at night in bed, and will never go to sleep alone, but will go to sleep very quickly when her mother is by her side. She often has nightmares but will never talk about them.

Rx: *Dysprosium fluoratum* 1M

### **Analysis**

This was now a very straightforward case. Her striking independence, stubbornness and self-determination led me straight into the Lanthanide series. Being familiar with the stages, it was also clear that she needed the stage 12 metal. More specifically *Dysprosium* (stage 12 Lanthanide) has a keynote 'fighting', and concepts: defend, attack, suspicious, guarded. This fighting quality may look as if they try to dominate others, contrary to the Lanthanide quality of letting others free, but it is not real domination, more a fight for their own autonomy. It is as if they are constantly on their guard because they have a feeling that others can attack them. So how she handles her problem is by fighting.

*Fluoratum* illustrates the expression. She is the rejected child; she is constantly busy with a very speedy energy; is obsessive about cleanliness; obsessive about films, obsessive about sugar; obsessive about anything. She is entertaining and loves to shine and be the centre of attention. Early sexual awakening is also characteristic of this salt.

### **First follow up after 7 weeks**

Mother starts by saying that they had the worst week ever, shortly after taking the remedy She was even more aggressive, was screaming, shouting, hitting out at anyone in her path. Her eczema, not previously mentioned, flared up angrily for a couple of weeks. And then it was "the calm after the storm" She became really, really tired which was unheard of, and took herself off to her room and seemed to sleep over most of the weekend. Ever since she has been so much more settled. Much calmer, less aggressive; getting on better at school, which was a comment from her teacher, eating less, and far less obsessive generally. She will actually let things go now

which has been unbelievable. It is as if she has stopped fighting. She settles herself off to sleep mostly by herself and not been woken up by her shouting out in the middle of the night. My own observation at this consultation was that she was much stiller. No Rx.

Still doing really well 6 months later. Repeated *Dysprosium fluoratum* 1M once, 2 months ago as the mother felt she was slipping slightly, but back on course again after the remedy.

## Reflection

My main reflection on this case is the ease with which I made this prescription. There was no rubric searching this time, no pondering over a difficult case.

## Acknowledgement

Many special thanks and appreciation to Jan Scholten and his tireless work for homeopathy.

## References

---

- <sup>1</sup> Samuel Hahnemann, Samuel, 1842. *Organon of the Medical Art*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. 1996, edited and annotated by Wenda Brewster O'Reilly, based on a translation by Steven Decker. Redmond WA, Birdcage Books.
- <sup>2</sup> Jan Scholten, 1993. *Homoeopathy and minerals*, Utrecht: Stichting Alonissos.
- <sup>3</sup> Samuel Hahnemann, *ibid*.
- <sup>4</sup> Jan Scholten, 2005. *Homeopathy and the Elements*, Utrecht: Stichting Alonissos.
- <sup>5</sup> Jan Scholten, 2005. *Secret lanthanides*, Utrecht: Stichting Alonissos.
- <sup>6</sup> Ai-Ling Makewell, 2006, Secret Lanthanides: commentary, reflection, and book review, *Interhomeopathy*, June 2006 [online] [http://www.interhomeopathy.org/index.php/journal/entry/secret\\_lanthanides/](http://www.interhomeopathy.org/index.php/journal/entry/secret_lanthanides/) [cited 10 April 2009].