

Zirconium, learning through a case

Dr. Anne Vervarcke

Case

Ann M. Female, born 12-11-64, married, two children. Job as commercial representative. Modest make-up, very carefully clothed and hair-dressed and talks rapidly and fluently without interruptions.

First consultation: 8-2-2002:

P: My complaint is complete fatigue, caused by the children's' birth (they are three and four year old at the time), work, everything. I always wake up around 3 o'clock in the night with pain in my back and diaphragm which gets better when I get up and move about. I'm also frequently ill, I was never ill before and now I am susceptible to all kinds of bacteria. I also tend to be irritable. It seems that I'm retaining waste products; these little pockets under my eyes get larger and larger. I also have difficulty going to the toilet, it can last for two weeks, but I have that from childhood on, it's psychological. I have taken Bach flowers now, and I feel a bit better, but when I called you I was very down.

H: Can you tell me about that?

P: Sometimes I am completely depressed... What is life about: doing the household, working, what do I have for myself? I also have eating binges and it destroys my self image... I don't enjoy life... it all passes me by.

(She starts weeping now as she was on the verge of it from her first words on.)

P: I'm telling all this stuff to a stranger, but OK, I let it come... I have left life... and sooner or later that makes you sick, doesn't it?

At that moment I don't have a clue what she means, but as she goes on like this, I hear more and more her therapist's words. She often cites her: "M. says this" and "M. says so". This is complicating the anamnesis in a way, because one must sort out carefully wishful thinking, citations, rationalizations and the patient's own words. To do so, it can be helpful to detect where the energy comes in the case, for instance by hand gestures. Also the explicit way in which the patient's own and original terminology surfaces or a remark, inconsistent in the context, can point to information from the vital level. But most important are the difficulties, sufferings, exclamations, and the like who are unclear to us in the beginning. The challenge is to understand them in the patient. This is so important that one can say that unless this is understood the case is not solved and the similimum will not be found.

P: My parents ran a shop and my father had a job... my brother and I had to keep ourselves busy in the apartment above the shop. I have never developed myself... I have not followed any courses at the Academy of arts nor did I attend any boy-scouts' meetings... and when at 10, the TV came in the house, development was definitely over with. I have never had the feeling that I was good in anything. I loved to go to school... it was an escape. I was good and docile... learnt my lessons, made my homework, whereas my brother was

more of a rebel... But I dreamt of doing this or that and it all came down to nothing... I haven't enjoyed life yet. What happens to a woman? You meet a man, you have children, it is the same day in and out and I want to break with it... I don't love myself. I am nothing, just nothing... It is frightening if you look in the mirror and you don't love yourself. I understand that people want to commit suicide... The only thing I'm good at is lying down on the couch and eating candy but then I'll grow fat and that's not good for my self-esteem.

Now she cries deeply and sadly and there is no stopping it. The intensity of her despair fills the room.

P: I'm having therapy... everything is blocked... The idea that life is so beautiful and you can't enjoy it. I have a feeling that I'm swimming and can't reach the bank, but if I wouldn't keep swimming, I would drown... This is making me so tired. M. says: let yourself float.

I have lived on my own but now I can't bear being alone... the A with her knowledge and qualities I don't know any more.

H: At that time I ask about her dreams as a child.

P: I wanted to become a star... movie... theater... dance, yes I wanted to become a star... and later I became more realistic: air hostess or something like that. I would be a known person. I got into teaching and at that point I stopped following my intuition. I have taken a completely different direction: the commercial world... marketing... I am at a reasonably high level at the moment and I am satisfied with it... I want a simple life.

She goes on conveying memories from childhood, how life became more

serious when her mother had a still birth when the patient was nine, how exemplary she always had been and helped in the shop from her teens on and took pleasure in the compliments. She always had been creative, always drawing or tinkering and on Sundays they made trips by car or went for dinner to the restaurant. On her holiday camps she was supervisor and had the capacity of getting higher-up but she was too compliant and afraid of the adventure.

To go live on her own had been the ultimate adventure: creating her own little nest in an apartment, saving for furniture and becoming part of an amateur theatre group.

P: This was fantastic until the director said that I wasn't good... that has hurt my self confidence, and then I quit. I have never learnt to go my own way. I had a LAT-relationship, but I expected too much of it and I broke with him. Then I bought a little house and met my present husband, but I still have this empty feeling inside.

This first man: I wanted also to be the perfect woman for him, the perfect lover, it was a beautiful man, a prince on a white horse, but he just loved other women too much... This relationship has stalled my development... I was too occupied being perfect for him... I have made myself into what I'm now, but I didn't get enough good hints. I had too many expectations and there was too little space to develop and also I didn't love myself. He felt I was suffocating him... It was a complete slap in my face when I had to go. I was... a failure. Then I have been lost for a while... I worked and went to my parents on Sundays... drinking a cup of coffee... I went on trips with mom and dad as a child... That only changed when I bought my house...

She looks back over her history thinking:

This stupid VSO¹: you have to choose at a very young age... it was a disaster. When I was twelve, I thought: I want to do biology and so I had to go to Gent... That was so stupid... so determining. I didn't finish my education... although I was the best of the class... but there were not many job opportunities and one of the girls was taking theatre classes. I was very easily influenced and then I began to skip class. I too wanted to attend theatre classes... But yes, I have no self confidence and joined a theatre group later. I had to have guidance. I had a good director... but once he confronted me... figuratively put me in the nude, and I stayed away from it.

H: Can you tell me what had happened?

(It's the second time she refers to this incident so now we know for sure this must have been very important for her.)

P: These eating binges had made me somewhat bigger and these remarks: 'wow, you've put on some weight'... or the word 'plump' they used... They gave me minor parts to play in the theater. I felt humiliated. At one time when the girl that played the lead roll fell ill, the director called me and it caught me off guard and I screwed it up. I tried to imitate her acting, but I was completely on the wrong track and he made it very clear to me that I couldn't do it. I was among the founders of that Theatre Company... we even had performed abroad. I did all sorts of things there, even such as the decor, but I felt abused and I quit. After I had delivered my second child, they've asked me back but I don't have the gut. I'm still hitting myself over the head over this...

H: When I ask her about her fears,

she tells me:

P: Seven months after delivery I was pregnant again and I was exhausted. I wondered: what are you doing? I had a lot of anxiety attacks: when I heard on the news something about a burning vehicle in the traffic jam, I immediately thought my children are in there or what must be going on in this child, I am not protected here and I am in a burning car. Or these children that suffocated from sitting all day in a hot car... Also injustice to a child I cannot tolerate. I took anti-depressive medication... not that I would have jumped in the water but I didn't find any joy in anything anymore.

The patient gives more details about her pregnancy and her husband, she calls quiet and modest, he is a military man and quite homely but he has less savoir-vivre than she has.

Analysis of the case

In every single case the first requirement is to spot the most characteristic and remarkable features (the Strange, Rare, Peculiar) or in other words: those features that represent the very individual being of the patient. This is what we would call the vital sensation or the vital disturbance, which in fact is an overlapping term. The vital sensation is a concept and is not experienced unless it is disturbed, in the same way the stomach is not experienced unless it is disturbed. The second requirement is to understand the SRP (not interpret but understand what is observed) and the third is matching this symbolic pattern to a homeopathic or similar pattern.

For homeopathic treatment I discern 5 levels of experience in a person. We could call them 'bodies'. The most dense is the physical (level 1) and it need no further explanation what we mean by disturbances of the

¹Belgian educational system

psychical body. The second or energy body is very intimate interwoven with the physical. The influx comes from exchange with the four elements, breathing, radiation from the earth and celestial bodies, exercise as well as repose, the quality part of the material food (that is destroyed by processing) etc. The third 'body' is our emotional body that is individual as well as collective and influenced by internal and external stimuli. The mental body (level 4) overlaps with the psyche, it consists of conscious and unconscious parts, again individual and collective features. Beyond this there is the vital body (level 5), where our blue print is located. It is our individual experience of this unique and onetime emergence of the spirit in this particular way. It encompasses the quantity and quality of time: place and date of birth (the persons horoscope), the family history (family constellations), the constitution (miasm), the physical appearance (genetics), the life plan (biography) and also the vital sensation. It is like a signature, a particular wave function, a frequency, that unfolds itself in a coherent pattern on all other levels. If we are able to determine the vital disturbance and treat this we have 'restored the sick to health' (Organon § 1) as we dealt with the cause of the problem.

Now in this patient there is grief, depression and even despair (level 3) because she feels her life is joyless, it all passes her by. She has intense self loath, because of her eating binges. Although she is very beautiful and not overweight, she feels she is old looking, too fat, has 'bags' under her eyes, and therefore she doesn't love herself.

When a patient tells her life story, what matters is the choice of the subjects and hence the message conveyed in this way. In her story the most remarkable thing is that she

feels she didn't have any opportunity to develop. In her childhood, she said: no Academy or scouts. In her relationship with the first man: by trying too hard to please him, her development stopped and when they split up, she felt a failure. She admits being easily influenced, needing guidance and longing for the good opinion of her parents or from the director in the theater company. In fact it was her childhood dream to become a star, a dancer, an actress and then when she unexpectedly had an occasion to play the lead role, she screwed it. The director said she didn't perform well and with shame she withdrew never to go back again to the theater. This is the story. Since then life seems dull, unfulfilling, although she has a loving husband, two healthy children and a good job. She is tired, depressed, disgusted. She feels empty.

This means in order to exist she needs to have something 'extra'. For her this means: development, exploring something new, being on stage, doing something creative. The vital sensation of every remedy of the mineral kingdom can be boiled down to this empty feeling. It is not the emptiness after an exhausting effort, which would be level 2 but the existential emptiness a person can feel when he explores the core of his unhappiness. (in fact an element is empty when examined unto the quantum level) A remedy from the animal kingdom would feel it is a never ending struggle while a plant remedy would have a specific sensitivity. (often but not always a variation of a pain sensation).

Exploring the new, being somebody special is represented by the remedies on the 5th row of the Periodic Table (while the remedies on the 4th row want to be normal, 'like everybody else').

The Periodic Table is an excellent

chart to understand the core issue of the patient. From horizontal row 1, which represents the state before birth, (the incarnation) we find all the stages of life until row 7 where disintegration is the key word (radioactive substances).

Row 2 represents the birth process: becoming a separate being. Carbon is the moment the person is born and comes into this world (a carbon based world) while Oxygen represents the moment the umbilical cord is cut and from now on you are really on your own! Row 3 represents the establishing of an identity, in relation to the others. It equals the childhood and youth of a person. Where Natrum is completely dependent on the relationship to provide in his basic needs, Sulphur on the other hand is asserting himself and his personality has the quality of arrogance and egotism. We recognize the student who knows better and is re-inventing the wheel. In row 4 the person knows who he is and he wants to be a member of society and sustain himself. The issues are law and order, duty, work, money, security, family, house, a common life. Row 5 represents the person who wants something more, something new, special. He wants to explore, invent, risk, find creative solutions, be in the limelight or on stage. In row 6 responsibility and leadership are the issues, as one could expect from an old and wise person.

Even more refined than the 10 miasms Rajan Sankaran uses are the 18 stages in the Periodic Table. To show a step by step evolution from on the left side with the first column: no basis of his own, then developing a strong structure that is at its summit at stage 9 and 10 and then starts to slip away, break down and completely crumble by stage 18. So the focus from column 1 to 9 will be in trying to get the missing thing and from column 11 on losing it.

Need for guidance in exploring the new is a feature most strongly found in the first columns of the 5th row, it becomes less towards the middle of the chart. The vertical columns represent the stage the person is in, meaning how much structure and basis he/she has to realize what is felt necessary to exist (hence: conditions to be OK).

This patient knows what she wants to do (doubting this would be column 3, because the essence of column 3 is 'doubt what', the essence of 4: 'doubt if' and of column 5: 'doubt how') but doesn't know how to reach her goal. The first try out is a failure and she never risks to try it again. She lacks the self-confidence and especially she misses a coach or guidance or help from parents or experts. This is column 4: Zirconium. She gets a 200K.

In Scholtens chart we find key words like: "doubt if, start, key, indecisive, uncertain, half, the official starts of your creativity." More explanation is in his book "Homeopathy and the Elements."

Follow up 8-3-2002:

The patient states that she didn't feel any effect at all from the remedy and that everything has remained unchanged. She says:

Sometimes I think: I am lost (delusion lost: *Strontium*) I have these eating binges, I really stuff myself with food at night to fill this emptiness...(confirms mineral remedy).

(A summary follows of all things she would have to do...)

She is disgusted about herself, she says, about all the filth she is stuffing her body with, disgusted of her cellulites and:

P: ...because I have become nothing and done nothing with my life, I am even more disgusted with myself.

Again not being successful in the area of exploring, performing, acting makes her life meaningless: becoming or doing nothing.

She claims to wake up in sweat less often and to have had no more nightmares, of which, by the way, she hadn't complained before. She is also less anxious about the children and at the end of the conversation sighs that she would like to behave spontaneously for once, without scruples, without fear, as you would do on stage, unlimitedly act normal, like an actress, and that this is what she always wanted: to be in the spotlight, but that now she had too much fear to start with it, that now her wings are lame.

Analysis

Often we hear the patient say almost the exact same words in the first follow up but, this is difficult to convey in a paper case, the intensity is less. Although the feelings are still there one could say the person is out of the tight grip of the vital disturbance. As the 'generals' (level 2) are often the first and very reliable signs of amelioration the homeopath can have full confidence the remedy will be curative. As long as there is a change for the better we don't interfere and that's why SL is given.

Follow up: 22-4-2002:

She starts remarking she didn't feel like coming because it is such a long drive and she doesn't know whether it is working or not. She hasn't much to say because there is not much of a problem left. She says:

I am too soft: I have allowed my parents to lead my life, I may not fix on eating and I think too much. I am on the right track... I am in a **neutral zone**. Will this last? This euphoria won't last. I can enjoy small things at present. I would want this carelessness to last. Lately I have made a realization: **what have you been**

occupied with? I portray it all so black... so negatively! I was so tired.

Now I have understood that you just have to accept yourself... I think it has to do with self confidence and then you will automatically love yourself.

The only thing is my parents... I should be able to forgive them... I don't know myself what I really like. I am so without substance... Go out with girl friends... to "have" to be just too much... But I am having **more pleasure** in it now. The children are so sweet and so incredibly naughty; they are at their best like this. Now I have a few aims: I want to move two times more and then change to a part time (4/5) job. I don't have the fear attacks concerning the children anymore.

Analysis

A sure sign the patient is better on a deep level. She actually hasn't got much to say anymore. An undisturbed vital sensation leaves the personal thoughts alone. Since there are no worries, there isn't much to think about. Also the emotions become quiet and in the background. Fears calm down. She calls it carelessness and that is what we hear our patients who received the similimum say over and over again: there is peace in their minds, calmness in their emotions (neutral zone), more pleasure and enjoyment in life. The energy comes back (level 2) and finally whatever is curable in the physical set up will be cured.

What a difference with the despair, self loath, emptiness and the feeling of being nothing in a joyless life a few months ago!

She received a dose of Zirconium MK about one year later, after a telephone call if it was possible to send her the remedy. ■■