

## I - TO FAVOUR A SIMPLIFIED OR AMPLIFIED VIEW AS REGARDS THE ACTION OF HOMOEOPATHY IS NOT CORRECT...

- **An article published very recently in a magazine with a wide readership and large circulation figures could only attract attention...**

It dealt with the possibility of using homoeopathy in psychiatry and mentioned the possibility of treating psychological disorders 'from the most minor to the most serious' with Hahnemannian dilutions.

It mentioned successively and pell-mell in its headings 'fits of delirium' - with, in smaller letters, bipolar disorder -, 'depression, hyperactivity, phobic and anxiety disorders'... all - nosological pictures and symptoms - mixed up...

If the article, which was obviously well-documented, rightly mentioned in the introduction the usefulness of the help brought, alone or in addition to other approaches, the way its potentialities are announced and described from certain cases related can be problematic because it engenders confusion...

- **This can only conduce to the stressing of the need to remain careful...**

What might be, because of lack of knowledge or for editorial reasons and in a prejudicial 'shortcut', inferred from our words by readers is quite annoying in many respects...

As a matter of fact, to say from the illustration given by an example that *certain cases* of fits of delirium or phobias can be relieved by a homoeopathic treatment alone is not at all the same as more or less suggesting, through inappropriate or awkward wording<sup>1</sup>, that *all* can benefit from this approach alone, especially as monotherapy...

And yet, if one is not able to realise the absurdity of this affirmation, this article might suggest it and that is problematic... The lack of nuance and precision can prove with serious consequences<sup>2</sup> in many respects...

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<sup>1</sup> And many subjects, as I was able to see several times, rush into this... hence the need to be precise... and to talk about it unambiguously. The article mentioned, which is a little more qualified than many others, is the occasion for this... Of better quality than many others published regularly on the subject, it *is not - I would like to stress this - particularly the object of my criticism* but rather *mentioned as an example among many others*, a sort of opportunity to stress a problem which, although seldom raised, is not unimportant and to dispel many misunderstandings concerning the essence and modalities of the practice of medicine which should be clarified and cleared up.

<sup>2</sup> There are frequent cases of people experiencing psychosis or patients profoundly affected who come, sometimes from very far away, in the hope of being treated with homoeopathy alone. They stop their treatments even before the consultation in the very understandable hope of stopping chemical treatment or taking only granules... Not really justified in the heavy pathologies which pave the way for mental disorders, unfortunately these are generally disappointed hopes... To persuade them and explain to their families that this is not only possible but can sometimes be risky is not easy. To say to them that, on the other hand, further help may be given to them in different ways, making it possible to lower the doses, tolerate them more easily and choose the useful molecules more effectively is positive. This very often results in making the allopathic treatment and its taking more easily accepted which, as it helps improvement, permits to lessen it.

Since I myself was asked questions about the efficiency of our social security system on several occasions, I know how difficult and risky this is. The point is to say what we can do, not to be influenced by the journalist who asks for an opinion and who, *legitimately* unaware of the differences and generally not making any qualification, *applies to homoeopathy what they do to allopathy or phytotherapy...*

Given the few lines I was allowed, I have often had to 'fight' to prevent remarks which were simplistic or potentially misleading through misused generalisations or distortion of their true meanings... : 'Against "depression", what can be given ? Against "phobias", what can be recommended ? Which dilution ? How often ? How many granules ? ' The questions follow each other, there are soon shortcuts and the journalist, often in a hurry because of many a constraint, writes, sends... And if there is no express demand to read the final version of the text and check the way it is worded for the readers, anything might be transmitted in good faith and out of goodwill... How delighted our detractors will be... 'Aha ! So fits of delirium can be treated by homoeopathy... That beats everything ! '... And they often will not go any further...

The debate should obviously be widened<sup>3</sup> and further details should be provided<sup>4</sup>...

Except in very exceptional cases of epidemics, it is not possible to say which medicine(s) *correspond(s) specifically to an illness...*

There are only those which correspond to the symptoms *which the subject shows and which are those of the subject...*

If some medicines must be mentioned to relieve a sign presented, they only *reflect* the homoeopathic approach, which is much less simple and systematised.

It is important to make qualifications, even in a few words... They should leave no room for any mistaken interpretation...

- **To explain is not always easy...**

To put this into practice, when what is asked most of the time is to provide a form of 'recipe' and 'magic formula' which might treat the mental pathology without any offensive 'drug', is, I admit, not easy.

To point out a few remedies symptomatic of anxiety, fear or insomnia is quite different from recommending *the* remedy(ies) corresponding to a psychological disorder.

The lack of knowledge of the Hahnemannian practice and the way it is comprehended by the media and therefore by the general public play an important role...

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<sup>3</sup> This article is an occasion for this by being a starting point for the opportunity to explain many points which are often implicit for homoeopathic practitioners but not obvious for the general public, even if they are enlightened. One needs only to call to mind the undeniable lack of knowledge surrounding homoeopathy and which strikingly appears in speakers of high renown - and from different backgrounds - during certain televised debates...

<sup>4</sup> If they are for homoeopaths, they are not for those who, even if they are doctors, trained in different branches and even less for the general public. In a time characterised by the more and more usual mediation of knowledge, they should all the more emerge from work groups and be categorically clarified by homoeopaths themselves.

- **The point is therefore neither to oversimplify, which would mean to miss the reality of our practice, nor to overcomplicate, which might discourage people.**

The problem is a bit different depending on whether the main medicines for somatic pathologies or those, even symptomatic, of anxiety or fear of heights are mentioned...

If, in one case, one can sometimes confine oneself to the analysis of a symptom, in the other case, this will not be enough... One will have to know more about it to plan the therapeutic strategy.

- **The nosological classification, that is according to diseases or the symptomatic one is of some interest...**

It supports our approach by popularising part of it.

If it meets the demands of people who legitimately have a keen interest in what they are prescribed and enjoy therapeutic modes considered 'natural', to tell them more precisely and through it about the particularity of a mode of treatment which is often decried, if not denigrated, is not negative... Quite the reverse... People will only know more about it and perhaps will be more able to grasp that, even if its mode of action is still very mysterious, homoeopathy is not a 'second-class' type of medicine, it should be taken as seriously as conventional medicine and its medicines should be used judiciously and according to precise rules.

If, linked to the substances which often correspond to them, the division into symptoms or broad and rudimentary classification of disorders can facilitate its comprehension, this is not useless... but *on one condition : to say that the object is to provide information, not to make automatic practical responses*<sup>5</sup>.

Except if all reservations have been expressed beforehand, tacit encouragement of self-medication which inevitably follows from the classification with symptomatic medicines into the bargain is no better<sup>6</sup> than in allopathy and even less so in mental disorders.

It is almost more risky towards our discipline in so far as it may suggest that homoeopathy is harmless - which is wrong -, that it can replace allopathic medication in an equivalent way - which is right in certain cases and wrong in others -, and that to medicate oneself without supervision is possible - which is not true, except in a pathology with repeated symptoms or in common minor pathologies, as can be done in allopathy, except that the medications are not the same...

- **There is great lack of knowledge and the practice of homoeopathy is complex.**

To stress in a few words and as a preliminary<sup>7</sup> to classification into diseases the importance of individualisation in our therapeutic approach and the response given permits to avoid misleading people... This also permits to avoid losing one's credibility, especially in psychiatry...

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<sup>5</sup> Which, except in very simple disorders, should not be done by these exclusive criteria.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. a dose of Sulphur or Pulsatilla mistakenly given in a case of otitis or, for the former, in eczema...

<sup>7</sup> And even in short articles...

To say that these are only general data which should be seen more as information than as data usable in self-medication is essential... :

Anyone who has prescribed, even for a psychological disorder, a dose of Lycopodium or Hepar Sulph at an inappropriate dilution can say so...<sup>8</sup> And there are no simple dictionaries of homoeopathy giving side effects and precautions... as the Vidal Dictionary does in allopathy.

A shortcut, which is inevitably problematic since different poles of the pathology are mentioned pell-mell to say which medicines correspond to them, should only be accepted on one condition : to be accompanied by the mention that to treat in homoeopathy is much more complex and cannot amount to the prescription of a medicine, even if it is selected with care...

If the qualification is not stressed, one might think, as has happened, that homoeopathy can be effective not solely in *the* above-mentioned *case of* fits of delirium or in the 'depressive state' given as an example but in *all cases* of fits of delirium, depression or manic-depressive disorder... These are two very different things, the confusion is unacceptable and this misinterpretation is detrimental to all<sup>9</sup>.

Unless one confines oneself to the enunciation of the positive effects of a remedy on a symptom and to the stressing of the fact that this is a reductive view of homoeopathy, qualified opinions and articles with large circulation figures<sup>10</sup> do not usually get on well together...

*If the undeniable contribution<sup>11</sup> of this mediatisation of medical care on many points cannot be rejected*, it is important to stress that one should not be led into an approach which, although it seems harmless and likely to have no consequences, is detrimental on other points.

- **To try our best to clear up misunderstandings will only help make our practice better known - and help know it better.**

As I experienced it on various occasions... : unless we insist on rereading the final version of the text, which has often been revised, sometimes at the last minute for editorial reasons, our words will be beyond our control...

Retranscribed out of context and therefore out of their true meanings, shortcut, sometimes even distorted, they express a limited view of the reality of the Hahnemannian practice but also, sometimes, a false view... This can therefore only be harmful since the

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<sup>8</sup> I can give the case of a patient who threw his hi-fi at his mother's head as soon as he took a dose of Hepar Sulph or that of another mentioned by one of my colleagues : his patient complained about 40-day impotence after taking Lycopodium...

<sup>9</sup> The needs are so big in psychiatry that a very small insert in a magazine with large circulation figures mentioning the group of homoeopathic psychiatrists engendered 3,000 enquiries from the list of practitioners working in this mode in 9 months...

<sup>10</sup> Which are useful, often in complete support of this approach and anxious to transmit information about this other way of treating...

<sup>11</sup> Which can be assessed by the number of phone calls, questions and often the increase in the sales of the medicines mentioned. This was said to me by a pharmacist.

practitioners of this approach are taken for the champions of 'the placebo effect', doctors with no rigour, who are somewhat 'lunatic'.

Homoeopathy and the patients who use it can do without this... There are enough detractors without them being given more food for thought when many confusions are gradually cleared up and the particularities of our practice are beginning to be brought out... notably that concerning the use of homoeopathy in psychiatry.

It is important to know this and to be careful not to let oneself be led, out of legitimate desire for recognition, to give reductive - if not 'simplistic' - answers to questions which, through their actual content, show how little those who ask them know about our discipline. 'Homoeopathy is demanding', Hahnemann said...

We cannot give way to lack of rigour... It plays into its detractors' hands. The answers can be concise and uncomplicated but the words used should be selected *so as to avoid any ambiguity*.

Perhaps this is what my practising of homoeopathy in psychiatry and the confrontation with the subject and the importance of words have led me to support.

The issue is much too important for silence to be maintained about it. Hahnemann did not show this way... and, in a time when the shadow of de-subjectivisation, deceitful shortcuts and the devastating effects of mental dogmatism and invasive systematisation hangs so forcefully over our heads, it is important to stress it...

The object here is not to cause useless and regrettable controversy but to state essential points to encourage greater cautiousness but also to try to avoid certain confusions which would be detrimental to all...<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Translated by Pascale Tempka