

Therapeutic Pocketbook

The Boenninghausen Repertory in a new, bilingual version for RADAR software, translated and edited by Peter Vint, Germany

An article by
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The Demand for Boenninghausen's Repertory

In Germany - the birthplace of homeopathy - many homeopaths are dedicated to Boenninghausen's unique approach to case taking and case analysis. The market leader in homeopathic software, the RADAR software, also make the works of Boenninghausen's available, the first was the Therapeutic Pocketbook, as a complement to the Kentian – Synthesis repertory that was already in place.



Boenninghausen

The Original Edition

Three major steps were then taken with this database material to ensure that the RADAR version remained true to Boenninghausen - and in some cases, that the translation returned closer to his original meaning. The beginning database was compared to the **original German text**:

Therapeutisches Taschenbuch, für homöopathische Ärzte, zum Gebrauche am Krankenbette und beim Studium der reinen Arzneimittellehre (Münster, Germany, 1846)

[Therapeutic Pocketbook, For Homeopathic Physicians, for the Use at the Sickbed and For the Study of the Pure Materia Medica]

1. **All the remedy abbreviations were verified**, as well as the degrees, rubrics, etc. As with all projects from Archibel, the remedy abbreviations were chosen to follow the rules of Synthesis.
2. **Page numbers were included for every rubric**. This enables any homeopathic practitioner or scholar to easily locate the exact page when they refer to the original book.
3. **The large original section on remedy relationships was included**. The relationships information in this Concordance section is central to the optimal use of the Boenninghausen repertory.

Creating a New Translation

To create the optimum version of the Pocketbook, Archibel needed a translator with **profound knowledge** in these principal areas:

- a) Mastery of both English and German
- b) German dialects as they were used more than 150 years ago
- c) Homeopathic philosophy, materia medica, and repertories
- d) The "homeopathic lingua" with all it's idiosyncrasies
- e) Medical terms used in Boenninghausen's time

Changes in the German Language

A few remarks on the evolution of language may be helpful in appreciating the challenge of this translation project.

Think of how English has changed from the time of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Yes, a contemporary English speaking reader can still use the original text without too many problems. But, they will often come across "funny" spelling, "strange" syntax, and words that obviously *must* have changed in meaning.

For example, take the word "aweful", which in Shakespeare's time meant more or less the opposite of what we would think of today. The original and literal meaning is "full of awe", "awe inspiring", and by no means "ugly", "terrible", or anything else along these lines.

A similar change in grammar, syntax, and usage has occurred with German since the time of Boenninghausen and Hahnemann. Readers who are not well acquainted with relevant shifts in the German language are quite apt to make errors with important phrases that they only think they know.

Dialects Make a Difference

Another challenge for the translator comes because the "fathers of homeopathy" spoke different dialects of German. Because of these regional variations, key words can have subtle, but possibly critical differences in meaning.

Hahnemann used the word "Fuss" [foot] as it is still used in some German dialects today - to mean "the whole leg". Whereas Stapf, who published the famous *Archiv*, used the word as we commonly expect - to mean the part of the leg below the ankles, or the foot itself.

Stapf's usage is exactly parallel to the English word, whereas Hahnemann's is significantly different. This demonstrates the kind of expertise necessary to create an accurate and truly valuable translation. A simple use of dictionaries will not suffice at all.

Choosing a Translator

It soon became clear that the best choice for a translator would be a German specialist. Luckily, a German collaborator, Peter Vint of the Hahnemann Institute for Homeopathic Documentation, had the requisite skills.

Peter had been working in homeopathy for more than twelve years, and he had been translating homeopathic literature from the beginning. His biggest work was an annotated and revised translation of Clarke's *Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica* - a task which took six years. For that translation, Peter traced every single symptom from Clarke back to the sources Clarke himself used.

Beside other "smaller" translations, Peter is also the translator of the Synthesis repertory for RADAR, and he remains involved in its further development.

Precise Translation - But Not Too Precise!

Any translation has to meet certain criteria. The first is that it should be precise, but not too precise. The most important aspect of precision is not to include in the translation anything that is not found in the original itself. But sometimes errors of this kind can creep in unnoticed if great care is not taken.

Take the word 'Schwindsucht' [consumption], for example. Sometimes you find translations where the word 'tuberculosis' appears all of a sudden. This gives the impression of a clearly defined disease, which of course it is not.

Open any medical textbook more than 100 years old and check for this word. It was not a medical or technical term and translating it as such can give a very wrong impression.

Descriptive Qualities of Common Words

A translation should take into account that language in itself, and especially the form used by the old homeopaths, has a clearly descriptive touch to it.

As any homeopath knows from everyday experience, patients may use a specific word to describe, for example, a pain. On further questioning, this word often turns out to be a 'place holder' for a fuller description.

Think of those stomach complaints people describe simply as 'pressing'. On deeper inquiry they may turn out to be 'like a stone laying on top of my stomach'.

We find this same phenomenon when we look at rubric names. In these cases, instead of just giving a literal translation, Peter introduced notes that describe the sensation more precisely for those cases.

For example, 'benumbing pain' refers to the German 'betäubender Schmerz'. This is a kind of pain that makes it impossible to think clearly - as though you would faint if it continues.

Therefore 'this pain drives me crazy' is another expression where the practitioner should take this rubric into consideration, and I've included appropriate notes for cases like this.

Repertorial Language

Working with the vocabulary of a specific repertory can sometimes be quite tedious. In fact, Peter has remarked that it can be like learning yet another language.

But the distinctions we uncover through an in-depth look may be extremely valuable to a particular case analysis.

In Boger/Boenninghausen, many rubrics use the word 'sticking'. But in Kent this word barely appears at all - instead we find the word 'stitching'.

In researching some of the older German repertories, we discover that both authors took remedies from the same sources - sources which use the word 'stechend'. 'Stechend' means 'simple stitching' without any further connotation. That is, 'stechend' means 'stitching' without adding any qualifier such as 'fine' or 'piercing' - just 'stitching'.

As this example illustrates, to be practical a translation must take repertorial language into account, but not be ruled by it.

For the new RADAR translation, Peter used expressions in the form that we know from Kent. Because Synthesis is based on Kent, and its language is therefore already Kentian, this seems the most useful route.

Caution With The Familiar

There are times when the practitioner already has a well-known rubric in their favorite repertory. With more or less the same remedies, there is a temptation to use the rubric that is already familiar, even if it is not exactly what we find in the original.

In Boenninghausen there is a rubric called by the German word 'Suesses' ['sweets']. And in all major English repertories, we also find the rubric 'sweets'. This rubric is then commonly used as the translation, notwithstanding the fact that its meaning may not be exactly the same.

To fully appreciate this difference, consider that 'Suesses' in German means anything that is sugary or sweet - a pudding, a cake, or even a beverage. So a soft drink, then, or even sweetened coffee would actually fall under the rubric 'Suesses'.

But the average practitioner working in English may not readily think of coffee or soft drinks when coming across the literal translation, 'sweets'.

Ambiguous Meanings

In more ambiguous cases it may be nearly impossible to come to a final conclusion of the meaning of a rubric. Often the term exists in a materia medica context, which may help. But even a MM reference is not enough in cases where a term has been used in too broad a sense or, even worse, with too many meanings.

Peter elaborates:

When we read cases from Boenninghausen we may be surprised that homeopaths of his time often made prescriptions based only upon the reports of friends, relatives and even village priests - without ever seeing the patient!

Keeping this in mind it is not surprising to come upon terms where the precision of the PocketBook fails our expectations. I've made every effort to point out such instances in notes to the rubrics.

Errors in Past Translations

The more works a person translates, the more they notice the idiosyncrasies of translators and their translations. There is no translation without mistakes, and no one can even begin to catch them all. But, it is good to be aware that some apparently unusual rubrics we find may just be incorrect translations and nothing more.

Translating the Therapeutic PocketBook for RADAR software gave Peter the opportunity to add rubric notes. Among their many functions, these notes can inform homeopaths about misinterpretations that have crept in during past translations and return our understanding closer to Boenninghausen's original intent.

Peter offers an example of the way rubric notes in RADAR are essential to correct past translation errors.

In the past, the German word 'nüchtern' has been incorrectly translated as 'while fasting'.

But 'nüchtern' in this context simply refers to an empty stomach. A common example of this meaning occurs when a doctor asks their patient to come to the examination with empty stomach - 'Bitte, kommen Sie nüchtern.'

I have only begun the major job of indicating the rubrics that require such special care when used in case analysis - but I can promise that other such rubrics will be published on our website.

The Presentation

One of the main features of the Therapeutic Pocketbook is its division into seven sections - called 'Abtheilungen' by Boenninghausen. These are:

- **Mind and Sensorium**
- **Parts of the body and organs**
- **Sensations and complaints**
- **Sleep and dreams**
- **Fever**
- **Change of general state**
- **Concordance of homeopathic remedies**

The order of these sections and their chapters (such as eyes, nose, etc.) were preserved in the new RADAR translation - exactly as they were in Boenninghausen's original. The bilingual RADAR version does not re-sort or re-structure the repertory in any way.

If Peter Vint had changed the order of the rubrics to accommodate more contemporary concepts ('thermoregulatory', to name one example) then RADAR users would not be able to reference the original and highly valuable Concordance, where remedy relationships are divided according to these seven sections.

Therefore the new RADAR translation remains as close to the original as possible.

In Summary

The new translation of Boenninghausen's Therapeutic Pocketbook for RADAR software:

- **Presents a totally new translation of the 1846 original**
- **Offers a German - English bilingual edition (Only English, Only German, or both languages on screen)**
- **Maintains the exact original structure**
- **Allows material to be available in alphabetical order**
- **Refers every symptom to its exact page in the original book**
- **Includes notes for important or ambiguous rubrics**