

# MONOPHARMACY OR POLYPHARMACY?

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the revelation of the doctrine of Homoeopathy, aside the conflict with the other systems of medicine; the homoeopathic fraternity, in different spell has also faced various contradictory problems amongst the brethren.

In the early dawn of Homoeopathy, there was a conflict regarding homoeopathic posology—lower dilution or higher? Although at the present era this puzzle has substantially been minimised, yet new problems are peeping before the brethren, viz. monoparmacy or polypharmacy?

Though from the very era of master Hahnemann this puzzling problem has been raised before the brethren, in this modern era this has become a matter of strife. But why?

## ETYMOLOGICAL EXPRESSION

The etymology of *polypharmacy* according to Stedman's Medical Dictionary is mixing of many drugs in one prescription which is also denoted as hlunderbuss or short gun prescription.

But, the term monoparmacy is not common with the orthodox school; yet our school denotes the term with special connotation, which explicit the notion of prescribing only a single simple medicinal substance in a prescription, intended to cure a disease.

## MASTER'S IDEOLOGY WITH CHRONOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

(1) Master Hahnemann's first public protest against the uncertainty of medicine mixtures appeared in the year 1784 in his work: Directions for Curing Old Sores and Ulcers. Together with the struggle against phlebotomy, there was the campaign against medicine mixtures. In the early years of master's professional career he turned an open and resolute front to this evil.

(2) In 1796, in his article: Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs and Some Examination of the Previous Principles, master forwarded a very definite expression to the conviction that every medicine produces, its own pure effect, hence it must therefore be doctor's duty to know this effect. He said, "In this specification of the virtues of every individual drug the most wonderful thing to me is always his circumstance, that this method of artificially intermingling several medicines into one receipt, which is still debasing the medical practice of the present day".

(3) In 1797 master made a strong attack on mixtures of medicine in his

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article; Are the Obstacles to the Attainment of Simplicity and Certainty in Practical Medicine Insurmountable?

Master wrote: "The question now arises: is it good to mix various kinds of medicines in a prescription?" In Hahnemann's time, a prescription of the orthodox school generally contained four classes of components: (a) the basis—the effective or main medium; (b) the adjuvants—the supporting medium; (c) the constituents—the vehicle giving the necessary (liquid or solid) body to the whole; and (d) the corrigents—the complement added for certain auxiliary purposes of smell, taste, colour etc.

To this master ironically proposed to add dirigents. He added, "Imperiously I command that none of these ingredients shall dare to leave its appointed post in the human body! I command that the corrigents shall not fail to cloak over the vices of the base and shall gloss over and turn to advantage all the wickedness of the main remedy and the adjuvants. That this same corrigents should leave its place and take up on its own authority some post—it may be in opposition to the base—I must herewith *strongly forbid*".

Master added, "Who can tell us whether the adjuvants or the corrigents may not work as basis in the fourfold prescription, or whether the constituents may not give an entirely different turn to the whole composition? Does the chief remedy, if it is right one, need an auxiliary remedy?.....Do you seriously believe that the mixture will perform what you expect of all the ingredients, as if they were things which do not act reciprocally on one another, influence one another or not according to your desire?.....Two dynamic agencies together *can never effect* that which *individually* might."

Master said, "If the ideal is to raise medicine to a high standard, should we prescribe haths, clysters, venesections, blisters, fomentations, embrocations—all of these at the same time or shortly after one another? Can we hope by this means to effect cures and learn exactly in every case what the medicine has achieved so that it could be used again in similar cases with the same or even greater success?"

Hence master came into conclusion that, "I take it upon myself to avow that of two and two medicines put together, *no single one will exert its own peculiar effect on the human body*, but almost always an effect quite different from that of the two separately."

Master explicated the idea that simplicity was the physician's supreme law, and at the same time threw the *guntlet* to the whole art of prescribing of his times. From above articles this conclusion can be drawn that from the beginning of 1790 and onwards, master rejected every mixed prescription and prescribed only single remedies. Dr. Richard Haehl also came to the same inference in his book *Samuel Hahnemann, His Life and Works*.

(4) In 1805 in the article: Aesculapius in the Balance master wrote referring to the violent attacks made by apothecaries and chemists, displaying his own indignation at the state of the temporary therapy and at the vain efforts to improve it, set forth his counter demands: "Away with this exces-

sive mixing of medicines, this prescription tomfoolery! Down with the apothecarys' privilege! Let the doctor have freedom to make his own medicines and administer them to his patients!"

(5) In 1805 *The Medicine of Experience* was published, where master wrote: "The best results are always obtained by *one simple suitable remedy without any other addition*.....it is *never necessary to mix two together*."

(6) In 1808 master wrote in the article: *On the Value of the Speculative Systems of Medicine*, "One might have expected that in the cure of disease .....they would invariably have employed a single, simple medicine, and watched its effect.....according to the general rule binding on all; where a single remedy is efficacious, we should not use compound ones.....In direct opposition to plain common sense, they attack disease by complex mixtures of medicines, with none of which they are more than superficially acquainted and of these medicinal mixtures they often give several simultaneously and many in one day.....Even supposing the virtues of each medicinal substance were accurately known, yet the administration of these multifarious compounds, this haphazard administration of several substances, at one time, each of which must have a different action, would in itself be very absurd and only lead to a blind and confused practice.....But it is still worse, and more reprehensible (to prescribe very complex medicines) when we consider that all of diverse substances thus mixed together are each of individual great but uncertain efficacy.....This motley mixing system is nothing but a convenient makeshift for one who, having but a slender acquaintance with the properties of a single substance, flatters himself, though he cannot find any one simple suitable remedy to remove the complaint, that by combining a great many of these may be one amongst them by a happy chance shall hit the mark."

(7) In 1808 in the article: *On the Substitutes for Foreign Drugs*, master wrote: "Substitutes, which completely take the place of medicines, which do not act chemically but specifically, there are not, and there cannot be, as one medicine differs from another—and substitutes which partly and half and half take the place of others (if such were necessary) can only then be found when the properties of every single drug have been accurately and completely displayed before the eyes of the world, for a complete comparison."

(8) In 1810 the first edition of the *Organon* appeared. In its introduction master wrote: "For caries of bones Hecker used several mixtures of medicines with material success. Fortunately for him, quicksilver was contained in all these mixtures and it was the only one which could conquer this malady homoeopathically".

This passage gave rise to a violent dispute. In July, 1814 Prof. A. F. Hecker of Berlin hastened to reply in the *Annalender Gesammten Medizen*, vol. II where he placed the list of medicines which he had mixed for curing caries. The list explicit that Prof. Hecker had used five medicines at the same time, though he denied to accept that it was a medicinal mixture, as because

the conviction underlying was that "greater simplicity was impossible."

(9) In the *Organon of Medicine*, 5th edition, published in the year 1833, master wrote:

In Introduction: ".....the mixture in a prescription of various medicinal substance, whose real action was, almost without an exception, unknown and which, without any one exception invariably differed so much among each other.....One ingredient suspended wholly or partly the action of another, or communicated to it and to the others a mode of action and operation not anticipated nor conjecturable, so that it was *impossible* the expected effect could be obtained; there *frequently* occurred a *new, morbid derangement*, which, from the incomprehensible changes imparted to substances by their admixture, was not and could not have been foreseen, which escaped observation amid the tumultuous symptoms of the disease.....The mixture of several medicines, even if the effects of each single medicine on the human body were accurately known (—the prescription writer, however, often knows not the thousandth part of their effects—), the association in one prescription, of several such ingredients, I repeat, many of which are themselves of a very compound nature, and the peculiar action of anyone of which is as good as unknown, although in reality it always differs greatly from that of the others, and the administration of this incomprehensible mixture to the patient in large and frequently repeated doses, in order therewith to obtain some proposed, certain, curative effect, is a piece of folly repugnant to every reflecting and unprejudiced person."

In a footnote of his introduction master wrote: "The *absurdity* of medicinal mixture was perceived even by adherents of the old school of medicine, although they still continued to follow this slovenly plan in their own practice, contrary to their conviction."

In aphorism 54, in a footnote master wrote: "To fill the measure of self infatuation to overflowing here were mixed (very learnedly) constantly more, indeed *many different medicines* in so-called prescriptions to be administered in frequent and large doses and thereby the precious, easily destroyed human life was endangered in the hands of these perverted ones."

Aphorism 272 reads: "In no case is it requisite to administer more than one single simple medicinal substance at one time."

In its footnote master wrote: "Some homoeopaths have made the experiment, in cases where they deemed one remedy homoeopathically suitable for one portion of the symptoms of a case of disease, and a second for another portion, of administering both remedies at the same or almost at the same time; but I earnestly deprecate such a hazardous experiment, which can never be necessary, though it may sometimes seem to be of use."

The portion of the last sentence: "though it may sometimes seem to be of use" might be perplexing; but on critical scrutiny of masters' following aphorisms such perplexity will be removed:

In Aphorism 273 master wrote: "It is not conceivable how the slightest

dubiety could exist as to whether it was more consistent with nature and more rational to prescribe a single well-known medicine at one time in a disease, or a mixture of several differently acting drugs."

Aphorism 274 upheld the idea of monopharmacy in a more distinguished way: "As the true physician finds in simple medicines, administered singly and uncombined, all that he can possibly desire (artificial disease-forces which are able by homoeopathic power completely to overpower, extinguish, and permanently cure natural diseases), he will, mindful of the wise maxim that "it is wrong to attempt to employ complex means when simple means suffice," never think of giving as a remedy any but a single simple medicinal substance; for these reasons also, because even though the simple medicines were *thoroughly proved* with respect to their pure peculiar effects on the unimpaired healthy state of man, it is yet impossible to foresee how two and more medicinal substances might, when compounded, hinder and alter each other's actions on the human body; and because, on the other hand, a simple medicinal substance when used in diseases, the totality of whose symptoms is accurately known, renders efficient aid by itself alone, if it be homoeopathically selected; and supposing the worst case to happen, that it was not chosen in strict conformity to similarity of symptoms, and therefore does no good, it is yet so far useful that it promotes our knowledge of therapeutic agents, because, by the new symptoms excited by it in such a case, those symptoms which this medicinal substance had already shown in experiments on the healthy human body are confirmed an advantage that is lost by the employment of all compound remedies.

#### MASTER'S CONFRONTATION WITH DR. KARL JULIUS AEGIDI

At 86 years of age master prepared the sixth edition of the *Organon* after eighteen months of laborious work and in February, 1842 he informed his German publisher Mr. Schaub of Dusseldorf from Paris. But in June of the following year master died without the new edition having seen the light of the world. In 1865 the publication of sixth edition was announced by Dr. Arthur Lutze which contained arbitrary alterations, particularly Dr. Lutze interposed a section numbered as 274b dealing with the use of double remedies. Dr. Lutze supported his acceptance of this section on double remedies by reference to master's own letter, dated 15th June, 1833, written from Cothen to Dr. Karl Julius Aegidi. It was actually a reply to Aegidi, who sent the report of 233 cases of cures effected by double remedies.

Master wrote: "Do not think that I am capable of rejecting any good thing from mere prejudice, or because it might cause alteration in my doctrine. I only desire the truth, as I believe you do too. Hence I am delighted that such a happy idea has occurred to you, and that you have kept it within necessary limits; that two medicinal substances (in smallest dose or by olfaction) should be given together only in a case where both seem homoeopathically suitable to the case, but each from a different side. Under such circum-

stances the procedure is so consonant with requirements of our art that nothing can be urged against it; on the contrary, Homoeopathy must be congratulated on your discovery. I myself will take the first opportunity of putting it into practice, and I have no doubt concerning the good result. I am glad that von Boenninghausen is entirely of our opinion and acts accordingly. I think too, that both remedies should be given together; just as we take Sulphur and Calcareo together when we cause our patients to take or smell Hepar sulph, or Sulphur and Mercury when they take or smell Cinnabar. Permit me, then, to give your discovery to the world in the fifth edition of the *Organon* which will soon be published. Until then, however, I beg you to keep it to yourself, and try to get Mr. Jahr whom I greatly esteem to do the same. At the same time I here protest and earnestly warn against all abuse of the practice by a frivolous choice of two medicines to be used in combination."

Dr. Lutze continues: "After State Counsellor Dr. von Boenninghausen .....and our master himself had tested this practice, and found it good he (Hahnemann) wrote the following letter, the original of which I also possess, to Dr. Aegidi, dated 10th August, 1833: 'I have devoted a special paragraph in the fifth edition of the *Organon* to your discovery of the administration of double remedies. I sent the manuscript yesterday evening to Arnold and enjoined him to print it soon and put the steel engraving of my portrait as a frontispiece..... The race for priority is an anxious one. Thirty years ago I was weak enough to contend for it. But for a long time past my only wish is that the world should gain the best, the most useful truth, be it through me or others.....'"

Dr. Lutze added: "Through these words from the old man who has now passed on to greater enlightenment the foregoing paragraph was sanctioned. In the congress of homoeopathic medical men which took place soon afterwards, on the 10th of August, 1833, the master brought this new discovery before his disciples, but instead of willing listeners he encountered opposition. The narrow-mindedness and ignorance of these men went so far as to compare this true homoeopathic discovery to the polypharmacy of Allopathy, and they drew such a dismal picture to the hoary master of the harm he would do to his doctrine thereby, that he allowed himself to be persuaded to recall the paragraph he had already sent to the printer. An eager disciple of not the purest sort undertook to do this personally, and thus the world was for many years deprived of this important discovery."

Though again master on 9th January, 1834:, wrote: "In my opinion you have proceeded somewhat too speedily in the matter of administering double remedies" (addressing to Dr. Karl Julius Aegidi) "since you are generally an impulsive man. I cannot and will not prevent you from talking about it in public; I don't do it myself."

"You presuppose that imitators could easily find the correct similimum in such a case of illness not only for one part of the symptoms but also the other part and in such a way that they could always achieve good results."

Ah! if most homoeopaths could or would discover only *one* remedy, exactly suitable in accurate similarity to the characteristic symptoms, we would gladly excuse them the necessity of finding the nearest suitable one!.....

"For my part I find the discovery of the right remedy difficult and laborious in every case. Therefore I do not see how they would hit upon the first, to say nothing of the second twin remedy so easily!"

Though it was followed by a counter statement by Dr. Karl Julius Aegidi, in his letter dated 12th April, 1865, he stated, "I loudly and publicly made known my disapproval of the administration of double remedies, as an abuse and a mischievous proceeding".

Hence in such consequence Dr. Lutze's *Organon* was annulled and Hahnemann's original 6th edition does not contain even the slightest support of Dr. Arthur Lutze's assertion. On the contrary the use of double remedies is expressly rejected as unpermissible at the close of aphorism 273 in the 6th edition.

Dr. Clemens Maria Franz von Boenninghausen wrote to Dr. Caroll Dunhum of the U.S.A. on 25th March 1865 that: "It is true during the years 1832 and 1833, at the instance of Dr. Aegidi, I made some experiments with combined remedies, that the results were sometimes surprising, and that I spoke of the circumstance to Hahnemann, who, after some experiments made by himself had entertained for a while the idea of alluding to the matter in the fifth edition of the *Organon*, which he was preparing in 1833. But this novelty appeared too dangerous for the new method of cure, and it was I who induced Hahnemann to express his disapproval of it in the fifth edition of *Organon* in a note to paragraph 272. Since this period neither Hahnemann nor myself have made further use of these combined remedies. Dr. Aegidi was not long in abandoning this method, which resembles too closely the procedures of Allopathy, opening the way to a falling away from the precious law of simplicity, a method too, which is becoming everyday more entirely superfluous owing to the increasing wealth of our remedies."

#### MATTER OF PERPLEXITY

The question of second prescription, complementary remedies, etc., might have caused perplexion in reference to polypharmacy but this should critically be judged.

(1) Our immortal Hahnemann wrote to Madame Bagdasar on 20th February, 1834, from Paris, that: "The general rule in the treatment of patients, is to allow one single minute dose of a remedy conscientiously chosen, to take effect until it ceases to act beneficially by lessening the ailment without interruption, in chronic diseases for two or three weeks, and even several months, while one single dose of the right remedy frequently cures an acute disease. But the majority of diseases require a succession of different remedies so as to be cured homoeopathically, as after the effect of the previous medicine has been exhausted the real homoeopath generally finds

some symptoms still which do not correspond to the same remedy. It is consequently not desirable to repeat the previous medicine although later on, it may again be indicated, when two, three, or perhaps four other remedies have been given."

(2) Master's following letter might have apparently caused confusion, but on critical analysis such confusion disappears.

Master wrote to Boenninghausen on 17th June, 1833: "I too have made a beginning with smelling two suitably combined remedies, and hope to have some good results. I have also dedicated a special paragraph in the fifth edition of the *Organon* to this method, and in this way introduced it to the world .....(X on 15th September, 1833).....I was told a short time ago that it had become known to Hufeland (probably through the printer) from my manuscript of the fifth edition of the *Organon*, that I have taken up treating with two medicines, and he is already rejoicing at the fact that Homoeopathy will have to return at last into the bosom of the only saving church, and would again have to join the old science. As it is never, as we know, absolutely necessary (although at times advantageous) to prescribe for the patient a double remedy, and the advantage gained from the exposition of this sometimes useful method, is, as I see, greatly overbalanced by the disadvantage which would certainly arise from a misinterpretation by the allopaths and allo-homoeopaths, I have, with your approval I feel sure, had the manuscript sent back, to me, and have put everything back integram, and also added a reprimand against such a proceeding, so that the orthodox pope of the old school will be considerably upset when he sees in the *Organon* a publication which will make his rejoicing melt away. I know you approve of my action."

On October 16th, 1833, master wrote: "Your eloquence would have easily persuaded me, if I had been in your position, that is if I had been as much convinced as you are from a large experience of the possibility and even great utility of giving double remedies. But from many attempts of this kind only one or two have been successful, which is insufficient for the incontrovertible establishment of a new rule. I was therefore, too inexperienced in this practice to support it with full conviction. Consequently it required only a slight momentum to induce me to alter that passage in the new *Organon*, which results in this, that I concede the possibility that two well-chosen remedies may be given together with advantage in some cases but that this seems to be a very difficult and doubtful method. And in this way I believe I have done justice to truth on the one side and to my inner conviction on the other. I should be sorry if in that way I have receded too much from your wishes."

On September 18th, 1836, master wrote to Dr. Boenninghausen: "Is it true what Dr. Foissac tells me, that you have written to him and said that you now give two remedies together to your patients with much success? Has not even Aegidi, after much reflection, abandoned such an abominable heresy which gives the death blow to true Homoeopathy, and throws it back to blind Allopathy?"



(3) In *Chronic Diseases* master said, "If the patient at the same time effected with another chronic ailment, as is usual after the violent treatment of figwarts by allopathic physicians, then we often find developed psora complicated with sycosis, when the psora, as is often the case was latent before the patient. At times, when a badly treated case of venereal chancre disease had preceded, both these miasmata are conjoined in a threefold complication with syphilis. Then it is necessary first to come to the assistance of the most afflicted part, the psora, with the specific anti-psoric remedies given below, and then to make use of the remedies of sycosis, before the proper dose of best preparation of mercury, as will be described below is given against the syphilis; the same alternating treatment may be continued until a complete cure is effected. Only, each one of these three kinds of medicine must be given the proper time to complete its action."

Here the last line of master definitely extinguishes all confusion and perplexities.

#### DESERTION OF POLYPHARMACY BY MASTER

So long I have presented different views of several stalwarts of our fraternity regarding the problem monopharmacy or polypharmacy? Here a conclusion should be arrived at. Hence with this view if we critically scrutinize the foregoing portion of this article, it will be clearly revealed that our immortal, imperishable master Samuel Hahnemann has strictly condemned and disavowed the vain idea of adaptation of polypharmacy in his doctrine.

Any type of misinterpretation of this ideology will be a deathblow to our divine doctrine, so true homoeopaths are to follow master Hahnemann and his monopharmacy.

(1) Master wrote in a footnote to Introduction in the *Organon* which supports his view of desertion of polypharmacy.

On such mixed prescription master asserted that, "We can never obtain from its action a pure experience of the individual efficacy of any single ingredient of which it is composed. In fact, our knowledge of what is essential to be known respecting all our remedies, as also respecting the perhaps hundredfold relationship among each other into which they enter when combined, is far too little to be relied upon to enable us to tell with certainty the degree and extent of the action of a substance, seemingly ever so unimportant, when introduced into the human body in combination with other substances".

(2) Master inveighed against the manifold compounded medicines and against the prescription of multi-mixtures. Master wrote, "most of the virtues really attached to the simple medicines."

(3) Master critically emphasized that "The human mind can hardly ever determine accurately the causes resulting from two simultaneous forces acting on one object. How can medicine obtain a higher degree of certainty, when the doctor seems intent only on allowing a number of miscellaneous forces to be exerted at the same time on a pathological state—the former of

which he understands neither individually nor together, and the latter often very vaguely?" Master said that "Nature likes simplicity and can perform much with one remedy, imitate nature!"

The fact that master had developed the expositions of these postulations on medicine mixtures was an open and logical confession of his own conviction.

(4) On the question of double remedies, to which Dr. Aegidi gave the impulse, master Hahnemann returned after some vacillation to pure homoeopathic principles and these he upheld with remarkable keenness to his friend, Dr. Clemens Maria Franz von Boenninghausen who had been at first won over to the cause of double remedies.

In the year 1833 master, for the first time had come to agree with Dr. Karl Julius Aegidi that "two suitable remedies might have good results, if smelled together". It was his purpose, in fact, after proving this method of administration to devote a whole section to it, in the fifth edition of the *Organon*. But in September and October, 1833, master had already retreated from this "very difficult and serious danger" although he was still willing to admit the possibility that two carefully selected and different remedies might be used "with advantage in individual cases."

Three years later, in September, 1836, master had almost blamed Dr. Boenninghausen for the "dangerous heresy and mixture-mongering," which is dealing the death-blow to pure Homoeopathy and converting it to blind Allopathy."

This remonstrance had the desired effect on Dr. Boenninghausen just as Dr. Karl Julius Aegidi had shortly before "abandoned downright heresy again."

This interlude of double remedies clearly emphasizes two things:

(1) On the one hand, it shows that master Hahnemann was continually seeking out new paths and improvements for his process of healing.

(2) On the other hand, it shows that he never stuck to his own opinions and views refusing to be taught, but was ready to leave them and alter them if some better idea was taught to him, as all great men of all times did.

Hence master said, "May I be allowed to confess that for several years I have never prescribed more than one medicine at a time, and I have never repeated the dose until the effect of the previous one had been exhausted".

Thus, it is clear that pure Homoeopathy has got relation only with monopharmacy and strictly deserts the ideology of polypharmacy.

May today's homoeopaths follow this eternal truth.

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