

## ALUMINA

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Alumina takes the third place among the elements in the earth crust which is mainly composed of aluminium silicates. It is the most abundant and most widely distributed of all metallic bases. Seven per cent of all elements forming the earth crust consist of aluminium. With aluminium in every soil it is quite natural to find it as regular trace element in plants, animals and in the human body.

Considering the omnipresence of aluminium in soil, plants, animals and in the human body, it is all the more astonishing that research in the field of trace elements has discovered nothing so far about the role of aluminium, or whether it serves any function at all in the sphere of living things. It is one of the research possibilities usually not contemplated, but inherent in homœopathic provings, that a proving can bring out the specific relationship of any substance with certain tissues of the human body. If we look up the original proving of *Alumina* in Hahnemann's *Chronic Diseases* we find 1160 symptoms listed. These symptoms, often repetitious in nature, represent the raw material from which the proving picture develops. However, even in our materia medica text-books this proving picture is still a maze of inco-ordinated symptoms, difficult, if not impossible to explain. In an attempt to elucidate and integrate the vast symptom register of *Alumina* we take a different approach. We shall look at nature to explore the environment in which the element occurs, in an attempt to discover what could be called the aluminium function in nature.

The floods of water coming down with the rain seep through cracks and crevices of rocks, sediments and sands. This precious "water of life" without which no life could exist on earth, would be lost, were it not finally held and retained as in a bowl by layers containing aluminium silicates, like clay.

From the soil aluminium enters the world of plants, where

it is omnipresent. Small amounts in the soil seem to stimulate germination whereas larger amounts have the opposite effect. Lycopodium and ferns have a greater amount of aluminium in their ashes than other plants. The only positive suggestion about the possible role of aluminium in plants we owe to the botanist Stoklasa ("Ueber die Verbreitung des Aluminiums in der Natur", 1922). He found that Hygrophytes, i.e. plants with greater need for water, contain more aluminium than the Xerophytes, plants with a low fluid balance. According to this researcher, aluminium facilitates the resorption of water into the cells and regulates the flow of water and the ions dissolved in it through the cell membranes. Except for Stoklasa's hypothesis about the role of aluminium in plants nothing is known about its function. However, the part which aluminium plays on the inorganic level, holding and retaining water, makes it likely that its function on the organic level of plant life will be of similar nature.

Up to date, nothing whatsoever is known about a function of aluminium in the human body where it is regularly found. It is here that the results of a homœopathic proving might shed some light upon the mystery of a trace element, always present, but without apparent function. The huge mass of very diverse symptoms seems to defy at first any attempt to find a common thread. There is, however, one physical symptom which goes through the entire symptomatology of *Alumina*, and this is *dryness*. There is dryness of all mucous membranes, dryness of the skin and as a consequence dry catarrh of various organs and dry eczema. Here we see once again the relation of aluminium to the fluid balance which we found in its occurrence in the soil and in plants. We may assume that it exerts a similar regulating influence upon the water content of the body as it does in the earth crust and in plants.

The many symptoms of the provings, often repetitious, are the logical consequence and expression of dry catarrh. Stitching pains, sensation of sticks, scanty, often acrid, discharges because highly concentrated, forming dry crusts, are the natural consequences of dry catarrh, whether occurring in nose or throat, or larynx, stomach, or rectum, or any other organ. A peculiar *Alumina* symptom, always repeated and obviously confirmed,

but up to now never explained, should be specifically mentioned: stomach complaints are worse from eating potatoes. Potatoes contain normally 3-20 mg. per cent., sometimes up to 43 mg. per cent. solanine. Even when cooked and according to the type of potato and its preparation, traces of solanine may remain. Solanine, however, like the related alkaloids of *Belladonna*, produces dryness of the mucous membranes and inhibits the stomach secretion. A sensitive prover, subject to the "drying" toxic effect which *Alumina* has also on the mucous membranes of the stomach, would be naturally aggravated by any trace of an additional "drying" agent as contained in potatoes, and so will the *Alumina* patient who reacts like a sensitive prover. All the often confusing details of the subjective symptomatology of the *Alumina* drug picture can be explained without much difficulty, even logically deduced, through the symptoms of dry catarrh and its varied expressions in different organs.

However, we have still to arrive at the unifying conception which comprises and elucidates the features and facets of the *Alumina* drug picture in its entirety. When we look at the main points of attack of *Alumina* in the proving and as a remedy, we find, besides the mental sphere and the nervous system, such different organs as pharynx and larynx, stomach, rectum and bladder as specific field of its action. We can perceive these organs as the special sphere of the body where the general function of reception has its particular seat, pharynx and stomach receiving the food, larynx as the first receptacle of air, bladder and rectum the receptacles for the body waste before its elimination. The essence of the function of these organs—in contrast to the organs which process the received material, like lungs, liver, etc.—is the function of receiving and holding. Impairment of this function through dry catarrh and paresis of pharynx, larynx, of bladder and rectum in the proving, and its restoration in the typical *Alumina* case display the same basic function of receiving and holding which aluminium has in the earth and in plant life. The *Alumina* paresis might be partly the end result of dry catarrh and by restoring the normal water content to these organs of reception *Alumina* ful-

fuls its basic function as regulator of fluids in the body, particularly in the organs of reception.

The nervous system shows symptoms resembling locomotor ataxia. A peculiar symptom here among others is that "pricking with a needle is not immediately perceived" the reaction is delayed. Numbness and paraesthesia are prevalent. Again we see here in the sensory sphere an impairment of the general function of reception, the reception of tactile impressions. Lameness, lancinating pains, complete a picture similar to locomotor ataxia, in German "Rueckenmarksdarre" which means "a drying up" of the spinal column.

Turning to the characteristic mental symptoms we find: inability to concentrate, wandering thoughts, very poor memory, fear of one's own impulses—to commit suicide, seeing blood on a knife—fear of losing one's reason. Again the faculty to hold, to hold and retain one's thoughts, to take a hold of and control one's impulses, to retain one's reason, is impaired. When one prover experiences a sensation "as if the mind were outside his body, as if what he speaks is spoken by someone else, and what he sees is seen by someone else", we encounter finally a phenomenon of exteriorization, a loss of the ego function as an expression of the inability to hold and retain the very "I", the ego itself.

In the sphere of the unconscious, expressed always in a symbolic language through dream images, we find characteristically several times dreams of thieves in the provings. Also in this sphere the inability to hold and retain what belongs to one is symbolically expressed.

The modalities of *Alumina* follow logically from this drug picture. Aggravation from dry weather, better from wet weather, is natural in the "dry" *Alumina* case. Warmth aggravates due to its drying-up effect. *Alumina* is one of the remedies which has a definite aggravation from moon phases, new and full moon, which influence the tides and the flow of water. Aggravation after menses which constitute a loss of fluids. The aggravation from eating potatoes has been explained already. Amelioration while eating, since eating provokes secretion, thus diminishing the sensation of dryness. The desire for indiges-

tible things (chalk, lime) may be an expression of the instinct for something which "holds" water. General aggravation on waking, i.e. the time when we have not yet the full hold on ourselves.

The personality type which responds particularly to *Alumina* is of thin, spare build, wrinkled, withered, with a dried-up appearance. Where the drying-up process persists indurations in various tissues may occur. In infants, the dried-up look pictures the condition of dehydration. Here *Alumina* develops in potentized form its curative action of holding and retaining the body fluids, the "waters of life", as it does everywhere in nature.

Here we look back and perceive once more the basic function of *Alumina* of holding and retaining, as it does through the layers of clay which hold and retain the water. When man for the first time wanted to hold the precious liquid he stretched out his hand—for clay to form the first vessel to hold water. And in the myth of creation man himself is formed from clay as a vessel to hold and contain the spirit of life.

When we stand on an old-time country road after rain has flooded the land, and see the water quietly staying in puddles and furrows, contained by yellowish mud, which is clay—we can perceive at a glance the essence of the *Alumina* drug picture together with the image of the specific function of the element of holding the "water of life" on the earth crust, in plant, animal and man—the great *Alumina* function which pervades every realm of nature.

—*The British Homœopathic Journal, October, 1960.*

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