

Catherine R. Coulter

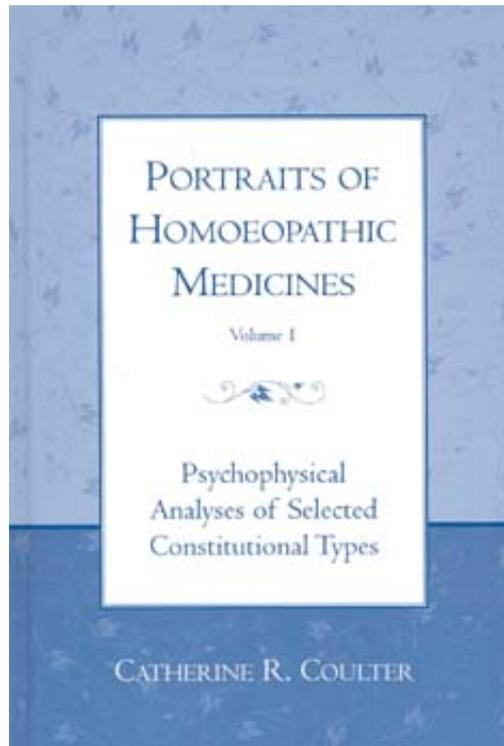
Portraits of Homoeopathic Medicines Vol.1

Reading excerpt

[Portraits of Homoeopathic Medicines Vol.1](#)

of [Catherine R. Coulter](#)

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Introduction

Homoeopathy was founded by Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), who was born in Meissen, Saxony, the gifted son of poor but educated parents (his father was a painter of porcelain in the porcelain works for which Meissen is still famous to this day). After completing his education, he started on a career as physician but became progressively more disillusioned with what he had learned. Finally he renounced medicine altogether and for some years made a living by translating works on chemistry and other subjects from English, French, and Italian to support a large and rapidly growing family.

While translating William Cullen's *Materia Medica* he made a discovery that was to completely change and redirect his life. Dissatisfied with Cullen's explanation of how Peruvian bark (quinine) acts to cure malaria, Hahnemann decided to test the substance on himself and observe its effect. He found that he was developing the symptoms of malaria: chills, drowsiness, heart palpitations, trembling, prostration through all the limbs, pulsation in the head, redness of the cheeks, thirst, rigidity of the joints, etc. This discovery acted as a catalyst to his medical thinking and gave birth to the science of homoeopathy.

If quinine (*China*), which caused the symptoms of malaria in a healthy person, could cure malaria, this signified that it acted as a *similar medicine*, curing the sick by virtue of its ability to produce the same symptoms in the healthy. After repeating the same experiment with other substances, Hahnemann generalized this observation into the "law of similars," i.e., that *all* substances—animal, vegetable, and mineral—cure their similar conditions. Hence the name, "homoeopathy," from the Greek *homoios pathos*, meaning "similar disease."

Hahnemann had then to devise a method for ascertaining the curative powers of medicines (in order to use them as similars). This is where his genius came particularly to the fore. He discovered and elaborated a method known as the "proving" (from German *Pruefung* meaning "test" or "trial") by which substances are administered on a systematic basis to healthy persons over a period of days or weeks. The "provings" have revealed that each substance in nature has the power to bring out a set of symptoms peculiar to itself when given in this way to the healthy.

Once the homoeopathic physician has a complete and exhaustive listing of the patient's physical, emotional, and mental symptoms, he compares them with the listings of symptoms in the homoeopathic books of "provings," or *materia medica*, and selects his remedy on the basis of the *totality* of the patient's symptoms. Cure will take place in due course, even in chronic disease, when there is precise correspondence between the patient's symptoms and the symptoms of the medicine administered; the one which acts curatively is called the *simillimum*, the "most similar" remedy.

In other words, the homoeopathic physician does not treat the disease entity but rather the symptom complex of the *individual* who has heart disease, arthritis, migraine headaches, colitis, cystitis, influenza, dysmenorrhea, insomnia, or the common cold. And this ability to make distinctions among patients and among superficially similar disease processes—that is, to "individualize" every case—is the natural corollary of the concern for the whole person which lies at the core of homoeopathic practice.

In homoeopathy the expression, "constitutional remedy," signifies the medicinal substance which encompasses the sum total of the individual's physical, emotional, and mental picture. Homoeopathy denies any inherent or qualitative distinction between these, assuming that all processes within the organism are interdependent. Physical illnesses (apart from accidents and injuries) have a mental aspect, while mental illnesses have a physical aspect, and the prescription of medicines must be based upon a consideration of both categories of symptoms. A patient is said to be a *Phosphorus*,

a Silica, a *Pulsatilla*, or some other type, according to the constitutional remedy which most closely approximates his total picture. To find this constitutional remedy the physician not only records painful sensations, symptoms, pathology, and the like, but also how the patient looks and behaves when in health, what he says, how he responds, his temperament and disposition, strengths and weaknesses. After collecting, arranging, and evaluating these characteristics, he matches them to the remedy which most expresses this "wholeness" of the patient. Espousing this truly holistic approach, each chapter of this work describes the relationship between a given type's physical, emotional, and mental patterns when viewed in their dynamic interaction.

To ensure that the individual features of a case are preserved in all their purity, Hahnemann urged the physician to take down the symptoms and sensations in the patient's own words, not in neutral "scientific" language. Following his precepts, this text seeks to record in "layman's" language those details of a given homoeopathic medicine that best conveys its individuality, that makes its "personality" more easily recognizable by the physician, and that deepens his understanding of its nature.

The remedies are the building blocks of the homoeopathic discipline, and their pictures remain forever valid. Their contours have been delineated by the masters of old in the records of provings and cures which constitute the foundations of homoeopathic literature. But, like all classics, they must be reinterpreted by succeeding generations. This book explores the behavior and psyches of nine constitutional types in health and illness, as manifested by the patient's manner, voice, speech, gestures, expressions, thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, tastes, and common or idiosyncratic physical symptoms.

The word, "Portraits," in the title is used deliberately. A portrait-painter selects certain features to reveal his subject's true character. The same is true for these descriptions of the homoeopathic remedies. They are selective rather than comprehensive presentations. Certain features are emphasized, certain themes developed, and certain nuances brought to the fore, because they appear quin-

essential to the type. Of course the characteristics of various remedies can and do overlap, as witnessed by the frequent cross-references in the text—particularly the sections which compare and differentiate the remedies; also, there are no absolutes in the remedy pictures: a *Silica* patient need not be chilly, a *Sepia* one can sparkle with cheerfulness and mirth, *Natrum muriaticum* can dislike salt, and *Arsenicum album* may be quite unconcerned "with his health. But in any constitutional type certain features stand out.

To clarify and illustrate these points examples have been taken from history and literature. Famous persons, or what we can know of them, and well-known characters in fiction, often seem to portray constitutional types in concentrated form, and because the¹; are familiar parts of our cultural heritage, any allusion to them suggests to the reader a host of associations which bring the remedy's specific personality into clear focus. Thus they serve as archetypes. A prime example is the *Natrum muriaticum* type of loyalty and friendship illustrated by the relationship of Dr. Watson to Sherlock Holmes. Ultimately every prescriber forms his own associations.

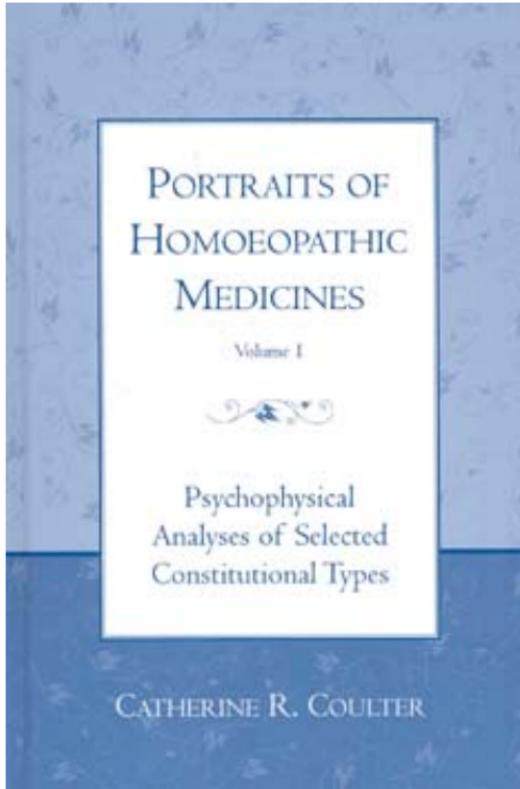
Yet few individuals are pure types, few are covered by a single remedy throughout a lifetime. In treating Samuel Hahnemann as a *Sulphur* and choosing to emphasize those traits in his personality, we necessarily simplify a complex nature that also displays features of *Arsenicum*, *Lycopodium*, and others.

The prescriber must pay close attention to the relationship among remedy-patterns within the individual patient. Most persons oscillate among two, three, or four remedies during the course of their lives, exhibiting their various characteristics in alternation. The body and personality are affected by external stresses—physical or emotional trauma, job or vocation, the stresses and strains of marriage or lack of it—which leave their imprint and promote change and modification in the individual's physical, emotional, and mental life. Genetic endowment and childhood development must also be considered, as well as racial or national background. These all affect the total constitutional picture. These complex questions are raised and discussed at appropriate points in the text below.

The material presented in the following pages should be use-

ful to others besides homoeopathic physicians: to a wide range of healers and medical practitioners who, *with the proper training*, can employ the remedies as helpful adjuncts to their specific techniques for relieving humanity's physical or mental ills. They help make surgical operations less hazardous and facilitate recovery. Osteopaths and chiropractors have reported that their treatments are made more effective by concomitant administration of the appropriate remedy, as have dentists and veterinarians. Pediatricians and family physicians consistently find that prescribing the constitutional remedy when the patient is in good health helps prevent future acute or chronic illnesses. Particularly in the psychiatric field, psychotherapists, as well as clinical, analytical, and behavioral psychologists, will find that the homoeopathic remedy brings about a profound inner change in the patient beset by fears and neuroses, anxieties of conscience and moral turmoil, or suffering from mania, depression, suicidal impulses, and even "borderline" mental illnesses. He may start to relinquish his anxieties and other disorders within days or "weeks, rather than months or years.

The time is at hand for a more general acceptance of homoeopathic principles by physicians and public. This approach to healing, which uses botanical, biological, and chemical substances singly and in very small quantities, "which stresses the need for holistic treatment of the individual and which reinforces his inherent defensive and recuperative capacities, has tremendous appeal at a time when orthodox medicine uses ever more potent drugs in ever larger doses—often many different ones at the same time. All those practitioners who desire "the highest good" for their patients, and who "want "all parts of the organism in admirable, harmonious, vital operation, as regards both sensations and functions, so that our inherent reason-gifted mind can freely employ this living healthy instrument for the higher purposes of existence" (Hahnemann, *Organon of Medicine*, Sec. 9), will find their efforts enhanced by application of the homoeopathic simillimum.



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