**STAPHISAGRIA:** Dermatological features and miasmatic considerations*

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Z.T. Miller reported the following case in the 24th annual meeting of the Homeopathic Medical Society, in 1889:

“A man with *Pediculus pubis* used an ointment with mercury until an eczema appeared, affecting the scrotum, penis, thighs and abdomen up to the navel. The rash was fiery red, prominent and vesiculous. The vesicles contained an opaque fluid. The size of the vesicles was approximately a millet grain. The itch was violent, intensely smarting, with contusive pain after scratching, and live bugs were still present. A lotion with *Calendula* had no effect. This was the moment when tincture of *Staphisagria* was locally applied, which made the patient “jump one meter high”. “For some minutes, it pained as hell”, then, it completely vanished, all together, rash, itch and the parasites, to the patient’s relief. The fact that *Staphisagria* kills parasites is known by everybody, but its power to heal so fast a mercurial eczema is not as generally known.”

In time, the primary, almost phytotherapeutic, indication was forgotten, although the use of tincture of *Staphisagria* locally in cases of pediculosus or scabiosis was known from centuries:

“As an agent which exterminates the parasites, this seed was called *phtheirococcon* by the Greeks, and it is still today an ingredient of an officinal ointment (*unguentum pediculosum*). This last is the only use now known to orthodox medicine [...]. An application of a dilution of the tincture of the strength of one part to four of water will destroy the parasites, though the state which favours their presence needs internal treatment (probably with a dilution of the same remedy) at the same time.”


“I brought it in order for us to have a more exact idea on the power of this amazing remedy, homeopathically discovered by Hahnemann himself, who performed its first proving. In relation to this remedy, Hahnemann enunciated an important principle related to the substances in which virtues as homeopathic remedies are to be expected: it is precisely the most powerful remedies, employed in the smallest doses, that we have to look to find the largest curative virtues in diseases among the most severe, which have that particular character that indicates it. Due to this unavoidable argument, that I anticipated a curative action of *Staphisagria* in some particular diseases and this was the reason that later led me to attentive experiments in healthy subjects. In this way, there were revealed curative virtues of infinitely much higher value than the mere power to kill parasites, virtues for which a homeopathic practitioner may employ it with wonderful...
effects in rare morbid states, for which there does not exist any other remedy but this one.”

Historically, the first uses of the remedy were diverse skin eruptions, genito-urinary, ocular and articular symptoms. These are the systems for which *Staphisagria* presents a true tropism and must always be kept in mind when this remedy is considered.

More recently, the image of *Staphisagria* has been associated to keywords, all coming from the psychological domain, to reach a kind of caricature personality, “a soft person, psychically repressed by the husband or those around, unable to express her feelings or forced to repress them...” This kind of portraits, useful from a didactic standpoint, reflect only partially and mutilatedly the homeopathic reality of a remedy, which consists in the totality of symptoms it can elicit and cure. Each and all of the remedies has a bipolar action, and almost all may present contradictory traits. I believe that it is important to precise the clinical logic and to feel the tensions, motions, the apparent contradictions and the mode to solve them proper to each remedy, which we will find again in the internal tensions and motions of the patients. Every disease is an epiphenomenon, a mode to solve a dysfunction, internal or relating to the external world; in homeopathy, we find a model to solve it, because in this model – which necessarily subsumes all the symptoms of the patient – it is found the miracle of the remedy which certainly will be curative, according to the possibilities of each particular organism. Thus, besides the “soft *Staphisagria*” an “angry *Staphisagria*” exists, red or pale from anger, throwing and breaking objects, and a male remedy, for depressive men threatening to kill themselves with a gun, as well as for children whose teeth are destroyed upon appearing.

Even if the initial suspicion arises from some mental symptoms, the confirmation may be wonderfully effected through the physical signs. It is not to think of some diseases but of particular traits, such as “*Staphisagria* skin” or “*Staphisagria* eyes” in order to confirm the choice of the remedy in a few seconds. In any situation, the skin is always present and may be of immense help to define a remedy. *Staphisagria* is one of the remedies that almost always is manifested in the skin in a way or another.

**Suppression**   -   **Expression**

Besides a physical tropism for a certain organ or system (eyes, skin, genito-urinary in this case), many remedies present a true situational tropism, e.g. mourning in *Ignatia*, boss-stress in *Nux vomica*. At all levels, both psychological and physical, and more especially, in the skin, it exists in *Staphisagria* a basic polarity expressed in the binomium suppression – expression.

At the psychological level, suppression is due to repressed emotions: anger – caused by the rudeness of those around or by abstention, a kind of ascetic (self-imposed, mortification) without any cause. What it must be stressed in the case of this remedy is that the suppressive events act at the causal level: they are the cause that determines the apparition of disease and disturbs. Thus, it will be found in rubrics such as “ailments
from…”, which may be identified in the anamnesis through sentences like “Since…, I was never well again”.

MIND - AILMENTS FROM - rudeness of others
MIND - AILMENTS FROM – mortification
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - mortification - indignation; with
MIND - AILMENTS FROM – indigation
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - excitement – emotional
MIND - AILMENTS FROM – disappointment
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - death of loved ones
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger – suppressed
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger - silent grief; with
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger - indigation; with
MIND - AILMENTS FROM – anger
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - abused; after being – sexually

However, the theme of “suppression” is much more extensive in *Staphisagria*, and might be referred to any suppression, even (or, especially) at the physical level. The first observations on this important trait, a true theme of the remedy, were offered in dermatology. At the time abuse was made of mercurial and sulphuric ointments to suppress almost any skin eruption, *Staphisagria* was one of the first remedies able to cure internal ailments subsequent to the suppression of skin diseases or the abuse of allopathic remedies. Thus, it is one of the most important remedies in the historical rubrics related to the abuse of mercury, and it can be found in at least 12 rubrics referred to very different domains of pathology associated with that metal:

MIND - SADNESS - mercury, after abuse of
HEAD - PAIN - mercury, from
EAR - PAIN - mercury, abuse of
HEARING - IMPAIRED - mercury, abuse of
MOUTH - INFLAMMATION - Tongue - mercury, after abuse of
MOUTH - MERCURIAL affections of gums
TEETH - PAIN - mercury, from
RECTUM - DIARRHEA - mercury, after abuse of
SKIN - ERUPTIONS - scabies - suppressed - mercury and sulphur; by
SKIN - WARTS - mercury; after abuse of
GENERALS - MERCURY, abuse of
GENERALS - PARALYSIS - toxic – mercurial

Although they seem dated, these indications may still be important if we remember the ailments that appear in the patients after suppressive conventional treatments. Here, especially in the case of ailments which appear after a dermatological suppressive treatment, *Staphisagria* is an essential remedy, as much as *Nux vomica*. I have extracted from the repertory *Synthesis* 8 the rubrics where the notion of suppression appears in *Staphisagria*. They illustrate very accurately the fact that in this remedy, suppression is a very important trait, from the mental connotations (suppressed anger, suppressed emotions, sexual desire) to suppressed diseases (particularly, gonorrhea, and sexually transmitted diseases in general).

On the other hand, this motion can be understood in two ways:
- On the one hand, suppressing psychological factors (repressed anger or desires, abstinence, repression of the use of the left hand in the left-handed) may lead to physical symptoms, especially amenorrhea, but also psoriasis, urinary or genital infections or falling of the hair. In modern terms, *Staphisagria* somatizes repressed psychological sufferings.

- On the other, the suppression of physical symptoms (gonorrhea, skin eruptions, scabiosis, condilomata or warts, and even the suppression of perspiration) may elicit a symptomatic picture indicative of *Staphisagria*, albeit in the mental level (e.g., sadness on suppression of menses). This is the inverse situation: the suppression of physical symptoms leads to psychological ailments.

MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger – suppressed
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - writing left-handed; suppression of
MIND - ANXIETY - sexual desire; from suppressed
MIND - EMOTIONS – suppressed
MIND - SADNESS - menses – suppressed
HEAD - HAIR - falling - spots, in - emotions; after suppressed
PROSTATE GLAND - INFLAMMATION - gonorrhea; from suppressed
MALE GENITALIA/SEX - PAIN - Testes - gonorrhea; after suppressed
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - MENSES – suppressed
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - MENSES - suppressed - anger, from
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - MENSES - suppressed - anger, from - indignation; with
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - MENSES - suppressed - mortification; from
SKIN - ERUPTIONS - psoriasis - emotions; after grief or suppressed
SKIN - ERUPTIONS - scabies - suppressed - mercury and sulphur; by
SKIN - ERUPTIONS – suppressed
SKIN - EXCRESCENCES - condylomata – suppressed
SKIN - WARTS – suppressed
GENERALS - GONORRHEA, suppressed
GENERALS - PERSPIRATION - suppression of perspiration; complaints from
GENERALS - SEXUAL DESIRE - suppression of sexual desire - agg.

Phenomena happen as if the repressed and accumulated energy inside, caused by the (mental or iatrogenic) suppression, would be seeking for a place of expression, yet the latter happens in a deranged way, through a “detour”, symptoms of diverse ailments which do not improve without the remedy. *Staphisagria* is one of the most mobile remedies among the levels of our structure, it goes from the physical to the psychological, converting energy between suppression-expression as if its aim would be to show that the mind-body dichotomy is fictitious, and we have is to deal with a single continuum, the individual in his/her totality.

An attentive observation of the behavior of a patient requiring Staphisagria shows in all of them this kind of internal motion; and in this context, there is a invaluable small skin symptom which I had the privilege to see tens of times. It is a discontinual eritema, as a geographical map, where the eritematous areas alternate with pale ones, the delimitation between both being well-defined, but without adopting a specific configuration. The skin appears sprinkled as if a “map”. It generally appears on the throat, but it can extend to the face, chest and back. It increases visibly when the dialogue with the patient reaches sensitive points, usually, precisely the subject of the suppression, humiliation, indignation, unhappiness. The psychological agitation elicited by questions such as “How
was your childhood?”, “How is your relationship with your husband?” or “How is it in your work-place?” is immediately manifested, including the apparition of that little redness, surprisingly alternating with pale areas, on the throat and, at times, associated to the imminent apparition of tears in the eyes. This is an essential moment in the consultation of a patient requiring *Staphisagria*, because it is highly probable that he/she will start to reveal the true causes of his/her suffering. This is a moment of emotional catharsis, a moment of expression, extremely necessary in this so sensitive remedy. The mental state, as well as the physical, manifests the highest sensitiveness, “the least word that seems wrong, hurts her very much […] The touchiness may take the form of sudden, violent outbreaks provoked by mere trivial causes.” (Clarke)

The sign mentioned above does not appear exclusively in an emotional context: in individuals where this remedy is deeply “rooted” – at times, after years of suffering – the discontinual eritema becomes permanent and may be found during the physical examination. If present, *Staphisagria* has to be considered in the differential diagnosis. When symptoms are sufficient to indicate the prescription of *Staphisagria*, it may become an important element for confirmation. However, its presence in any case does not automatically and forcefully indicates *Staphisagria* as the present remedy. It may represent the vestige of an earlier time when *Staphisagria* could have been useful.

Upon a closer look with a magnifying glass, it can be seen that it is a visibly vascular phenomenon, however, what has to be remarked is the alternance of vasodilatation and vasoconstriction in extremely close areas (Fig.1). It usually appears on the chest and the throat, extending to the face, and eventually to the back. (Fig.2) It looks as if the “congestive” force that determines the eritematous rash (as e.g., in *Belladona, Sanguinaria* or *Pulsatilla*) was opposed by a “pallor force”, and both were disputing the territory, with no decision on who is winning. This rash is half-expressed, half-suppressed: the basic model of suppression-expression characteristic of the remedy.

**Staphisagria as an anti-psoric remedy**

Itch was one of the first, and the most constant, symptom which appeared in the provings, and one of the most constant in clinical practice. Hahnemann counted *Staphisagria* among the anti-psoric remedies. The itch may be associated or not to eruptive elements (maculae or papulae, more rarely pustules) and compells to scratch, which tends to aggravate rather than to relieve the itch. Another important characteristic is that, after scratching, the itch moves to another place. “Badly it has vanished, that it reappears in another place”, tells the patient. Although the eruptions may appear anywhere, *Staphisagria* shows tropism for the scalp, face, throat and chest.

The scalp is one of the most frequent localizations, where it may appear:
- corrosive itch (leaving scratch lesions) on the occiput
- occipital corrosive itch with dull pain, which returns at the same place at the same time
- itch in the hairy part, as a stinging, with scratching lesions and papular eruptions towards the forehead
- hair falls copiously

One of the most characteristic lesions of *Staphisagria* is:
- eczematous eruption, which is usually dry at the beginning, with thick crusts and itch which changes of place. In children, at times, wet eruption with yellow crust, extremely smelling, which extends behind the ears. For this reason it is indicated in milky crust and also in the itching seborrheic dermatitis of the adult.

On the face:
- Eruption of small pimples on the forehead, also redness next to the eye angles, itching and stinging, painful upon touching.
- Eruption of of small pimples, itch ameliorates by scratching, but it returns as a stinging.

In the eyes, we may find a series of evidently psoric symptoms:
- Itching on the lower and upper lids, especially on the edges. Itch may appear associated or not to ocular ailments.

*Staphisagria* is one of the main remedies for overexertion of the sight at a computer screen. A conjunctivitis is not mandatory: a mere redness of the eyes associated to itching after spending some time at the computer may be enough to suggest the prescription of *Staphisagria* 6D diluted in half in normal saline as a colirium. There are three good reasons for such a prescription:
1. The strict localization of symptoms elicited by an evident cause.
2. The tropism of the remedy for the conjunctive and lids.
3. The possibility of considering “looking at a screen” as a suppression of the normal use of sight. Instead of looking at the real world, with all its diversity, the fixation of the sight on a screen is a reduction, a suppression of the visual perception and implies the radiant effect of the screen, which leads to irritation and itch.

- dull pain in the eyeballs, preceding and associated to inflammation (blefarconjunctivitis).
- congestive, red eyes, as if “having cried” for many days.
- Agglutination of the lids in the morning.

**EYE - INFLAMMATION – Lids**
**EYE - ITCHING - Lids – Margin**

On the body, especially on the chest and back, but eventually also on the extremities, may appear the same eruption of small pimples, itching, especially after states of irritation or distress. *Staphisagria* is one of the main remedies for miliar eruptions, with the aspect of a rash, and intense itch in the night. (Fig.3)

**SKIN - ERUPTIONS – itching**
**SKIN - ERUPTIONS - itching – evening**
**SKIN - ERUPTIONS - pimples - close together**
**SKIN - ERUPTIONS - pimples – itching**
**CHEST - ERUPTIONS - Mammae – miliary**
**CHEST - ERUPTIONS - Mammae - itching - heat, from**
CHEST - ERUPTIONS - Mammae – itching
CHEST - ERUPTIONS - rash – red
CHEST - ERUPTIONS - rash – itching
CHEST - ERUPTIONS – rash
CHEST - ERUPTIONS - pimples – burning
CHEST - ERUPTIONS – pimples

Also, on the body, may appear eritematous eruptions, with the aspect of a geographical map, extremely itching.

The skin of *Staphisagria* tends to be dry, with fine scaling; one of its symptoms is the impossibility to perspire.

R. Morrison considers it the most important remedy in two conditions:
- psoriasis in children
- psoriasis which appears after stress and suppressed emotions.

All the symptoms above (itch, scratching and scratching lesions) reflect the psoric tendency of *Staphisagria*.

**Staphisagria as an anti-sycotic remedy**

On the other hand, *Staphisagria* has proved to be an important anti-sycotic remedy, manifesting this tendency through many benign skin formations, like warts and all kinds of excrescences, condilomata, papilomata, polyps. In the symptomatology of the remedy, symptoms referred to the sycotic element are well represented, especially pedunculate warts, sensitive to touch. In the rubrics below it can be seen once again the genital and cutaneous tropism of the remedy.

**GENERALS – SYCOSIS**
**SKIN – WARTS**
SKIN - WARTS - bleeding; - dry ;- filiform;- indented; - inflamed; - jagged; - mercury; after abuse of ; moist; - pedunculated; - sensitive to touch; - stinging; - suppressed
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - CONDYLOMATA – Vagina
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - CONDYLOMATA – sensitive
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX – CONDYLOMATA
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX – EXCRESCENCES
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - POLYPUS – Vagina
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - POLYPUS – Uterus
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - TUMORS - Ovaries – fibroids
CHEST - PHTHISIS pulmonalis – sycotic

It is noteworthy that a repertory analysis of these symptoms indicates *Thuja* and *Nitric acid*, the well-known anti-sycotic remedies, with a significance similar to *Staphisagria’s*. The most characteristic trait of the latter is its extreme sensitiveness to neoformations. Recently, *Staphisagria* became more frequently indicated in women, due to the increased number of hysterctomies performed. Hysterectomy accentuates sycotic tendencies
(already existent, which is the reason that determines the apparition of fibromata) by suppressing the primary manifestations.

The sycotic tendency can be also seen in the eyes, through the presence of chalazions and other tumors, polyps, noduli and indurations.

**EYE – STYES**
- induration from EYE - TUMORS - Lids - Meibomian glands – cysts
- EYE - TUMORS - Lids - nodules in the lids
- EYE - TUMORS - Conjunctiva – polypus
- EYE - TUMORS - Lids - nodules in the lids – Margins
- EYE - TUMORS - Lids - Meibomian glands

**Staphisagria as an anti-syphilitic remedy**

The main manifestations of this tendency at the skin level are ulcers, which cover 69 rubrics in the repertory *Synthesis 8*, from which 23 are of the 2nd and 3rd degrees. The most important characteristic of the ulcers of *Staphisagria* is the fact that they are congestive, surrounded by a red areola which itches at times, painful, with a fetid secretion.

**SKIN - ULCERS**
- discharges – offensive
- painful - gnawing pain; with
- Areola – red

This is the context for the symptoms described above, related to the abuse of mercury, but also of other symptoms, such as warts and iritis.

**SKIN - WARTS** – syphilitic
**EYE - INFLAMMATION** - Iris - syphilitic - bursting pain in eyeball, temple and side of face

Similarly, genital formations may be present as ulcers, following syphilis, or other ulcerative genital ailments.

**FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX – ULCERS**
**MALE GENITALIA/SEX - ULCERS** - Penis – Prepuce
- Penis - lardaceous base
- Penis - mercurio-syphilitic
- Penis – chancres
- Penis – bleeding

The repertory rubrics do not represent accurately the destructive, severe and disseminated character of these lesions, which may affect all mucosae (mouth, pharynx, nose, lips), as well as producing serpiginous ulcers on the face and nasal septum.

**GENERALS - PAIN** - ulcerative – Externally
**GENERALS - FISTULAE** - Skin; with ulcers of
**EXTREMITIES - ULCERS** - Leg – painful
This is also the context for the premature destruction of the teeth, right from their apparition, in children.

TEETH - CARIES, decayed, hollow - children; premature in
TEETH - CARIES, decayed, hollow

**Staphisagria as an anti-cancerinic remedy**

There are three kinds of symptoms that reflect this miasmatic tendency:

1- Symptoms that betray proper cancerous pathology, both in general (schirrus, carcinomatous lupus) and in the privileged localizations of the remedy (face, genito-urinary system, skin).

FACE - CANCER – lupus
STOMACH – CANCER
BLADDER – CANCER
PROSTATE GLAND – CANCER
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - CANCER of – Uterus
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - CANCER of - Uterus – scirrhous
SKIN - ULCERS – cancerous
GENERALS - CANCEROUS affections - lupus; carcinomatous
GENERALS - CANCEROUS affections – scirrhous

2- Symptoms that may have cancerous connotations or that, from a homeopathic standpoint, belong to cancerinism (genital polyps, indurations, hard lymph-nodes and nodules).

EYE - STYES - induration from
FACE - INDURATIONS - Jaws - lower, periosteal
FACE - INDURATIONS - Submental gland
THROAT - INDURATION - Tonsils; of
EXTERNAL THROAT - INDURATION of glands
PROSTATE GLAND - INDURATION – chronic
MALE GENITALIA/SEX - INDURATION – Testes
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - INDURATION – Ovaries
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - INDURATION – Uterus
FEMALE GENITALIA/SEX - INDURATION - Uterus – Cervix
SKIN - INDURATIONS, nodules, etc.
GENERALS – INDURATIONS
3- General and mental symptoms in common with Carcinosinum, the number of which is 509. From these, the ones of higher degree are:

- a history of humiliation and punishment, and long domination:

MIND - AILMENTS FROM – domination
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - domination - children; in
MIND - AILMENTS FROM – punishment

- a history of sexual abuse:

MIND - AILMENTS FROM - abused; after being - sexually - children; in
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - abused; after being – sexually

- ailments after suppressed emotions:

MIND - AILMENTS FROM – indignation
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - honor; wounded
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger – suppressed
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger - silent grief; with
MIND - AILMENTS FROM - anger - indignation; with

- suicidal tendence:

MIND - ANXIETY - suicidal disposition, with
MIND - SUICIDAL disposition
MIND - SADNESS - suicidal disposition, with
MIND - DEATH – desires

- anxious, terrible dreams, nightmares, where crimes happen:

DREAMS – FRIGHTFUL
DREAMS – MISFORTUNE
DREAMS – MURDER
DREAMS – ANXIOUS

**Staphisagria: a polycrest which is (also) manifested on the skin**

In the description above I tried to follow an idea that appears in full evidence:

1- *Staphisagria* is a polycrest, covering all diatheses.

2- The deep miasmatic tendencies may be expressed and recognized in the skin pathology: from the psoric symptoms (eritema, itch, irritability and sensitiveness), to the sycotic (warts, papilomata, condilomata), to the syphilitic (ulcers, indurations) to the cancerinic.
A multisequential analysis of the symptoms, employing the Herscu modul of Radar 8, shows that side by side with *Staphisagria* appear all the main nosodes (*Psorinum, Medorrhynum, Syphillinum, Carcinosinum*) in the considered sequences.

As an example of the miasmatic progression of the symptoms, the ocular ones may be illustrative:

*From the inflammation and itch of the lids - Psora*

EYE - INFLAMMATION – Lids  
EYE - ITCHING - Lids – Margin

*To the chalazions and cysts - Sycosis*

EYE – STYES  
EYE - TUMORS - Lids – cystic

*To the ulcers – Syphillis*

EYE - ULCERATION - Lids – Margins

*To tumors with eventual cancerinic signification*

EYE - TUMORS - Lids - Meibomian glands  
EYE - TUMORS - Conjunctiva – polypus  
EYE - TUMORS - Lids - tarsal tumors  
EYE - TUMORS - Lids - nodules in the lids

All these different kinds of lesions may coexist (as it happens often) in a same patient; their simultaneous presence might be an index suggesting the remedy.

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