

Thuja occidentalis

The name Thuja is from the Latinized Greek meaning to purify. The branches of the Thuja tree were traditionally burned on sacrificial altars because of their fragrant odour. Thuja has also been called 'Arbor Vitae', the tree of life. Certainly as a homœopathic remedy it has great life-giving powers, and is deeply purifying on a cellular level, having the power to prevent and cure serious diseases such as arthritis or cancer. It also has a purifying effect on the mind and emotions, helping to remove deeply ingrained distrust, obsession and guilt. *Thuja* is a quintessential sycotic remedy having the hallmarks of distrust and deceit, and the tendency to discharges and growths.

Devious

Sycotic remedies like *Thuja*, *Nitric acid*, *Bufo* and *Medorrhinum* tend to be devious because they feel that if they allow people to know their weaknesses, they may be used against them. They are all secretive. *Thuja* characters are often particularly evasive and therefore not easy to discern in a clinical situation. They have a fear of being judged, controlled or manipulated by others, therefore concealing their flaws by projecting a charming and well mannered, 'Christmas tree' front to the world. George Vithoulkas noted a tendency to 'test' the homœopath by omitting to give important information, or relating misleading and incongruous facts. *Thuja* characters have a tendency to say what they think others would like to hear, rather than what is truthful. With their impressive veneer, charm and good manners they are natural diplomats, skilled in protocol, in the art of saying and doing the right thing to please others. Careful observation and enquiry will eventually reveal a very different picture. By questioning close family members of *Thuja* types one will often find that they are not the pleasant charming people they appear to be. *Thuja* is similar to *Lycopodium* in being an angel in the company of strangers and a devil at home. When ill or feeling negative they show their ugly side or nasty behaviour only to those close to them. From Kent's *Materia Medica* we find a perceptive description: "There will be mental symptoms of violent irritability, jealousy, quarrelsomeness, ugliness. This irritability is likely to be shown towards individuals about the house, toward the husband and the mother; yet she is able to control herself among strangers and the doctor may not be able to find out about it, because she has in her nature a disposition to cheat." In children the negative side may be reported by the mother. The child may be over-excited, quarrelsome and obstinate when at home and perfectly mannered at school (*Carcinosin*). Once they trust the doctor *Thuja* patients may admit to being secretive, often having memories that as children they were made to feel a sense of 'shame' for behaving inappropriately. There were often many 'taboos', particularly in the area of sex. Love from parents may have been conditional on 'desirable' behaviour. The child was expected to be 'seen and not heard'. Deviousness became a necessary strategy to avoid disgrace. *Thuja* people are often

very sensual, however there is much guilt and ambiguity around sex. Their sexuality is often clandestine, but they are sometimes overtly seductive. Like *Nitric acid*, *Fluoric acid*, *Medorrhinum*, and *Bufo* they may have a liking for one-off sex, visiting massage parlours and the like.

Perfect Front

After a conversation *Thuja* types will often do action replays of conversations in their minds wondering if the other person perhaps got the wrong impression of them by what they said. They cannot bear to be judged or rejected by others. They may phone the person in order to rectify their impressions of what they had said. *Natrum muriaticum* also reflects and worries a good deal about their interactions with others, however, with an altogether more sincere motive. They have a deep concern that they might have said something to hurt the other's feelings. They are sympathetic, knowing from experience how it feels to be hurt. *Lycopodium* is another remedy that has a deep aversion to being judged, however this arises from a pervading sense of inadequacy. There are other remedies that project well mannered fronts like *Thuja*, including *Carcinosin*, *Natrum muriaticum*, *Pulsatilla*, *Lycopodium*, and *Staphysagria*. They all have the tendency to suppress bad feelings, and to internalise conflicts. *Carcinosin*, like *Staphysagria*, is often too sweet and 'nice', putting up with abuse without showing aggression. *Carcinosin*, *Natrum muriaticum* and the *Kalis* lack spontaneity, being 'proper' and conservative. Overly dependent *Pulsatilla* with its deep fear of being alone, avoids rejection by pleasing others. The controlled external projection of *Thuja* manifests as excessive moralism, rigidity of principles, and fastidiousness. It inhibits them making it difficult for *Thuja* to let go and enjoy life, to be spontaneous. *Thuja* types can be very judgmental of others and suspicious of the motives of others (*Arsenicum album*, *Nitric acid*, *Kali carbonicum*). They may feel that others, like themselves, are also living a lie. In Kent's *Repertory*, *Thuja* appears in the rubric 'Aversion to jesting'. They may express their uninhibited, sensual, side in the company of few people who they are sure they can trust.

Closed and Rigid

Like *Natrum muriaticum*, *Thuja* is one of the closed remedies, recorded in the repertory as disliking consolation and having an aversion to company.

There is a rigidity on the emotional level which may manifest in sensations of brittleness. From the original provings of Hahnemann we see: "Delusions the body is brittle, fragile, and delicate". There may be a dislike of being jarred or touched by others. In the provings there was a feeling as if the lower limbs were made of glass, as if they would break easily. Joints give way while walking. Rigidity and emotional hardness in some *Thuja* characters makes it difficult for them to empathise emotionally with others. Their difficulty in being close to others suggests itself in 'aversion to being touched'. In

their relationships with the opposite sex they are at times callous and manipulative, approaching them as sex objects rather than persons (*Fluoric acid, Lycopodium*). The hardness is reflected bodily in dry, warty growths, cysts and indurations. Characters needing *Thuja* often admit to distrusting others (*Arsenicum album, Hyoscyamus, Lachesis, Nitric acid*). They may be sceptical and suspicious of others. In a clinical situation they may question and cross-examine the homœopath in a manner which suggests that they do not really believe in him. *Thuja* appears in the Repertory in the rubric 'Fear of the physician'. Perhaps there is fear that a perceptive physician may probe too deeply beneath the surface.

Spiritual Guilt

Thuja's aversion to being judged sometimes manifests as 'anxiety about salvation' (i.e. ultimate judgement), and religious fanaticism. There may be subconscious feelings of guilt, that they have not been honest with themselves or the world. *Thuja* appears in Kent's *Repertory* in the rubric 'Delusions he has done wrong'. The kind of guilt *Thuja* characters carry is often about their sensuality or their selfishness. Guilt assumes unreasonable proportions. *Arsenicum, Aurum, Syphillinum*, and *Cyclamen* are also important remedies for an over-active conscience. Like *Lachesis, Phosphorus* and *Lycopodium*, *Thuja* types often have a narcissistic streak, wanting to be desirable to the opposite sex, dressing to attract, and becoming over concerned about blemishes or imperfections on their bodies. They seldom pass a mirror without having a look at themselves. Like *Lac caninum, Arsenicum album*, and *Ignatia*, there is a tendency to be self critical. An intense dislike of their body may drive them to plastic surgery, diet faddism or anorexia. *Thuja, Aurum*, and *Lac caninum* appear in a rubric 'Contemptuous of self'.

The well known symptom 'feeling of something alive in the abdomen' of *Thuja* is interesting. The abdomen represents the subconscious zone of the body. Therefore something moving in the abdomen, over which they have no control, suggests a loss of control over subconscious, suppressed instincts. In fact it is quite common for *Thuja* patients to complain of rumbling, gurgling and discomfort in the abdomen. This may be aggravated by onions (*Lycopodium, Pulsatilla, Sulphur*).

Obsession

The one-pointed, triangular-shaped *Thuja* tree is suggestive of two characteristics of *Thuja* – obsessiveness and spiritual idealism. *Thuja* is one of the most obsessive remedies, appearing in the repertory under 'Monomania'. Obsessiveness may be about anything – looks, sex, an interest, religion or diet. *Thuja* types may be tormented by fixed ideas which repeat themselves causing inner anxiety. A little known remedy which is found under 'Monomania' is *Anantherum*. It has obsessions of wanting to go to a particular place repeatedly, and wanting to dress in a grotesque manner. It is a catarhal and warty remedy, and has both sycotic and syphilitic symptoms. A case of a sensitive, effeminate young man who compulsively calculated distances from where he was, was cured with *Thuja*. His obsessiveness also emerged as a time and motion obsession – hurriedness about getting certain things done every day. He was also overly fastidious. This one-pointedness that is found in *Thuja* may also be symbolic of spiritual idealism. Indeed, sometimes the deep inner yearning for perfection of the *Thuja* character finds expression in following a spiritual path of some sort (*Ignatia, Aurum,*

Pulsatilla). There are many *Thuja* types who discover a genuine inner commitment to spiritual development; however there are a good many who remain religious moralists, bigots and fanatics (*Lachesis, Veratrum album, Sulphur*).

Sensitive and Hard

Like *Medorrhinum* with its love of animals, there is a sensitive side to *Thuja* which comes out as a love of nature, and sensitivity to music. *Thuja* types are often naturally musical, taking an interest in singing or becoming musicians (*Cannabis sativa*). They may cry listening to music as it dissolves their emotional hardness, allowing them to open up their feelings. As in other sycotic remedies, *Thuja* is characterised by emotional extremes. On the one hand there is a hardened and sceptical materialist, who finds it difficult to accept any notion of the supernatural, while on the other there may be a psychically sensitive, spiritually aspiring person.

Duality is a theme often observed in *Thuja*. Like *Lachesis* and *Medorrhinum*, they may swing from one pole to the other, embodying a constant struggle between spiritual and material/sensual forces. No wonder *Thuja* has 'Delusions the body is separated from the soul', 'Delusions of being double' and opposite delusions 'of being heavy' and 'light'. The gravity bound materialistic nature contrasts with that which is light and ethereal nature. This polarising of *Thuja* associates it with schizophrenia. From Hering we have, "Insane women will not be touched or approached".

Because the kidneys are the prime site of disturbance in the sycotic remedies, there may be symptoms of hormonal imbalances. The kidneys govern the major electrolytes (ions) of the body, which polarise within the body fluids like a battery. The kidneys are profoundly influential in the male and female hormones (Yin and Yang), and the 'fight or flight mechanism' via the adrenals. From the point of view of Chinese medicine the kidneys house the 'will' and the adaptive response. The negative emotion of the kidneys is 'fear', while the positive emotion is humility (trust). This polarity represents the psychological axis of sycosis. Many of the sycotic remedies suffer from attacks of fear and anxiety, including *Thuja, Argentum nitricum, Medorrhinum*, and *Staphysagria*. Phatak describes the intensely anxious state of *Medorrhinum* so succinctly in "Desperate, sad, tearful, and fearful". One has so often seen this in practice. *Thuja* may experience sudden panic attacks, usually when in company, perhaps from a subconscious fear of losing their mask and revealing their underlying fear and distrust (see 'Anxiety, paroxysmal', and 'Anxiety, sudden' in the repertory). *Thuja* does not often have specific fears, but may express fear of wind, of doctors, strangers, insanity or evil.

From a hormonal point of view, *Thuja* and *Medorrhinum* show irregularities in the levels of androgen and oestrogen, thus creating masculinization in women (body hair etc.) and feminization of men. The physiognomy of these two follows the same pattern as found in the personality with extremes of grossness or sensitivity. The physique and face may appear coarse, puffy, greasy, hairy and warty, or fine and sensitive like *Silica*, but with tell-tale signs of fleshy moles or warts somewhere.

There is a hurried side to *Thuja*, which may be noticed in rapid speech, or may be experienced subjectively. Like *Medorrhinum*, and *Argentum nitricum*, *Thuja* experiences hurried, anticipatory, anxious feelings which come on suddenly in the form of panic attacks. The hurriedness of *Thuja* is an extension of their rigidity and inability to adapt.

There is a tendency to set targets, and to focus on a daily program which they feel compelled to complete, becoming increasingly tense and driven as life presents its usual unforeseen obstructions. There is also a tendency in *Thuja* to feel as if in a dream (*Cannabis indica*, *Medorrhinum*, *Opium*). Concentration is difficult. The mind becomes blank or drifts off while reading or during conversation. This feeling is often emphasised during mid-afternoon. From Hering: "Mental dullness, with pious fanaticism; no desire to work". In the extreme, *Thuja* is a remedy for imbecility, and like *Medorrhinum* does much to quicken and enliven dull intellects, particularly in children.

Physical Characteristics

Physically *Thuja* types may have a slightly puffy, pasty or greasy face. The skin colour is at times greenish. There will often be warts, red moles, or soft excrescences on the skin somewhere. Indurated cysts. Ganglions. Sycotic arthritis is common, affecting sacrum, knees, and ankles particularly. There may be pain in the soles of the feet. Sacral pains. Joints frequently crack, and neck or back trouble are common. Modalities of arthritis are similar to *Rhus toxicodendron*. The pelvis is often a site of problems. *Thuja* has pain in either ileac area, although it is predominantly left-sided. It may be indicated for a grumbling appendix (*Carcinosin*, *Iris*). There is perspiration in the groin and sacral area. Women tend to have ovarian problems, painful 'grumbling' ovaries and cysts or fibroids of ovaries or uterus. Left-sided ovaritis. A history of

cystitis, or fishy-smelling discharges is often elicited. Women may have hair in unusual places (*Medorrhinum*, *Sepia*). There are genital warts. Men may have prostate swelling and induration (*Staphysagria*, *Pulsatilla*, *Conium*) not uncommonly connected with suppression of gonorrhoea in the past. Vertigo is common. Babies that cry all the time for no reason may need *Thuja*, *Carcinosin* or *Medorrhinum*. Abdominal bloating, with rumbling and gurgling. *Thuja* is an important remedy for chronic sinusitis (*Pulsatilla*, *Hepar sulphuricum*, *Kali bichromicum*). Asthma is worse from damp (*Natrum sulphuricum*). Bad effects of vaccinos. Worse at 3 am and 3 pm. Sleepiness and weariness at 3 pm. Worse from onions and tea. The food desires of *Thuja* are for oranges, bananas and curry. Aversion to or desire for onions.

Relationships

Thuja is particularly complementary to *Argentum nitricum*, *Arsenicum album*, *Bufo rana*, *Causticum*, *Lachesis*, *Lycopodium*, *Medorrhinum*, *Nitric acid*, *Natrum muriaticum*, *Natrum sulphuricum*, *Pulsatilla*, *Sabina*, *Silicea*, *Staphysagria*, *Sulphur*.

Keywords

Well mannered, perfectionist, spiritual idealism or spiritual guilt, controlled, moralistic, rigid, sceptical, obsessive, sexual, dual existence.

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