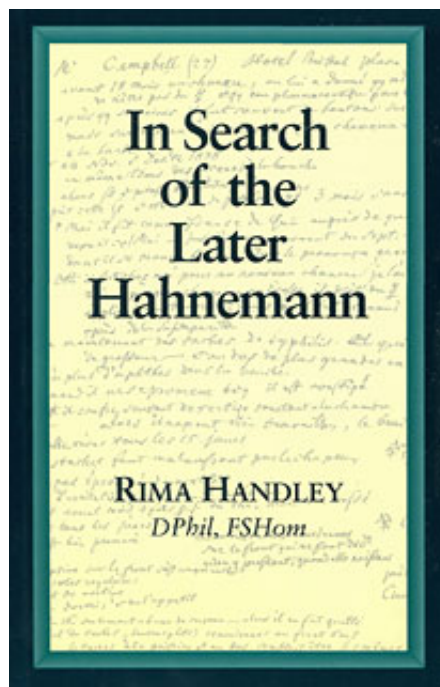


Rima Handley In Search of the Later Hahnemann

Reading excerpt
[In Search of the Later Hahnemann](#)
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Introduction

All homeopaths are familiar with the story of Samuel Hahnemann's early life, its trials and vicissitudes, his piece-by-piece formulation of the principles of homeopathy and their painstaking verification in practice, as well as with the story of his success and failure in Leipzig followed by his self-chosen exile to Kothen in 1821.

We are not, however, so familiar with the story of his later years, the years in which, having married a rich young French wife, the Marquise Melanie d'Hervilly, he moved to Paris, and, at the age of eighty, once again set up a successful homeopathic practice, publicising homeopathy from the capital of the fashionable world in a way he could never have done from the small Saxon town where he had been living for the previous fourteen years.

It was in Paris that Hahnemann achieved his greatest renown and where he was, at last, honoured as he always should have been for his remarkable achievements. It was in Paris that he completed the second edition of his *Chronic Diseases* and his final revision of the *Organon*. It was in Paris that he put into practical effect the implications of his theory of chronic disease, the miasm theory, as it has come to be known. It was in Paris that he experimented with high potencies and pushed his conception of the infinitesimal dose to undreamed-of lengths in developing the LM potency.

This book is the story of Hahnemann's practice of homeopathy during the last years of his life in Paris, a period hitherto little studied and much misunderstood. The story is based for the first time on Hahnemann's actual casebooks, up till now left substantially unexamined in a German library. These reveal a rather different Samuel Hahnemann from the apparently confident master with whom we have become familiar through the pages of his published works.

We see here the private experimentation which underpinned the assurance of his public utterances. We see him literally 'practising' homeopathy, obliged to try numerous different methods of prescribing

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with his complex Parisian patients, guided not by any dogma but by the spirit of enquiry which had always informed his own learning.

These last casebooks show how Hahnemann adopted a new method of prescribing in the wake of his discovery of the psoric miasm. He no longer prescribed solely on the 'totality of symptoms' he had advocated for so long, but often prescribed miasmatically, usually clearing the psoric miasm at the outset of a case, before proceeding with any more individual prescribing.

He also prescribed in the higher potencies, about which he had first written in a note to the fifth edition of the *Organon* (paragraph 287), changing his methods to accommodate them, prescribing in liquid doses frequently repeated, abandoning the familiar practice of giving one dose and waiting for its action to cease before considering any repetition.

We see him tentatively moving towards what he considered to be his ultimate achievement in releasing spirit from matter: his discovery of the LM potency.

We see him making successful cures, of course, but we also see him making mistakes, improvising, getting stuck and lost in his cases. We see him trying different ways of coping with the responses to remedies, especially with aggravations.

We see him developing his materia medica from the fifty or so remedies which he had at the beginning of his practice to the nearly two hundred which he had by the end of his life. We see him prescribing new and unusual remedies, nosodes, poorly proved and even unproved substances, in his attempts to wrest his patients from the jaws of disease.

Above all we see him experimental, tentative, enquiring, trusting the process he had himself formulated, trusting that if symptoms were indeed the only expression of disease, then removal of the symptoms must result in removal of the disease. If the remedy chosen did not remove the symptoms, then he chose another remedy. If the symptoms aggravated, he often saw the aggravation as an indication for another remedy. If the symptoms disappeared he often put a double exclamation mark in the margin. It seems that surprise at the fact that homeopathy works is something that never leaves even the best prescribers!

We see here the real Hahnemann, Hahnemann at his everyday work. As the existential psychotherapist Irvin Yalom has written:

'In their everyday work, therapists, if they are to relate to their patients in an authentic fashion, experience considerable

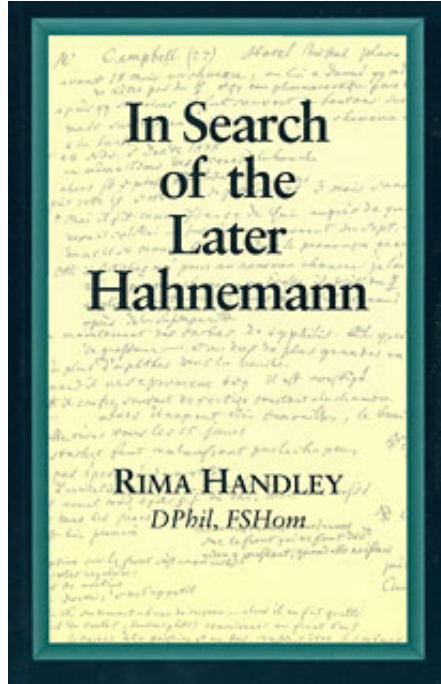
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uncertainty ... The capacity to tolerate uncertainty is a prerequisite for the profession. Though the public may believe that therapists guide patients systematically and sure-handedly through predictable stages of therapy to a foreknown goal, such is rarely the case: instead, therapists frequently wobble, improvise, and grope for direction. The powerful temptation to achieve certainty through embracing an ideological school and a tight therapeutic system is treacherous: such belief may block the uncertain and spontaneous encounter necessary for effective therapy.*

To read Hahnemann's cases is to see him 'wobble, improvise and grope for direction' a great deal. It is to see him as a whole person and to share in the process of the making of homeopathy.

R.H.

*Yalom, I. D., *Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy*, Bloomsbury, London 1989.



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