

## Twelve Jewels

A review of Peter Tumminello's book Twelve Jewels by Alastair Gray

Homeopathic medicine is imbued with the spirit of experimentation, change and movement through that experience. It started like that with Hahnemann. It's still there now. It is no accident to me that those most busy and dynamic of homeopaths seem to be the ones that engage in a meaningful way (manufacture and proving) with the medicines. Proving of new remedies and the re-proving of the old are vital to us as a profession and to us personally in order to grow.

Peter Tumminello in this book has introduced twelve more remedies, and in a way that remedy information has never been presented before. It's a gem. It's an immediately personal book. At the outset Peter describes his journey into working with these substances. The book itself is a stunner. Hard bound and 468 pages, it is heavy. But the weight is all good; the paper. It is high quality and the illustrations and photos have immediate richness. But there is substance too. Included are the details of the individual provings. There is an index of concepts and themes of these medicines at the back of the book. As a consequence Peter has been able to begin a much needed profile of the gems as a family which will inevitably grow as other members are added to it and as we get further clinical verification.

The body of the book is where the material is. There are twelve remedy profiles from the gem family with supporting proving and case data.

On opening the book I expected to find proving information similar to what I would find elsewhere in other proving manuals like Sherr's or Klein's. But here the presentation of the remedies is unique.

With each medicine Peter presents a negative seed essence. At first I was confused, but on reading the introduction it means this. In order to get over the dryness of reading raw proving data, the feel of the remedy, a concise distillation is required. The negative seed essence is therefore a distillation of those symptoms, fears, delusions and dreams to emerge from the proving. This is followed by a positive seed essence; a distillation of those curative or positive symptoms and feelings that emerged after taking the remedy.

He then presents the key themes from the mental symptoms. It is a monumental task of ordering and systematizing the information. There is information on the generals, then physicals before confirmation of the remedy profiles with cases from Peter's clinic. It's comprehensive. It is also accompanied with photos of each gem and illustrations of each negative and positive essence. While not everyone's cup of tea and heavily laden with symbolism they are a valuable addition to the work. Many of us learn best by metaphor and picture.

Inevitably questions will be asked in a couple of aspects of this work; mainly around methodology, and manufacturing. The provings here are in fact not single provings – an event that takes place once and then is over. In fact there are multiple provings over years. This in itself is no controversy, and personally I feel it has great merit, but the inclusion of some meditation information may of interest to some observers.

Some of the remedy profile information comes from meditation provings. Questions of the validity of the information that comes from a person in a part of a meditation circle will inevitably be asked. Does the influence of others or the presence of a charismatic group leader infect the others? Is the information embroidered (some might say contaminated) by the powerful personality who knows what the remedy is? There is no question as to the validity of the experience. But can the information from that experience then find its way into the next updated repertory or into the next edition of a materia medica? That is the question that seems to divide many homeopaths. When I ask students this question I am always surprised that they answer 'absolutely not'. But then that is usually before they realize the exact methodology – if that is even the word – for some of Hahnemann's early trials.

Those questions acknowledged, for me there are a number of checks and balances that Peter has in place here that entirely validates the work. None of the information comes purely from one source. When it come to say Pearl, there is the meditation group experience, but this is balanced with a Hahnemannian trial conducted at a different college and in a different context. One enriches the other. The information is very complementary and deepens our understanding. I have experienced this from the other side in my own proving work. My experience of conducting rigid 'right wing' Hahnemannian trials is that they often lack richness. It's hard to say just what a remedy is really about. In the most of all the Hahnemannian trials I have conducted – 19 so far, easily the flattest and the one that was most deflating and boring and dissatisfying to the participants was the triple blind trial conducted using the strictest modern controls and blinding and cross over methodology. There is an equation I have made up. 'The degree of scientific 21<sup>st</sup> century orthodox medical science methodology in a proving is in inverse proportion to the value of the experience of the trial for the participants or for the coordinator'. And the information that is useable to the community at large is often one dimensional. All that remains for these rigid trials are often a couple of physicals and the odd general symptom. Some might ask some questions of the lack of blinding in some cases in this work and also the reality that many provers were used over and over again in the different trials. There are sound arguments for and against this practice.

In addition, the manufacture of the remedies might raise a fundamentalist eyebrow. The remedies are immersions and not triturations. It is certainly interesting that the lack of trituration is not reflected in the intensity of the symptoms or experiences of the provers.

A point should be made about Peter's use of 'positive and negative seed essences'. I wonder if he has deliberately or inadvertently stumbled upon a solution for an issue that confronts anyone who has engaged in multiple provings. There is such immediate clarity about a new symptom. 'I felt fear'. 'My stomach hurts'. 'I itch'. There is no problem with these symptoms. The issue is with the positive things that happen. 'The rash I had before the proving is gone'. 'I feel great'. 'I am

dancing in champagne'. These are Peter's positive seed essences. Others might call them cured symptoms. Some ignore them because they are secondary. This is a new take on the two hundred year argument about primary and secondary symptoms that divides some homeopaths. While Hahnemann told us about primary and secondary symptoms and encouraged us to forget about the secondary ones because these were caused by the organism's vital force pushing back against the morbid agent, he never got down to the nitty gritty of describing just exactly how we identify each and every symptom as one or the other. It is certainly different approach to that outlined by Hercu in his two volume *Proving*s books.

Can we distill the seed essence of a substance as we are taking it, or writing about it? Do we need some of the clarity that time can bring? Perhaps, as Scholten says in the foreword the concepts of objective and subjective are outdated anyway so it doesn't matter. It's a small point but it needs to be made. With the assertions of central themes of remedies some are better at it than others. Some homeopaths such as Sankaran just nail inner essences and main feelings in a flash. But not all of them are spot on all the time. I trust these essence statements here because I know Peter's work and I have seen him in action. He has decades of clinical experience. If in doubt, try waiting the months in the queue to try and get an appointment with him. But I am not so sure about others capacity to do this.

Some may be troubled by aspects of this work and its artistry. The homeopathic 'police', those who haven't seen a patient in years, who emerge from time to time from under their rocks will glance the headings, see the illustrations and have an opinion. At first I was perplexed by the lack of rubrics and concerned about the condensed paragraphs on the physicals and generals. But on confirmation it is clear that all the information is there. That individuals' symptoms cannot be ascertained is in itself a small matter. Some find these things valuable in their prescribing. But here quality shines through. It oozes commitment, homeopathic understanding and a decade of work and integrity. It's a colossal undertaking of managing information and systematizing it. And for every question I had about the lay out, the manufacture and the methodology used in these provings and distilled in the book, there is a clear reason or description. Vive la difference.

Alastair Gray

Alastair Gray practices in Sydney Australia and is the author of the provings of Moreton Bay Fig, White Tailed Spider, Box Jellyfish, Cactus, Bufo, Cockroach, Seahorse, Tea Tree, Mosquito, Liquorice, Waratah and Kowhai, and published his first volume of provings in 2005, *Experience of Medicine Vol I*.