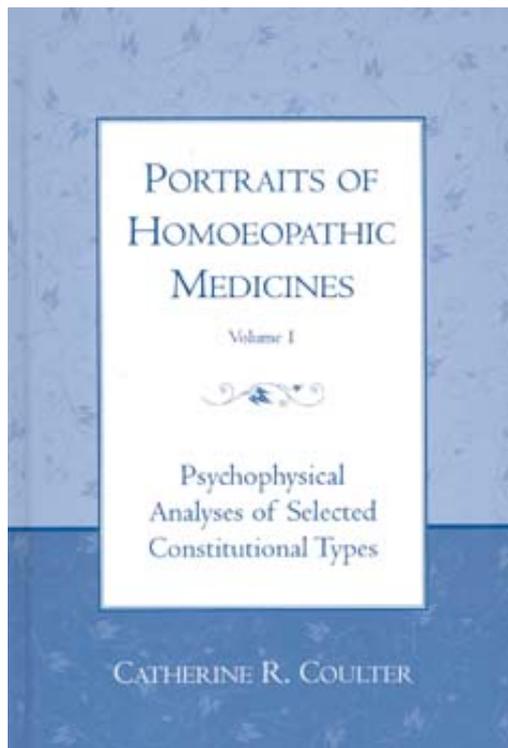


Catherine R. Coulter
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Lycopodium

L YCOPODIUM is the club moss whose spores are shaped like a wolf's paw; hence the origin of the Greek name: *lyco* (wolf) and *podos* (foot). Moss is one of the oldest surviving plant life forms on earth, having existed since the Silurian period some 350 million years ago. Yet it has survived essentially unchanged despite all the intervening geological and climatic cataclysms and upheavals. The associations evoked by the moss family are serenity and stability. Its lovely green is restful to the eye and soothing to the spirit; its resilient softness is cooling to the touch, and its pertinacious growth throughout the ages suggests an indestructible nature.

As we seek correspondences between the plant and the man (if only for mnemonic purposes), we find that *Lycopodium* possesses a pleasant and self-contained personality, soothing in its composure and reserve and, at least outwardly, cool and restrained. Thus it contrasts with the more heated *Sulphur*, *Lachesis* and others. Furthermore, the nature is viable, displaying the capacity to adapt to changing scenes and varying environments without itself mutating in the process.

The mentality is complex, not always easy to recognize and define, the appearance often having little in common with what transpires underneath. This will become apparent as we attempt to capture the constant tension between the strengths and weaknesses, the image and reality, of this constitutional type.

The following analysis will focus on four prominent *Lycopodium* characteristics: his resilient self-esteem, his unshakeable viability, his imperturbable detachment, and the Achilles heel of this highly capable individual — his tendency to deceive himself. A final section will exam-

ine how these traits converge and are reflected in his attitude toward health and illness.

The Divergent Type

The classic picture of *Lycopodium* found in the homoeopathic literature is as follows: the patient is thin, muscularly weak and lacking in vital heat; the hair is prematurely gray or balding; deep furrows (from much thought and worry) line the forehead; the sunken skin of the face is sallow and earthcolored, with premature wrinkles; the worried expression may make him look older than his years; the child will resemble a wizened little old man, while the young man may appear distinguished but somewhat withered. The mind may be developed at the expense of the body. And yet the opposite is also found: mental degeneration, early senility, failing brain power, weak memory. Finally, the individual has been described as melancholy, morose, despairing, defiant, suspicious, inclined to take things ill, excessively irritable, misanthropic, cowardly, and so on. All these characteristics are encountered in the type and must be recognized when present.

The *Lycopodiums* who grace contemporary homoeopathic practice, however, quite often do not fit this picture, either at first glance or upon more extended examination. Hence this chapter will focus (especially in the male) upon what may be called the "divergent type" and present new angles to the remedy.

Lycopodium has been identified in, and successfully prescribed for, a great many patients who are physically strong, attractive looking, and well-built, suggestive of a type of vigor that the subject does little to maintain. In both sexes, the complexion can remain clear and the skin smooth, even into old age. The women are often beautiful and of good carriage. The men possess large and well-defined facial features. "Handsome" and "clean-cut" are appropriate words for *Lycopodium's* appearance, just as *Pulsatilla* is pretty, *Phosphorus* is attractive, and *Arsenicum* is aristocratic*

Often these men remain lanky throughout life, but with a leanness that bears the stamp of toughness rather than of frailty (*Arsenicum* and

* In this picture of *Lycopodium* the reader will recognize, among others, the peculiarly American type known as the WASP ("white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant").

Phosphorus are the latter). Those who gain weight with age, do so elegantly, becoming portly and distinguished-looking. Weight only seems to add dignity to their bearing and solidity to their being. The frequently strong intellect may be revealed in the prominent brow. This is a compelling feature. The remedy should be considered in any patient with a high-domed forehead or a broad or handsome brow, with or without furrows, or who exhibits the well-attested "disposition to frown" (Kent).

On the mental-emotional plane, *Lycopodium* is usually stable and balanced, with a robust attitude towards life and healthy appetites. He is temperate by inclination and in his essentially measured life style, and seldom indulges in neurotic or hypochondriacal self-deprivation. His behavior, in most respects, is moderate. He seldom over-extends himself emotionally, usually holding something in reserve. An undercurrent of quiet strength can be sensed in *Lycopodium*.

One reason for the seeming discrepancies between the traditional and divergent pictures may be that in Kent's well-known constitutional triad, *Sulphur*/*Calcareo carbonica*/*Lycopodium*, the *Lycopodium* temperament shares characteristics with these two flanking remedies. Variations in *Lycopodium* types occur because of a shift in emphasis within the triad. Some lean more to *Sulphur* and project confidence, assertiveness, intellectuality, energy, intrepidity, viability. Others lean more toward *Calcareo* and are apprehensive, slower, with an underlying layer of unresolved insecurities carried over from childhood. An additional factor accounting for the discrepancy in this drug picture is simply age. The basically strong individual remains healthy until middle age or later and thus does not visit the physician until that time. Only when he has tried his constitution too far, and it has broken down, does the weakened physical and mental picture emerge. The man who has ignored his health for four or five decades is now frightened and exhibits all the classic apprehensions and insecurities. Prior to this point he will have carefully avoided physicians.

In fact, *Lycopodium* is apt to be the homoeopathic caboose. What usually happens is that the eager, newly-converted wife (the engine) comes chugging along to homoeopathy, energetically pulling the cars along behind: her children, parents, friends, and relatives. Finally, twenty cars in the rear, comes the caboose — her reluctantly trailing husband. Thus, thanks to the energies of the bulldozing *Arsenicum* or insistently

enthusiastic *Natrum muriaticum* or beseeching *Pulsatilla* wives, who drag their sceptical, reluctant, essentially healthy *Lycopodium* husbands to the physician's office, homoeopaths have been able to observe them prior to their breakdown and treat them preventively.

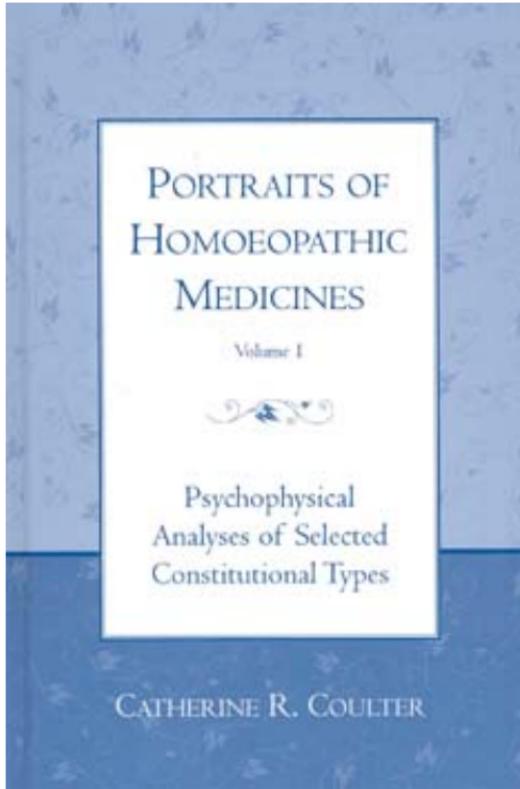
Self Esteem

The first striking *Lycopodium* characteristic is self-esteem. It is seen in the quiet air of one who is self-possessed and obviously has a good opinion of himself. He has confidence in his own judgment, believing that he knows best at all times. Being reserved, he may not always say so, but the thought is still there. The half-mocking lament by a patient—"Oh, what a trying fate it is to be always right, when others are so wrong!" — reveals the true *Lycopodium* mindset.

He considers himself an example of moderation and reasonableness others would do well to follow. He is convinced the world would be a far, far better place if it contained more right-thinking and right-acting persons like himself. *Sulphur* can possess similar self-confidence but is less self-righteous; *Lycopodium* invests moral weight in his "rightness," while *Arsenicum's* "I am always right" has an aggressive overtone which is uncharacteristic of *Lycopodium*.

Sometimes, to be sure, his self-esteem is a facade (what Gutman calls "outward overcompensation") covering a *Calcarea-like* sense of inadequacy. Under the strong exterior lie fears of incompetence ("lack of confidence in his strength": Hahnemann), sometimes justified, sometimes unfounded. But even here his insecurity is distinguished from *Calcarea's*, in being overlain with a veneer of assertiveness (sometimes even psychological bullying), while *Calcarea's* is humble and diffident. In the divergent *Lycopodium*, however, the unequivocal self-esteem is no cover-up. His youthful *Calcarea* insecurities have been resolved, and his air of confidence and strength is the outward manifestation of a truly self-respecting, intellectually and emotionally well-integrated individual.

Indeed, *Lycopodium's* strength derives largely from his self-esteem, which he uses to gain the esteem of others. His very character, behavior, and assurance all inspire respect, and he is psychologically astute in making himself liked as well as respected. His manner is gracious and courteous, with a self-contained charm (as against the more expansive charm of a *Phosphorus* or *Sulphur*) that almost imperceptibly brings



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