

Dott. Massimo Mangialavori

### Case of Anhalonium lewinii

Giuseppe is a 35 year old Post Office worker. He comes across as an obsequious and easily-embarrassed man, who sweats visibly, especially at the beginning of the consultation. His heavy glasses, with their thick black frames and strong lenses emphasise this almost grotesque appearance of his eyes, which seem framed in a look that is lost and distant and filtered through these lenses.

Giuseppe moves awkwardly, really seeming to lack harmony in his movements. He almost gives me the impression of exaggerating his difficulty in being coordinated. He stumbles as he comes into my office, knocks over the knickknacks on my desk while he talks, is constantly restless and moves his head and eyes forwards and backwards, as though to find a better focus.

He begins:

'I've always been a very anxious person. I started to be afraid of people after quarrelling with my boss in the office, he was a friend from the union.

I felt as though people were giving me nasty looks. Everything started three years ago when they started to look at me strangely.

I felt... I still feel a sense of anguish and a feeling of constriction here [he points to his chest].'

I ask him to explain:

'Something pressing outwards... I feel like I come into contact with the aura of anyone standing near me... It feels like there's an electric current in the side of my head next to them.

I feel as though just my presence brings misfortune to people, and the tenser I am the more I get very destructive thoughts.'

I ask him to continue:

'Aggressive feelings towards anyone in the vicinity.

I feel as though people can read my thoughts... They look at me with fear and that makes me feel even more tense. I listen to relaxation tapes in order to relax.'

I ask why he has to use these tapes:

'I've already tried psychotherapy, but I don't earn enough money to be able to afford it... And the sessions didn't have the slightest effect on me: All I did was talk. But I didn't feel as though the psychotherapist understood me. We also tried relaxation exercises... I managed to do them, but I often fell asleep.'

After a long pause he adds:

'I feel... like other people can contact me mentally, like two auras that meet. I see them looking at me critically... Perhaps because they can feel my aggression.'

Did I tell you that I have thoughts about killing?

Giuseppe doesn't seem distressed to tell me these things; instead he almost seems to be searching for a concept strong enough to ensure that he will be taken seriously.

I ask him to continue:

'I feel as though they can look right through me... As though I was made of something that you can pass through... As if... my body was immaterial... I feel hurt by this feeling and by these looks, because they make me think, *what am I made of what...?*

Something you can and you cannot see... Something that could be like water or the air... But inside me there's a world of colours that I can see and feel.

I often ask myself whether I live in a world of *colour-blind people...*

After a long pause he continues:

'I also felt that other people could sneak into my mind... as though it was open...'

I tell him that I would like to go back to the thoughts of killing:

'In those moments I feel as though I could do anything... If other people obliterated me, then the only thing I can do is obliterate too... I only ever think about doing it of course, but it frightens me.'

After another pause he seems to want to compose himself, and then he tells me, in all seriousness:

‘The real reason why I came here is that my colon is very irritable: I get diarrhoea from the slightest draught or current of air, or if it’s at all humid.

I get shooting pains that stop me from walking, from the inside of my bottom to the lower part of my balls. It’s as though my pains are trying to get out.

When I was little I used to get stomach aches, it was a pressing pain as though something wanted to get out. The doctor always used to say that it was appendicitis... They even operated on me, even though I used to get the pains on the left hand side. I carried on feeling them there even after the operation.

I have had diarrhoea constantly since I was twenty.

It’s my usual symptom and it comes on with the slightest change to the environment in which I am. I’m terribly sensitive to the cold and when I catch a cold it even makes my balls itch.’

I ask Giuseppe if there is anything he feels like doing when he gets these problems:

‘When I feel tense I escape by looking at nature... The trees feel as though they are alive, I love nature. I like green because it’s a relaxing colour.’

I ask him if he remembers any dreams:

‘I often used to dream of being a Jew being chased by the Nazis... I’ve had the dream for years... But it wasn’t a war, just a manhunt... And in the dream it was strange, because they spotted me suddenly in a crowd, as though I was a different coloured flower in a grey field...

But even in the dream I could see their auras, and that’s how I realised that they were getting closer. I was starting to get interference from their auras.’

I ask him what he feels when he wakes up:

‘Like I feel now... I still get that dream, and I feel bad... My stomach hurts and my whole abdomen feels tense.’

I ask him what food he likes:

'I love lemons, they're my favourite food: I've eaten loads of them all my life... The look at me a bit strange in the bar, because I order tonic water so as not to just as for the slice of lemon, which I always eat.'

I ask him more about his relationship with the cold:

'I've always been terribly chilly... All it takes is the slightest draught and... I feel and I get diarrhoea... And if I feel chilly then even standing right by the fireplac can't warm me up.

Even if I press my back against the radiator... what I really need is a great bi *vaginator* to warm me up... Human warmth is more complete, but – no such luck. That's another big problem I have, but I don't want to talk about it. I've been talkin about it for years and it's pointless.'

I ask Giuseppe if he wants to tell me anything about his family:

'I'd rather not talk about my family... I talked about them for years with th psychologist and it was useless... Please don't ask me anything else about that...'

I am struck by how much Giuseppe told me about his sensation of feeling othe people's auras, and the interference he gets from them. At the time I hadn't ha much experience with *Nabalus serpentaria*, and all I remembered was that th remedy was known for this symptom, and had also been used for a similar kind c diarrhoea. Moreover, Clarke reports as important symptoms in the remedy a desir for lemons, and the chilliness, so clearly expressed by the patient.

*Nabalus* is a remedy with possible similarities to *Lactuca virosa*, from the botanic point of view, and it also forms part of another large group of plants with marke psychotropic properties.

I decide however to prescribe *Nabalus* 30CH. I see Giuseppe again after two month: during which he never contacted me.

He tells me:

'My diarrhoea has definitely improved... Now even if my belly hangs out I can shit lik normal... I even tested it out on the balcony, but I had to stop because m neighbours were giving me funny looks when my belly was hanging out up there a six in the morning... Perhaps they were actually right, but who was there to tell ther that I was conducting an experiment?'

I ask him to go into more detail about the feeling of being looked at:

'People look at me and I can feel it... Even if I know that I'm imagining it. But I have to tell you the truth, otherwise what's the point of coming here...?'

I feel looked at... as though the people around me can look right through me. I feel like nothing, like something that the whole world just looks through... If I was the invisible man, maybe I could enjoy my condition. I would like to be the visible man. to be like him whenever I wanted.'

I ask Giuseppe what he would do if he was really invisible for ever:

'I would paint myself or I'd dress up in a harlequin's costume, to show that I could be coloured too...'

After a long pause, he adds:

'I think that the world is all made up of colour and music... I know that other art forms exist, but I don't understand them... I don't see them... They're there, I know but they don't mean anything to me...'

A statue doesn't excite me as much as a painting of a field of flowers, or when I listen to Pink Floyd... The statue is beautiful, but your eye stops at the level of the marble, whereas in a painting it goes beyond...'

Music carries away my thoughts and I don't know where it takes them... Far away perhaps even too far.'

Giuseppe is visibly moved and indicates that he wants to change subject.

I ask him about his relationship with the cold:

'It's been icy cold lately... Inside my bones... Perhaps even worse, in my heart... the cold that circulates and moves all through you: I have to put so many layers on and never get warm...'

I ask Giuseppe if he took the remedy as I advised him to:

'It was very difficult for me to take the drops that you gave me, because the thought of taking *something made from a snake* worried me... Then I went to the library to find out more and I read that it was actually a plant that was called liki. I did some research and that's what it is... Just a root that looks like a snake...'

I ask him to explain:

'I hate snakes... When I was little I often used to dream about them, and I even dreamt about them recently... When I was taking the drops... But perhaps it was because I was scared of dreaming of them.'

I ask him to explain, but Giuseppe doesn't want to reply:

'Nothing, it's a secret... '

I ask how he feels overall now:

'Apart from that I'm fine, but I'm someone who doesn't feel bad in general.'

I ask him to explain:

'Even my mother used to say that when I was little... That I could even have been a juggler in a circus: For fun my brothers used to show their friends that I couldn't feel any pain... They would pinch and even prick me but I didn't feel anything...

I often do it in the office too, because no-one believes that I can't feel the prick of a pin... I don't feel it when people pinch me, not even when they scratch me...'

I ask him to continue:

'My mother used to say that I didn't even feel it when she smacked me, and when I used to be naughty she would just frown grimly at me. It was the only way of really hurting me: I suffered, and then I would obey her.'

I ask if there is anything he can do to overcome his feeling of cold:

'I don't go out in the sun because I don't like it... There's too much light and I prefer to stay in the dark... I've talked a lot about this because... There are people who say that the dark is cold... Whereas I like the shade and I find it very warm, even though the colour of the sun goes away... I don't like being in the sun, it makes me feel unwell and weak and there's no intimacy...'

I am not at all satisfied with Giuseppe's reaction to Nabalus. I judge my prescription to have not been very accurate, even though I am still sure that Giuseppe belongs to the homeopathic family of the drug remedies. At the time I hadn't had a lot of experience with these remedies, and when I repertorised the case again, including the symptoms he had told me about in the first consultation, Anhalonium emerged as a possible remedy.

I therefore recommended a single dose of Anhalonium lewinii 200CH.

Nearly two months later, Giuseppe asks to come back and see me again:

‘The most surprising thing is that my feeling of coldness is going away, as though my blood had started to circulate again after all these years... I can even manage to sleep alone with the blankets.

But perhaps I have found another kind of warmth... I’ve become friendly with a guy who got transferred to my office from another part of the country: He doesn’t know this town at all and I’m showing him around a bit.’

I ask him to explain:

‘We have the same tastes in music and art and he didn’t get upset when I told him that I only like some of his poetry... In fact it spurred him to write better.

Even though I don’t understand poetry, there’s warmth and lots of colours in his lines.

I ask Giuseppe if he has noticed anything else about his sensitivity to the cold:

‘I’ve managed to go to the seaside and even to sunbathe... He persuaded me to do it, and I even feel better there, but only if I’m moving around and doing something. Otherwise the sun gives me the feeling of being in the desert...’

I ask him how his abdominal pains are:

‘I haven’t had any more problems there, my stomach aches have disappeared completely – and I haven’t had any diarrhoea either.’

I ask him about his feeling of being looked at:

‘I’ve been paying attention to this, and... I’m looking around less. Even if I feel people are looking at me... I’ve noticed that I’m no longer doing the peculiar things I used to do to get me noticed, because I feel present, and I feel that I’m there, and other people are aware of that.

I’ve also had some satisfaction at work. I was offered a more important position with greater responsibility, but I turned it down because I want to stay in the department where I am with my new friend.’

I would like to hear some more about this but Giuseppe doesn’t want to talk about it

I ask him if he has had any dreams:

'I dreamt of a castle, many times... It was like one of those classic places you see in war films, where the Gestapo make their headquarters... But the castle was empty and I was wondering if they were going to come or if they had already left... It was as though I could smell them there... coming or going.

Then the soldiers came and I saw them undressing... I didn't understand why, and then I realised that it really was a film, a stupid film. I was worrying about something that was being shown as if it was in a comedy, a stupid comedy...

It made me feel bad because I didn't want to be there: neither as a spectator, nor by chance... I've never been able to stand those kind of people and I couldn't understand what would bring anyone to make a film about them... It's like when they talk about criminals on the news... In the end you do them a favour whereas the best thing is to ignore them...'

I ask him about his chest problem:

'The feeling of constriction in my chest has completely disappeared... it's completely gone... and my belly is much better too...

But I'm happiest about the fact that I seem to be a bit calmer. I was even told at work that I seem more relaxed, whereas before I was always in a bad mood...'

I ask him what he thinks has changed:

'I really don't think anything is changing at all.... I'm just like I was before... It's just that I'm less moody and a bit calmer. But I always have ups and downs... And things are going well at the moment.'

I can't find out any more, and I advise him to continue with a placebo, because Giuseppe is still not keen on the idea of simply waiting to see how things develop.

We meet again three months later, at his request:

'I feel as though perhaps something is putting itself right... I am definitely much better physically and I have much more energy to face each day with.

I think that something very serious is working itself out inside me. It's thanks to this friendship as well that I'm facing my reality, not thinking that I'm by myself as much and that perhaps it's not even such a natural thing to be alone...

Ultimately I really wasn't willing to be communicative... But I felt vulnerable... as though my defences were few and badly organised. Chaotic in my reactions, and confused in my thoughts. It's as though I'm starting to see things more clearly, in another light...'

I ask him about his relations with other people:

'They seem to be becoming more diverse... I don't feel as vulnerable, and I don't feel as though I hardly matter to those around me. After all, why should I have thought so highly about myself? Everyone has their own stuff to live with, if we all had to worry about everyone else it would be like Babel... I feel as though I have a little world around me, but I can work within this. Though if my friend hadn't been there, I don't know if I could have done it.'

Once more I am unable to find out more about Giuseppe's relationship with his friend.

Several years later Giuseppe seems to be keeping a good equilibrium: He has accepted promotion at his work, has started playing the trumpet and he has formed a little group with this friend from work. He has made new friends, and the two of them often go out with girls. I have never been able to find out anything about his relationships with women, but his friend, who has become my patient in the meantime, is always willing to talk to me.