

Catherine R. Coulter

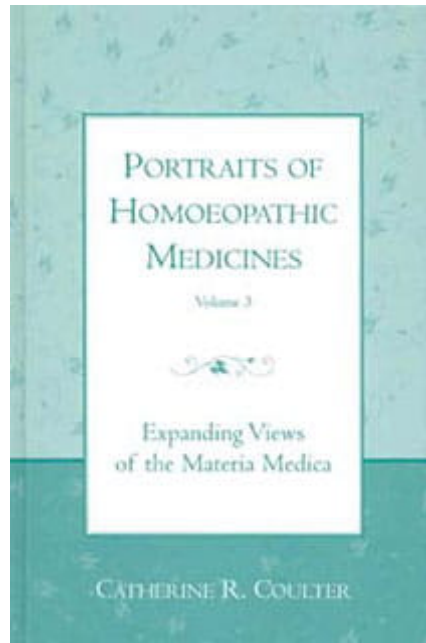
Portraits of Homoeopathic Medicines Vol.3

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from [Catherine R. Coulter](#)

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Introduction

To see the world in a grain of sand,
And heaven in a wild flower; Hold
infinity in the palm of your hand, And
eternity in an hour.

This exhortation from William Blake's poem *Auguries of Innocence* defines the challenge that confronts every classical prescriber seeking to acquaint himself with the homoeopathic medicines. He must approach the vast corpus of *materia medica* not only with the analytical mind of a scholar, but also with the sensibilities and imagination of a poet.

"To See the World in a Grain of Sand"

To see the "world" of a remedy means no less than to integrate into a cohesive unity the remedy's idiosyncratic and often fissiparous symptoms, its range of polarities and contradictions, as well as the sum of its traditional features and its deviations from the norm.

The archetypal approach, wherein the physician prescribing constitutionally must address features that lie beneath the surface of the physical and mental symptoms and direct himself to a patient's unconscious impulses, drives, and deepest life challenges, is one way of arriving at this larger understanding. Only by sensing the *whole* world of a given remedy—both its destructive aspects (in illness) and its creative ones (in health), both its weaknesses or imbalances (which are necessarily emphasized in the "provings") and its actual or potential strengths (as observed in clinical practice)—can the physician avoid the pitfall of reducing homoeopathic personality types to limited and, therefore, misleading generalizations.

These portraits will attempt, through an analysis of archetypal characteristics and situations, to dispel the reductionist pictures that adhere to certain remedies; also to demonstrate (as, for example, in *Aurum metallicum*) how the "world" of a remedy can be conjured up by establishing meaningful correspondences between the medicines' properties and the knowable universe.

"And Heaven in a Wild Flower"

Investigating the *spiritual* dimensions of the remedies in the *materia medica* is but an extension of the conviction, long held by physicians adhering to the law of similars, that the spirit of medicinal substances and the spirit that animates man, nature, and God are of the same essence ("For what is outside man is also inside, and what is not outside is not inside. The outer and the inner are one thing: one constellation, one influence, one concordance, one duration . . . one fruit": Paracelsus, *Selected Writings*, p. 21).

The homoeopathic physician thus finds himself caught up in a dual process. Through the study of the remedies, he broadens his knowledge of man, nature, and God; while, conversely, through a study of man, nature, and God, he learns to understand the spiritual healing powers (the whole "heaven") of a medicine—as best observed in "The Psychic Dimension of *Thuja*"

"Hold Infinity in the Palm of Your Hand"

Whenever a homoeopath reaches out to administer a high-potency remedy to a patient, he is holding in his palm "infinity" released by dilution and succussion. Furthermore, our universe is an infinity of substances, each one of which contains locked within itself unique medicinal powers just waiting to be recognized through "provings" and understood through clinical cures. Add to this the consideration that patients' varied symptoms and modalities fall like pebbles in a giant kaleidoscope into a myriad of patterns, and one begins to appreciate the magnitude of the assault of the infinite on the prescriber.

Fortunately there exist in homoeotherapeutics several ways of maintaining the "infinite" without chaos. The repertory system is one; the archetypal approach, which guides the prescriber to the unity beneath the multiplicity of symptoms, is another; while yet an additional method for pinpointing the *simillimum* is comparative *materia medica*.

The comparative approach, by its very nature, does not permit the same depth of analysis as an individual archetypal portrait. The format, however, does perform modest services of its own. It helps to differentiate between those shadings of feelings and behavior patterns that, on the surface, appear similar; it increases familiarity with the less stellar remedies (cf. *Phosphoric acid* in "Indifference" and *Mercurius* or *Baryta carbonica* in "Suspicion"); it is a way of drawing out new aspects of familiar polychrests (cf. "Clairvoyance"), also of introducing *healthy* characteristics as guiding symptoms (cf. "Generosity"). Furthermore, the comparative *materia medica* approach provides an excellent format for the homoeopath to organize his straggling (because ever increasing) personal observations and elucidate his clinical experience.

"And Eternity in an Hour"

"Holding eternity in an hour" signifies fixing into a lasting picture those characteristics of a particular remedy which have hitherto been evanescent or transient, or blurred, and seem to fade and change with the hour.

There exist a number of polychrests which, while undeniably protean in action, possess less colorful personalities than their more eminent brethren. In fact, even after having performed noble service, they exhibit the tendency to slide, eel-like, back into typological obscurity. *Causticum* is such a one, and *Graphites* is another. To assume that these remedies do not possess individuality is, however, to err. Their full pictures may have remained obscure, but one has merely to observe a sufficient number of favorable returns in *constitutional* prescribing and extrapolate from these the reiterated behav-

ioral and emotional patterns for a remedy's archetypal, "eternal" verities to emerge.*

In his famous motto, "*Aude sapere*," Hahnemann instructed his followers, in their pursuit of knowledge, to *dare* to test, to explore, to experiment with all aspects of his scientific method, including the *materia medica*. It is in this spirit of "daring" that each one of these *Portraits* has been submitted to all those who love and practice homoeopathy.

Nota bene: Readers of *Portraits*, volumes 1 and 2, have inquired into this writer's criterion for selecting the various homoeopathic quotations. The answer is simple. The honor goes to the author who first noted the symptom. Exceptions to this rule are certain listings from Hering, which are given priority over those from T. F. Allen (and occasionally even Hahnemann) because of their superior felicity of expression; also an assortment of listings from Kent and Boericke because they are readily available (in the *Repertory* and the *Materia Medica*, respectively) to most prescribers.

*Admittedly, the operative phrase is "sufficient number of favorable returns." It may take years—decades even—to build up the required critical mass of cured or helped cases.

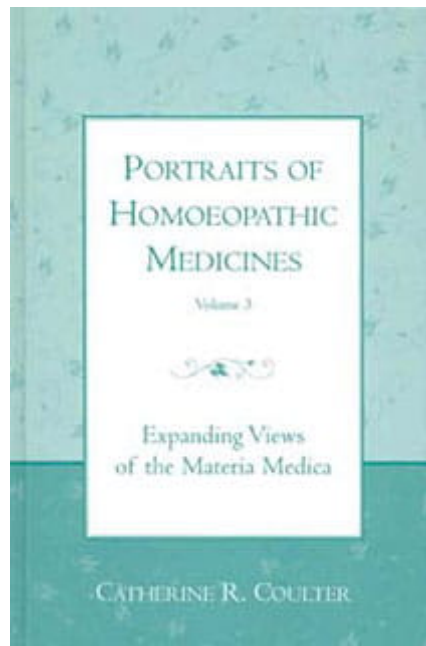
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