

Communication and Individuation:
The Psychological Dynamics of
Communication in C. G. Jung's
Interpretation of Alchemy

Master's Thesis



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A B S T R A C T

Carl C. Jung's psychology is considered from a communications perspective. Jung's method of empirical research and of therapeutic practice, as well as the central object of his investigation, namely, the process of individuation, are shown to be based on a relationship of communication intrapsychically between consciousness and the unconscious, and extra-psychically between individuals, or between individuals and the material world. Jung's interpretation of alchemy, whose symbols provide a paradigmatic description of individuation, makes possible a psychological understanding of the dynamics of individuated communication via the notions of projection and transformation, while respecting the unknown basis of unconscious processes. Invoked as a predecessor of Bateson's cybernetic model of communication, Jung's psychology lays the groundwork for a rethinking of the mind-body relationship crucial to current communication research.

R E S U M E

La psychologie de Carl C. Jung est étudiée sous l'angle de la communication. Il est démontré que la méthode de Jung de recherche empirique et de pratique thérapeutique, ainsi que l'objet principal de son étude, à savoir le processus d'individualisation, sont fondés sur une relation de communication intrapsychique entre le conscient et l'inconscient, et extrapsychique entre les individus, ou entre les individus et le monde matériel. L'interprétation que Jung donne de l'alchimie, dont les symboles fournissent une description typique d'individualisation, permet d'en arriver à une connaissance psychologique de la dynamique de la communication individualisée par l'entremise des notions de projection et de transformation, tout en respectant le fondement inconnu des processus inconscients. Considéré comme l'une des antécédents du modèle cybernétique de communication de Bateson, la psychologie de Jung constitue un point de départ à partir duquel il est possible de repenser la relation corps-esprit, question essentielle à la recherche actuelle en communication.

To my mother, Irena, for whom the promise
of creative and intellectual ability
was overshadowed by the demands of work
for her family and her children,
this thesis is dedicated.

Contents

List of Illustrations and Alchemical Mottos in English	p. 1
Chap. 1 The Method of Carl G. Jung's Psychology	p. 3
Illustration and Motto n. 1	p. 4
Summary	p. 5
Text	p. 6
Chap. 2 The Alchemical Tradition	p. 27
Illustration and Motto n. 2	p. 28
Summary	p. 29
Text:	
a) The Difficulty of Entry into the <u>Magnum Opus</u>	p. 30
b) Entry into Alchemy through Psychological Notions	p. 45
Chap. 3 The Individuation Process in Alchemy: Projection and Transformation	p. 54
Illustration and Motto n. 3	p. 55
Summary	p. 56
Text	p. 57
Chap. 4 Mercurius: Archetype of the Communication Process in Individuation	p. 85
Illustration and Motto n. 4	p. 86
Summary	p. 87
Text	p. 88
Chap. 5 The Reality of the Unconscious	p. 100
Illustration and Motto n. 5	p. 101
Summary	p. 102
Text	p. 104

Contents

Chap. 6 Individuated Communication	p. 121
Illustration and Motto n. 6	p. 122
Summary	p. 123
Text	p. 124
Footnotes	p. 133
A Selected Bibliography	p. 153

List of Illustrations and Alchemical Mottos in English

Illustration titles and sources are followed by the alchemical mottos in English and sources.

1. Seven virgins being transformed

Beroalde de Verville, Le Songe de Poliphile (1600), p. 61

in: C. G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, (Princeton, 1968), p. 41.

The obscure by the more obscure, the unknown by the more unknown.

Jung, p. 227.

2. The "green lion" devouring the sun

Rosarium philosophorum (1550) in: Jung, p. 332.

Rend your books, lest your hearts be rent asunder.

Jung, p. 482.

3. Symbol of Hermetic transformation: the homo philosophicus

Mercurius

Samuel Norton, Mercurius redivivus (1630), fig. 2 in: Jung, p. 393.

Dissolve and coagulate.

C. G. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, (Princeton, 1970), p. xiv.

4. Mercurius as the sun-moon hermaphrodite, standing on the (round) chaos

Mylius, Philosophia reformata (1622), p. 354, fig. 5

in: Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 244.

And imagine this with the true and not with the fantastic imagination.

Jung, p. 257.

5. The sea of renewal arising from virgin's milk

Stolcius de Stolcenberg, Viridarium chymicum (1624), fig. LXXXIII

in: Jung, p. 409.

Transform yourselves into living philosophical stones!

Jung, p. 148.

6. Artists in library and laboratory

Maier, Tripus aureus (1618), from title-page in: Jung, p. 290.

Mercurius, capable of either.

Jung, Mysterium, p. 484.

CHAPTER 1:

The Method of Carl G. Jung's Psychology



1.

Obscurus per obscurius, ignotus per ignotius.

Summary

This thesis focuses on the communication process inherent in Carl Jung's analytical psychology, more specifically in its central discovery, the process of individuation.¹ Thus far Jung's work has not been exhaustively studied from the point of view of information or communication theory.² The thesis will lay the groundwork for further work by developing the notion of individuated communication, as I propose to call communication in the Jungian sense.

In the following introduction, which aims to bridge the study of depth psychology and the study of communication, I will look at Jung's analytical psychology and the personal and scientific context in which he understood his work to have developed. Following such a general outline, I will discuss why alchemy was used by Jung as culminating evidence for the individuation process and also as a paradigmatic example of it. As a preparation for looking in depth in the thesis at how alchemy exemplifies and illuminates the unconscious processes of the psyche, particularly pointing to their communicative aspects via the central symbol of Mercurius, the main terms and concepts of Jung's psychology will be summarized. Finally, a brief statement will be made of the need for such an original approach in the field of human communication, especially in an area of human experience which has thus far received slight consideration by communication scholars.

Text

Analytical psychology: natural science and human science

As a medical doctor specializing in psychiatry, Jung placed the medical branch of psychology which he represented among the natural sciences. Methodologically, Jung saw himself as an empiricist, i.e. he was primarily interested in the observation, verification and description of facts. Facts, in his terms however, meant psychologically real phenomena:

This standpoint is exclusively phenomenological, that is, it is concerned with occurrences, events, experiences - in a word, with facts. Its truth is a fact and not a judgement. When psychology speaks, for instance, of the motif of the virgin birth, it is only concerned with the fact that there is such an idea, but it is not concerned with the question whether such an idea is true or false in any other sense. The idea is psychologically true inasmuch as it exists. Psychological existence is subjective in so far as an idea occurs in only one individual. But it is objective in so far as that idea is shared by a society - by a consensus gentium. 3

In so far as psychic phenomena are phenomena of nature, Jung saw medical psychology as a natural science. ⁴ But in so far as its method of explanation is a product of the psyche, i.e. an attempt by the psyche to explain its own workings, it is a cultural phenomena and thus belongs to the human sciences. ⁵ Because of the constant possibility of interference by the medium of observation in the observed facts of that medium, psychology is in a unique situation:

In the other natural sciences, the question of what a thing is can be answered by a knowledge that goes beyond the thing in question, namely by a psychic reconstruction of the physical process. But in what, or through what, can the psychic process be repeated? It can only be repeated in and through the psychic; in other words, there is no knowledge about the psyche, but only in the psyche...its principle of explanation is ignotum per ignotius [the unknown through the more unknown], for it can reconstruct the observed process only in the same medium from

which that process is itself constituted.

Thus the medical psychologist "mirrors the psychic in the psychic" - his description and explanation occurs in the same medium. In this respect, analytical psychology stands outside of natural science, since it lacks an Archimedean point from which to carry out objective measurement.

Jung's aim, to begin with, was that of a medical doctor. It was not "investigation for investigation's sake, but for the immediate purpose of giving help":

What we learn through understanding will not, I sincerely hope, petrify into intellectual theory, but will become an instrument which, through practical application, will improve in quality until it can serve its purpose as perfectly as possible. Its main purpose is the better adaptation of human behaviour, and adaptation in two directions (illness is faulty adaptation). The human being must be adapted on two fronts, firstly to external life - profession, family, society - and secondly to the vital demands of his own nature.⁷

Analytical psychology thus has a broader application than only medical treatment of the maladapted. Its goal is also educative and, as I will show in the course of the present thesis, communicative. In general, Jung wrote also for teachers, pastors or those in the position of helping others to understand their own psyche as the cited article indicates. His psychology differs from experimental psychology which seeks to analyze and isolate single functions of the psyche; rather he is concerned with "the total manifestation of the psyche as a natural phenomenon." The emphasis on the total psyche is required by the obscurity or inscrutability of problems which lie in the unknown areas of the psyche. Nothing can be a priori left out. This requires a methodological openness, which is witnessed by the fact that Jung took the world for his laboratory, as it is present in the day-to-day happenings of human life.

By looking at the life of the individual psyche, Jung wished to steer clear of theoretical hypostasis. The truth of individual experience was decisive:

Each individual is a new experiment of life in her ever-changing moods, and an attempt at a new solution or new adaptation. We miss the meaning of the individual psyche if we interpret it on the basis of any fixed theory, however fond of it we may be. 8

The uniqueness of the individual is relative, of course, thus making statements of general validity concerning the individual psyche possible.

Generalizing statements refer to those parts of the psyche which are amenable to comparison; but they can say nothing about those parts which are unique. 9

Jung's outlook in this respect is characteristic of a much broader concern for the basic antinomial characteristics of the psyche. For every valid statement about one individual, a valid contradictory statement can be made about another. Proof of this, according to Jung, is found in the various schools and techniques of psychotherapy which rest on very different often mutually exclusive assumptions and invoke very different psychological facts:

Objective appraisal of the facts shows, however, that each of these methods and theories is justified up to a point, since each can boast not only of certain successes but of psychological data that largely prove its particular assumption. 10

For Jung, this lack of unanimity is not unscientific. Contradictory theories co-exist in physics, for instance, about the nature of light. In order to distinguish and therefore to promote the comparison of diverging theories, the mode of observation must be established. In the context of psychology, since the psyche which observes and understands is implicated in the psyche which is experiencing, Jung had to include his own experiences and his own analysis in his theoretical and methodological assumptions. How this affected his method of dealing with patients is succinctly put by Joseph Henderson:

But no single picture holds still; again and again the frame

breaks and Jung turns up in a new guise. This may be why his method is so flexible, reflecting as wide a comprehension of life's experience as he himself enjoyed.¹¹

In this respect Jung differs from other psychotherapists, for his method is a truly dialectical one:

If I wish to treat another individual psychologically at all, I must for better or worse give up all pretensions to superior knowledge, all authority and desire to influence. I must perforce adopt a dialectical procedure consisting in a comparison of our mutual findings. But this becomes possible only if I give the other person a chance to play his hand to the full, unhampered by my assumptions. In this way his system is geared to mine and acts upon it; my reaction is the only thing with which I as an individual can legitimately confront my patient.¹²

While other therapies rest on a belief in some theoretical superstructure which constitutes the therapist's knowledge by virtue of which he interprets and explains the individual's dreams etc., Jung's approach rests on the unknown experience of the individual, which can only be made known by a:

. . . dialectical process, a dialogue or discussion between two persons. Dialectic was originally the art of conversation among the ancient philosophers, but very early became the term for the process of creating new syntheses.¹³

In Jung's therapy, therefore, the doctor and patient enter into a relationship of communication.

Broadly speaking, Jung's use of the term "analytical" embraced other endeavours in the field of "complex psychology" such as Freud's and Adler's,¹⁴ whose common goal is to "solve the problems of the psyche". Jung's interest later went beyond the therapeutic frame of these other methods, inasmuch as his method pointed to an amplification or expanded experience not only of dream material but of the individual's personal and cultural identity. As Henderson recalls:

. . .his own symbolic origin, life-style and purpose were to

be determined to the widest extent possible, as a process of development, not just analysis.¹⁵

Hillman has criticized the choice of the name "analytical", since it implies a too close emphasis on "the practical intellect" and on problem-solving,¹⁶ and therefore is tied unnecessarily to therapy and case material. Instead, he suggests the term "archetypal", since archetypes of the psyche are ontologically prior even to the analytic situation:

This designation reflects the deepened theory of Jung's later work which attempts to solve psychological problems at a step beyond scientific models and therapy in the usual sense because the soul's problems are no longer problems in the usual sense.¹⁷

In so far as Hillman sees the usefulness of Jung's psychology beyond the strictly therapeutic situation, he follows Jung's anticipations. Promotion of the "better adaptation" of human life can occur in many ways, whether therapeutic, pedagogical or even legislative as a recent example from the Swiss canton of Uri proves, where a Jungian approach was used in land¹⁸ planning. Hillman's assessment of the importance of the theoretical concept of the archetype coincides with that of Leopold Stein, who argues that although Jung had placed analytical psychology among the natural sciences, he had not shown how it actually is a science, i.e., how it goes beyond the mere collection of empirical data:

It is by reason of the theoretical entities known as archetypes that analytical psychology clearly differs from and surpasses empirical science as Jung sees it.¹⁹

Taking the elaborations of Stein and Hillman, together with Jung's own point of view, we arrive at a polar view of analytical psychology. On the one hand, analytical psychology can be considered to be a science insofar as it treats its object of study, the psyche, according to a scientific method. On the other hand, analytical psychology points to a knowledge beyond science, in that the problematic of the unity of the psyche invokes transcendental

factors. As a medical doctor, Jung chose to remain within the theoretical confines of science, by speaking of these transcendental factors as hypothetical constructs in his psychology. Scholars in other fields, such as philosophy or theology, may treat these realities differently.

Jung's hesitation towards theory stemmed not from a lack of theoretical insights, but rather from an aversion to the scholastic way of thinking. While expecting the theoretical clarification of analytical psychology's principles to come about as "the outcome of discussion among many" and not through the erection of his own personal edifice of thought, Jung also felt that to begin with theory was anathema to activating processes of the unconscious:

Intellectual or supposedly scientific theories are not adequate to the nature of the unconscious, because they make use of a terminology which has not the slightest affinity with its pregnant symbolism. The waters must be drawn together and held fast by the one water, . . . The kind of approach that makes this possible must therefore be plastic and symbolical, and itself the outcome of personal experience with unconscious contents. It should not stray too far in the direction of abstract intellectualism; hence we are best advised to remain within the framework of traditional mythology, which has already proved comprehensive enough for all practical purposes.²²

In wishing to respect the integrity of the unconscious, i.e., in accepting that it really is unconscious, Jung refused to pretend to know more than is within the possible range of human understanding, as this range is indicated by depth psychology. According to Jung, the discovery of a possible unconscious psychic realm in the nineteenth century brought with it the implication:

. . . that if the subject of knowledge, the psyche, were in fact a veiled form of existence not immediately accessible to consciousness, then all our knowledge must be incomplete, and moreover to a degree that we cannot determine. The validity of conscious knowledge was questioned in an altogether different and more menacing way than it had ever been by the critical procedures of epistemology.²³

In order to do justice to the unconscious, one cannot rely on knowledge alone:

. . . in so far as this consists merely of thinking and intuition. It would lack the function that perceives values, i.e., feeling, as well as the fonction du réel, i.e., sensation, the sensible perception of reality.²⁴

Jung's argument here is two-fold. Conscious knowledge is limited on psychological, not epistemological, grounds; first, because it preempts the experience of unconscious contents which rather require the activation of the other functions of the psyche mentioned besides intellect; secondly, conscious knowledge preempts the articulation of such experiences because of the rigidity of its scientific or pseudo-scientific forms of expression. Therefore, not only must the totality of the psyche be allowed to manifest itself in our experience in order to study the unconscious scientifically, but one's understanding of it must be a function of the total psyche as well. As mentioned by Henderson, this understanding must also be seen as a process of development.

Alchemy and analytical psychology

Having laid out the scientific framework of Jung's psychology, at least in its principle characteristics, it is possible to assess the role that alchemy fulfilled in Jung's scientific endeavour. First of all, the symbolic language of alchemy provided Jung with a language to talk about the contents and processes of the unconscious, while respecting the mystery inherent in the unconscious: He writes in MDR (p.205), of the strangeness of this language:

. . . I noticed that certain strange expressions and turns of phrase were frequently repeated. For example, solve et coagula, unum vas, lapis, prima materia, Mercurius, etc. I saw that these expressions were used again and again in a particular sense, but I could not make out what that sense was.

Once the symbolic nature of these terms opened up for Jung, he found they provided living proof of the processes of the psyche to which he could only

point in "scientific" language. Secondly, alchemy embodied a procedure similar to the one that Jung employed in his psychotherapy; i.e., activation of the total psyche. As an old alchemical saying goes: "Ars totum requirit hominem."²⁵ The work demands the whole man. Jung's approach is further paralleled by the inclusion in the alchemical opus of a theoretical part, theoria, and of a practical part, operatio.²⁶ Significantly, these were not discrete parts of the opus, for the alchemist "theorized" as he worked in his laboratory.²⁷ Above all, in discovering a historical precedent for the images and contents of the unconscious which he had already encountered in himself and his patients, Jung gained collective affirmation of his hypothesis of unconscious processes. As Aniela Jaffe writes, alchemy permitted Jung to develop his psychology into an objective science.²⁹ The historical material allowed Jung to conclude in MDR (p. 194):

. . . that the contents of psychic experience are real and real not only as my own personal experiences, but as collective experiences which others also have.

In undertaking to study the positive, healing potential of the unconscious, and not only to consider its more destructive influences as seen in psychopathology, Jung had challenged a longstanding prejudice or fear of the unconscious, hailing back to the tradition of Goethe's Faust. In the years 1913-1919, as he tells in MDR (p. 178), Jung was obliged to face and overcome his own fear of the unconscious:

One of the greatest difficulties for me lay in dealing with my negative feelings. I was voluntarily submitting myself to emotions of which I could not really approve, and I was writing down fantasies which often struck me as nonsense, and toward which I had strong resistances . . . I felt not only violent resistance to this, but a distinct fear. For I was afraid of losing command of myself and becoming a prey to the fantasies. . .

The fascinating details of Jung's personal encounter with the unconscious can, of course, be read in his autobiography. Crucial to his method was the

conviction, which this example confirms, that the doctor must undergo this experience himself if he expects to help anyone else to do so. It was not until the following decade that Jung found themes similar to his own experiences in a Chinese alchemical text. The encounter with the East proved the cross-cultural validity of unconscious processes:

The similarity of the contents of the unconscious among Europeans and Chinese offered unsuspected confirmation of the concept of the collective unconscious, which would explain the analogy and even identity of myth-motifs and symbols among all races, and also the possibility of human communication in general.²⁹

The relationship between the collective unconscious and human communication will be discussed shortly. Suffice it to say at this point that Jung's idea of a common, unified psychic ground or inheritance shared by mankind was confirmed not only across continents but across centuries:

. . . it was the study of alchemical literature that enabled him. . . to view his own work in the light of a process of human development extending over thousands of years.³⁰

While the process of human development tends toward consciousness down the centuries, each individual must experience anew this accumulated heritage as a process of integration in his/her own life. Thus mediaeval alchemy could serve Jung as a paradigm for his theory of individuation, as it takes place in every individual:

We can see today that the entire alchemical procedure for uniting the opposites, . . . could just as well represent the individuation process of a single individual, though with the not unimportant difference that no single individual ever attains to the richness and scope of the alchemical symbolism . . . No case in my experience is comprehensive enough to show all the aspects in such detail that it could be regarded as paradigmatic . . . Alchemy, therefore, has performed for me the great and invaluable service of providing material in which my experience could find sufficient room, and has thereby made it possible for me to describe the individuation process at least in its essential aspects.³¹

Finally, alchemy encouraged Jung in his conviction that the irrational mind

not only can be studied in psychological terms, but that it should also be studied in order to understand its role in the scientific endeavour. This position has been supported in recent years by R. P. Multhauf of the Smithsonian Institute:

That [alchemy] has some [psychological] importance is argued with increasing frequency by some historians of science, who claim, and not without reason, that their discipline has been characterized by a kind of conspiracy of silence towards the irrational side of the scientific mind.³²

The psyche in analytical psychology

Having thus laid out Jung's scientific and psychological work as he understood it, and having shown how alchemy was a pivotal body of evidence confirming his description of psychic processes, I would now like to sketch briefly the main terms of Jung's psychology; namely, the psyche and its polar division into consciousness and the unconscious; the process of individuation, which characterizes the dynamic life and development of the psyche; and the goal of the self, i.e., the potential union of all psychic opposites. The use of these terms as hypothetical constructs was the closest Jung came to creating a psychological theory. Bearing in mind his aversion to theory as the beginning of psychological understanding, however, these terms should be considered preliminary to a general description of experiences and processes which are vividly captured by alchemical symbols. As Jung confesses:

I am no terminological rigorist - call the existing symbols 'wholeness,' 'self,' 'consciousness,' 'higher ego,' or what you will, it makes little difference. I for my part only try not to give any false or misleading names . . . The names I give do not imply a philosophy, although I cannot prevent people from barking at these terminological phantoms as if they were metaphysical hypostases.³³

As the object of the psychologist's inquiry, the psyche is an irreducible

given, partly as Jung says, because we have no part outside from which to observe it and partly because it is the only reality given to us without a medium.³⁴ Every thought, perception or experience is understood by Jung to be a quality of the conscious contents of the psyche. For instance, the experience of matter or of spirit are qualities of conscious contents. Whether the idea or experience also represents something that actually exists is beyond the mandate of the psychologist to ascertain:

Psychology cannot advance any argument either for or against the objective validity of any metaphysical view. I have repeated this statement in various places in order to give the lie to the obstinate and grotesque notion that a psychological explanation must necessarily be either psychologism or its opposite, namely a metaphysical assertion. The psychic is a phenomenal world in itself, which can be reduced neither to the brain nor to metaphysics.³⁵

Although the material ground of the psyche, i.e., its connection to the space-time continuum, cannot at present be shown, in later writings Jung suggested that the psyche is connected to the organic, instinctual life of the individual without being able to specify what the nature of this relationship is.

This difficulty is also encountered in physics:

. . . just as physics in its psychological aspect can do no more than establish the existence of an observer without being able to assert anything about the nature of that observer, so psychology can only indicate the relation of psyche to matter without being able to make out the least thing about its nature.³⁶

To begin with, however, Jung simply wished to oppose either a spiritual or materialist interpretation of existence. The psychic and the physical are parallel or concomitant phenomena which appear to reflect each other. The point is, however, that we can only "get into" the physical through the psychic:

So far as we can see, the collective unconscious is identical with Nature to the extent that Nature herself, including matter, is unknown to us. I have nothing against the assumption that

the psyche is a quality of matter or matter the concrete aspect of the psyche, provided that 'psyche' is defined as the collective unconscious.³⁷

As Franz puts it, because the unconscious part of the psyche is rooted in Nature, it is unbounded and cannot be called "my" unconscious. ³⁸ In Jung's depiction, the psyche exhibits the qualities of an energy band or spectrum whose lower reaches, as the last quote suggests, lose themselves in the organic/material substrate, while the upper reaches resolve themselves into "spiritual" form. Characterized as all "that can be brought under the influence of a will," ³⁹ the psyche is limited on either side by instinct and spirit, which in Jung's sense is greater than mere intellect. These terms, however, are not meant in an absolute way, for they are always relative to one's conscious attitude. Whether one experiences the world in terms of spirit or in terms of instinct, their opposition exemplifies the process of equilibration through which the psyche mediates all opposites:

The spirit/instinct antithesis is only one of the commonest formulations, but it has the advantage of reducing the greatest number of the most important and most complex psychic processes to a common denominator. So regarded, psychic processes seem to be balances of energy flowing between spirit and instinct, though the question of whether a process is to be described as spiritual or as instinctual remains shrouded in darkness.⁴⁰

The main point is that psychic processes provide a scale marked by opposites along which consciousness "slides." A more detailed consideration of Jung's position can be consulted in the essay "On the Nature of the Psyche."

Suffice it here to emphasize the polarity of the psyche characterized by the tension of opposites. One such tension structures the psyche into conscious and unconscious functions which exhibit compensatory features:

Since the psyche is a self-regulating system, just as the body is, the regulating counter-action will always develop in the unconscious. Were it not for the directedness of the conscious function, the counteracting influences of the unconscious could set in

unhindered. It is just this directedness that excludes them To this extent the psyche of civilized man is no longer a self-regulating system but could rather be compared to a machine whose speed regulation is so insensitive that it can continue to function to the point of self-injury, while on the other hand it is subject to the arbitrary manipulations of a one-sided will.⁴¹

The regulating, counter-action of the unconscious, in other words, can have no beneficial, stabilizing effect when the conscious attitude suppresses it. Instead, the energy of the unconscious begins to intensify even further the already one-sided conscious process:

For instance, when someone makes a rather bold assertion and suppresses the counter-action, namely a well-placed doubt, he will insist on it all the more, to his own detriment.⁴²

In writing of the changes in psychology which occurred with the positing in 1886 of a "subliminal consciousness" by Frederic W.H. Myers, Jung said:

The hypothesis of the unconscious puts a large question-mark after the idea of the psyche. The soul . . . no longer represented anything immediately known, about which nothing more remained to be discovered except a few more or less satisfying definitions. Rather, it now appeared in strangely double guise, as both known and unknown. In consequence, the old psychology was thoroughly unseated and as much revolutionized as classical physics had been by the discovery of radioactivity.⁴³

The hypothesis of the unconscious is particularly troublesome as far as the method of study is concerned. For the unconscious is not directly accessible to observation and can only be inferred from its effects, such as dreams, verbal slips, memory lapses, symptomatic actions, spontaneous fantasies on the one hand, and hysteria, neuroses, phobias or schizophrenia in pathological cases.⁴⁴ As we have seen from the description of the psyche as a self-regulating system, the effects of the unconscious have a purposive function. If this function can be consciously integrated and allowed to realize its equilibrating or relativizing action on conscious contents, then the hypothesis of the unconscious has been verified.⁴⁵ However, any statement about the unconscious itself is tentative, since it cannot be scientifically

verified. As Jung says, the psychologist proposes a model not in order
to assert something that is, but to illustrate a mode of observation.⁴⁶

The conscious integration of "messages" from the unconscious is part of the
"dialectical discussion"⁴⁷ of Jung's "interpretative method."⁴⁸ Jung postul-
ated two levels of the unconscious, it should be noted: the personal
unconscious or shadow whose contents are determined by the personal exper-
iences and attitudes of the individual and a collective unconscious which
is independent of the conscious mind and untouchable by personal experience.⁴⁹

Jung's model of the psychic unconscious diverges from that of Freud, probably
the most widely known alternative model. While Jung was indebted to Freud
for his "significant and most valuable" contribution of developing a
practical method for exploring the unconscious through dream analysis,⁵⁰
Jung split with him over certain theoretical interpretations. Jung saw
two limitations in Freud's explanation of the unconscious: namely, the
tendency to use reductive causalism as the sole mode of explanation and
the tendency to treat the existence of unconscious complexes as only sub-
jectively determined.⁵¹ Furthermore, the Lacanian derivative of psychoanalysis
used in communication studies has identified the linguistic manifestations
of unconscious processes, as in the spoken recapitulation of a dream or
in free association, with the nature of the unconscious itself.⁵² Jung departs
from the psychoanalytic approach of Freud and its derivatives in three crucial
respects. According to Jung's model: a) the unconscious is characterized
by a teleological purpose in addition to the causal factors which determine
it; b) the unconscious has an objective reality and includes collective contents;
c) the unconscious manifests itself in other ways besides linguistically.

In fact, the unconscious for Jung is a necessary part of psychic wholeness
or equilibrium, while the pathological splitting-off of autonomous unconscious

complexes constitutes a special case. Analytical psychology has, therefore, a broader basis of application than psychoanalysis, which is restricted to the pathological:

In so far as psychoanalysis is a branch of medical psychology, it concerns itself solely with abnormal cases and should therefore be reserved for the physician; but dream psychology, studied for the light it throws upon normal human behaviour, will be of ever-increasing interest to thoughtful people generally, and especially to those with educational inclinations.⁵³

In speaking of the purposive nature of unconscious activity, we touch upon the central discovery made by Jung concerning the psyche, i.e. its natural tendency to wholeness. The process of realizing the unconscious he called individuation, that is, the psychological work of a lifetime:

From one point of view the unconscious is a purely natural process without design, but from another it has that potential directedness which is characteristic of all energy processes. When the conscious mind participates actively and experiences each stage of the process, or at least understands it intuitively, then the next image always starts off on the higher level that has been won, and purposiveness develops.⁵⁴

Jung called the potential state of integration of consciousness and the unconscious, the self, by which he meant a psychological postulate beyond the powers of comprehension or ordinary knowledge. The symbol of this postulated condition, however, arises in dreams and other spontaneous unconscious manifestations, as:

. . . an image born of nature's own workings, a natural symbol far removed from all conscious intention.⁵⁵

While the symbol of the self has somewhat the character of a goal attained, something that is won by great sacrifice or travail, in actual experience it is encountered as that center of the greater personality which stands poised opposite the ego. Hence the ego, as center of consciousness and subject of all integrative work on the unconscious begins to sense an "other" with whom it must reckon or establish an on-going relationship. "Sensing" is, in

Jung's terms, the most accurate way of describing the apperceptive nature of the relationship, since nothing is knowable about the contents of the self as a whole. The ego is, in fact, the only knowable content of the self.⁵⁶

Analytical psychology and communication

Establishing a relationship with the self not only seems to be the natural goal of individuation, but also affects the nature of interhuman relationships:

This archetypal connection raises the interhuman relationship out of the realm of personal entanglements and sets it in the wider context of a transpersonal, objective psychic process with infinitely subtle shades of meaning that can be properly expressed only in symbols. In the world of consciousness the transpersonal, paradoxical unity of the self, the alchemical 'conjunction of sun and moon,' is experienced as a 'synthesis of I and Thou.'⁵⁷

While in one sense a final state of integration can never be reached, just because the unconscious is infinitely greater than consciousness and can not be totally integrated, the symbol of the self constitutes the central uniting principle which, I propose to show, enters the experience of the individual as an on-going process of communication. In the words of Marie-Louise von Franz, the self is:

. . . the preconscious ground of all communication and community among men.⁵⁸

The individuation process entails a concomitant process of communication, whereby unconscious contents come to consciousness as static images and ideas at first, and by conscious acceptance are activated into living functions of the psyche:

. . . conscious assimilation of [unconscious] contents leads us, by a natural route, back to ourselves as an actual, living something, poised between two world-pictures and their darkly discerned potencies.⁵⁹

The state of being poised between two viewpoints, that of consciousness and that of the unconscious depends on a communicative relationship. The two

viewpoints must be discriminated and related at the same time:

The ego keeps its integrity only if it does not identify with one of the opposites, and if it understands how to hold the balance between them. This is possible only if it remains conscious of both at once.⁶⁰

Thus psychic integration is based on communication as a means while the goal of wholeness, the self, constitutes the psychological ground of possibility of human communication. Individuation and communication, as this thesis will demonstrate, are inextricably linked.

Metaphors used by Jung to describe the individuation process support the contention that individuation is based on communication. For example, in tracing the psychology of the unconscious from Freud to Jung, Liliane Frey-Rohn treats Jung's method as hermeneutic.⁶¹

It was in Jung's personal encounter with alchemy, as presaged in his own dreams (MDR, p. 202) and later in his explorations of the alchemical texts themselves, that the communicative relationship between consciousness and the unconscious became clearly distinguished. In MDR (p. 209), Jung says:

As I worked with fantasies, I became aware that the unconscious undergoes or produces change. Only after I had familiarized myself with alchemy did I realize that the unconscious is a process, and that the psyche is transformed or developed by the relationship of the ego to the contents of the unconscious.

The symbol of the self guides this communication intrapsychically, i.e., within the individual, between consciousness and the unconscious, but also extrapsychically in interhuman relationships. Alchemy confirmed this double process in its symbolism, while adding yet a further dimension, that of a communicative process between the psyche and the physical world of matter:

For the alchemists inorganic matter was not 'dead' but something unknown and alive, which was not to be merely manipulated technically but with which one must establish a relationship in order to investigate it.⁶²

As Jung suggests, physical science has reached the necessity of such an outlook in our century.⁶³

The thesis will discuss the perplexities for our century of the alchemical worldview, to begin with, and consider Jung's groundbreaking psychological interpretation of the opus. The alchemical motto of "solve et coagula" (dissolve and unite, or "out of dissolution, unity"⁶⁴) and the alchemical stages serve to illustrate the psychological dynamic in the individuation process of projection and transformation. Inasmuch as alchemy provides living symbols to speak about psychological processes, the central symbol of Mercurius will be discussed as evidence for a communication process in individuation.

Following the alchemical motif of the chemical wedding or coniunctio of Sol and Luna, the two psychological functions which are "wed" or synthesized in individuation and which underlie the possibility of human communication will be described. They are: a) the ability to discriminate and b) the ability to enter into relationships with others. Finally, the role of the unconscious is discussed, first in the communication process intrapsychically and next in the communication process extrapsychically. Without an active or conscious acknowledgement of the objective existence of the unconscious, in its psychic and physical aspects, the polarity requisite for dialogue with the unconscious is missing and hence intrapsychic communication is impossible. Lacking a receptacle into which projections cast onto external persons or objects can be withdrawn, an objective communicative relationship with extrapsychic reality is also preempted.

In the concluding remarks, the consequences of tracing the communication process in the individual will be considered. Inasmuch as the individuated individual is opposed to mass man, individuated communication stands opposed

to mass communication and the psychic split on which it is based. In other words, individuated communication may be seen as a means:

. . . to control the otherwise unavoidable dissolution into the mass psyche.⁶⁶

Postscript

The reader will want to know at the outset, perhaps, in what sense "communication" is meant in this thesis. Here is a terminological requirement which, as I have shown, is counter to Jung's method. Any attempt at concise definition or intellectual formulation at the beginning of one's search is made at the expense of the unconscious. It is only by keeping close to the experience of communication rather than its linguistic reconstruction to start with, that communication can be enhanced, inasmuch as this requires experience of the unconscious. Rather than terminological rigour, our scientific endeavours require creative replenishment. As Jung sums up:

It is far more to the point to give [the reader] some conception of what the actual possibilities of experience are. Nobody can really understand these things unless he has experienced them himself. I am therefore much more interested in pointing out the possible ways to such experience than in devising intellectual formulae which, for lack of experience, must necessarily remain an empty web of words.⁶⁷

Therefore the meaning of communication is ambiguous at the outset of the thesis. It is both the relationship to the unconscious and a quality of that relationship. It is both the relationship with other persons and with material reality and a prerequisite for such relationship. Above all, it is the method for coming to a psychological understanding of oneself, i.e., a scientific understanding, and prerequisite for such understanding. As such, communication in the Jungian sense is only partly amenable to scientific explanation since it rests, psychologically speaking, on the unknowable ground of the union of

all opposites. As Jung says metaphorically, we must:

. . . loosen up our rigid psychologie à compartiments by putting in a few communicating doors.⁶⁸

Furthermore, the communicability of our findings puts a limiting constraint on their scientificity, as Franz observes:

. . . there can be no absolute truth and . . . the researcher's mental and general psychological condition, and along with it the Zeitgeist (spirit of the time) and the communicability of what one's investigations have revealed, all play a relativizing part.⁶⁹

Like the symbol of Mercurius, which invokes the essence of what we wish to understand by communication, it is everywhere to be found, mobile, connecting, yet impossible to catch in definitional form. The closest I can suggest as a point of departure is that communication in the Jungian sense is like a psychic connection, or psychic connectedness, a process of relating everything to itself, or oneself to the self via the psyche.

Taking a dynamic, psychological approach to communication suggests that communication is not a given, it does not simply exist "out there." It happens as a process involving the psyche of an individual or individuals. At the beginning of individuation, communication fragments experience, working through projection. As the goal of individuation, which is never finally reached except as an on-going process, communication integrates experience, working through symbols; projections are withdrawn leading to psychic transformation. As the symbol of self is the ever-present goal, individuated communication is the means of realizing this goal as a process in the actual psychic experience of the individual.

In attempting to compare the Jungian approach to communication with other theories or approaches in the field of communication, it becomes clear immediately that no existing approach offers a psychologically integrated method

of understanding communication, in so far as all other approaches adopt an intellectual method, regardless whether they stress theory or practice, and no other approach considers the psychic basis of communication in the unconscious and in experience. Where the unconscious is considered, as in the psychoanalytic approach of Lacan, it is misrepresented as we have shown, largely because of methodological limitations, i.e., by attempting to get in touch with the unconscious via language rather than via the whole of experience. The only writer to my knowledge who has attempted to consider communication as the bridge between the world of substance (physis) and the world of form (psyche) is Gregory Bateson. Interestingly enough, comparisons could be made between the latter's cybernetic approach to mind and Jung's characterization of the psyche as a self-regulating system. Furthermore, Bateson sets the pursuits of the alchemists in the tradition of those who inquired into the pattern of things rather than the substance of things. The alchemical approach is a historical predecessor of an information view of the world, i.e., as patterns of difference. As Bateson writes:

The mental world - the mind - the world of information processing - is not limited by the skin . . . We thus get a picture of the mental world which has somehow jumped loose from our conventional picture of the physical world. This is not new, and for historic background we go again to the alchemists and Gnostics.⁷⁰

If communication is a perceived difference, perhaps the alchemical vision of the goal, expressed paradoxically as "the stone that is no stone" is, above all, a vision of communication. In order to find the stone, the alchemist had to enter into a relationship of deep communication with the unconscious.

CHAPTER 2:

The Alchemical Tradition



2...

Rumpite libros, ne corda vestra rumpantur.

Summary

In the opening chapter on alchemy, I wish to consider the difficulties alchemy presents for modern scientific thought, on the one hand, and the modern scientific prejudices which have prevented entry into the worldview of the alchemist, on the other. The alchemical worldview is distinguished by a feeling of participation in nature and a belief in the life of matter. When one considers the origins of the art, one is drawn into the paradoxical quest for philosophical, not vulgar, gold. While work in the laboratory was the crucial basis of the work, alchemy was as much psychic as physical and therefore combined chemical experimentation with a psychological process of integration as experienced by the alchemist. Entry into the opus can thus be made through the mythological language of the texts and through the hints the alchemists gave of the psychic aspects of the work. Although Jung was not the first to offer a psychological interpretation of alchemy, his explanation of the art through the notions of individuation, projection and transformation, forms a unique contribution to the historiography of alchemy.

Text

a) The Difficulty of Entry into the Magnum Opus

Turning to pre-science

At first glance, alchemy hardly seems to constitute a legitimate area of study for the serious scholar. Yet changes in attitudes toward science over the last decades have given the study of alchemy more credibility.

While the modern Western paradigm of science and technology is found to be lacking, more and more interest is being given to the historical conditions in which it is rooted, that is, in Europe of the Middle Ages. Out of a concern for what the present century may learn from the past, Carl G. Jung devoted over thirty years of his life to the probing of alchemical riddles:

However remote alchemy may seem to us today, we should not underestimate its cultural importance for the Middle Ages. Today is the child of the Middle Ages and it cannot disown its parents.⁷¹

A second trend has appeared alongside the increasing disillusionment with the notion of intellectual and technical "progress" promised by the Enlightenment. Doubt in reason's all-pervading hegemony has loosened the corsets of intellectual centrism which prevented modern European scholars from treating other cultures or other epochs as worthy intellectual partners.

Mircea Eliade describes the moral consequences of science's triumph:

For close on two centuries the European scientific spirit has made prodigious efforts to explain the world so as to conquer and transform it. Ideologically, this triumph of science has manifested itself in a faith in unlimited progress and in the idea that the more 'modern' we become the more likely we are to approach absolute truth and the full plenitude of human dignity. . . Having for so long (and so heroically!) followed the path which we believed to be the best and only one worthy of the intelligent, self-respecting individual, and having in the process sacrificed the best part of our soul in order to satisfy the colossal intellectual demands of scientific

and industrial progress, we have grown suspicious of the greatness of primitive cultures.⁷²

Eliade likens periods in European history preceding the achievements of the scientific method to traditional cultures existing today, in that both are considered primitive, i.e. inferior, by those condescending scholars partisan to the intellectual values of the 18th and 19th centuries. Eliade considers it a mistake of historiography to disqualify alchemy as a pseudo-science, or to treat it merely as a rudimentary phase of chemistry. To be understood, alchemy must be studied within its particular historical and cultural context, for according to Eliade:

There is, indeed, only one way of understanding a cultural phenomenon which is alien to one's own ideological pattern, and that is to place oneself at its very centre and from there to track down all the values that radiate from it . . . Before we proceed to judge it we must fully understand it and become imbued, as it were, with its ideology, whatever form it may take - myth, symbol, rite, social attitude.⁷³

Attempts to study alchemy as a whole, "from the center" are overshadowed to some extent by the legacy of research into alchemy left by 19th century historians of chemistry. The historian tended to look for "proof" that alchemy was indeed the precursor of modern chemistry and thus emphasized alchemical texts which foreshadowed the scientific method. Unfortunately,

. . . these interpretations of alchemical writings paid less attention to the theoretical world of which they were part than to those values which properly belong to . . . experimental science.⁷⁴

Modern scepticism

In order to offset the usual doubt aroused whenever alchemy is mentioned, I would like to consider the difficulty for our century of taking alchemy seriously, of entering into the alchemist's peculiar spiritual worldview

and metaphoric language. Granted that some derision is almost inevitable given the prevalence of entirely different intellectual standards today. Jung himself was sceptical when he first encountered Silberer's psychological interpretation of alchemy around 1914, as he says in MDR (p. 204):

At the time his book was published, I regarded alchemy as something off the beaten track and rather silly, much as I appreciated Silberer's anagogic or constructive point of view.

It was not until 1928, when he received Richard Wilhelm's translation of The Secret of the Golden Flower, a Chinese alchemical text, and following a number of dreams which referred to alchemy, that Jung began to seriously investigate the art. He commissioned booksellers to hunt out original manuscripts and early printed works and assembled one of the most complete libraries of primary sources in existence at the time.⁷⁵

Though prompted by a desire to discover their meaning, Jung's first perusal of the books he acquired was laid over with the prejudices of his time as he admits in MDR (p. 204):

To be sure, the texts still seemed to me blatant nonsense, but here and there would be passages that seemed significant to me, and occasionally I even found a few sentences which I thought I could understand.

For the next decade, Jung studied the language of alchemy in an attempt to penetrate the art, while keeping his researches apart from his therapeutic practice so as not to prejudice the study with interpolations from his clinical and analytical work in psychology. He gradually succeeded in developing a lexicon of key terms (MDR, p. 205):

In the course of time I assembled several thousand such key phrases and words, and had volumes filled with excerpts. I worked along philological lines, as if I were trying to solve the riddle of an unknown language. In this way the alchemical mode of expression gradually yielded up its meaning.

It was not until 1935 that Jung made his interest in alchemy public at the

Eranos Conference in Ancona. By this time, he was convinced of the relevance of alchemy to depth psychology and of the analogies between alchemical processes and the psychic process in which he was primarily interested (MDR, p. 205). But it was not until 1944 that Jung published his first major work on alchemy under the title Psychologie und Alchemie. Yet twenty-six years later, Jung still felt that his work on alchemy had - with the exception of a few scholars - met largely with "stony incomprehension".⁷⁶

Jung's initial bafflement and the many years it took him to come to grips with alchemy seems to justify this lengthy treatment of the difficulty of entering into the study of it. Neither do I wish to underplay the value of intellectual scepticism which our century entertains. Scepticism serves to check an overly enthusiastic and perhaps uncritical acceptance of obscure or occult knowledge. Jung's attitude in Psychologie und Alchemie is exemplary of such caution:

I for my part prefer the precious gift of doubt, for the reason that it does not violate the virginity of things beyond our ken.⁷⁷

This general framework provides a guiding thread to steer between a rationalistic dismissal of alchemy and a too hasty acceptance of its obscurity.

Assuming, therefore, some sympathy from the reader for the possible insights to be gained from a look at the alchemical world and the requisite open-mindedness towards its unfamiliar terms of reference, let us consider briefly the written legacy of the alchemists.

The legacy of alchemical texts

Jung gives four groupings of alchemical texts, from ancient authors including the Greeks and their texts transmitted by the Arabs, to the early and late Latinists and ending with texts in modern European languages from the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, which was the high point of alchemical philosophy. Later writings were part of alchemy's decline and are not considered reliable by Jung.⁷⁸ Something must be said about the error incurred when these texts are taken at face value. In many cases, authorship and even period is difficult to determine, since:

. . . the alchemists tended to put their ideas into the mouths of their greatest authorities. Writings bearing the names of famous alchemists often turn out to have been written by later imitators, who have thus created an extraordinary confusion.⁷⁹

In spite of feeling part of a tradition, alchemists, - unlike most esoteric disciplines - did not form associations or secret societies. They were, as Jung puts it, decided solitaries who said things each in his own way and reconstructed the art from first principles:

Each worked in the laboratory for himself and suffered from loneliness. On the other hand quarrels were rare. Their writings are relatively free of polemic, and the way they quote each other shows a remarkable agreement on first principles, even if one cannot understand what they are really agreeing about.⁸⁰

The apparent confusion which abounds in the usage of terms and description of procedures and materials, as well as the vagueness concerning the results to be obtained presents frustration not only for the modern reader. Jung concludes that:

. . . one must not imagine for a moment that the alchemists always understood one another. They themselves complain about the obscurity of the texts, and occasionally betray their inability to understand even their own symbols and symbolic figures.⁸¹

Standards within the art

Gradually, as one attempts to approach the texts in a more meaningful way, it becomes clear that present-day standards of scholarship - such as clarity, conciseness and consistency - did not pertain to alchemical writings. Yet the alchemist did apply standards to the art, for reference is made to those

whose metaphorical understanding has been opened by God or by a master, in contrast to the foolish who are infatuated with literal interpretations. Not only did alchemists themselves distinguish the honest from the dishonest alchemist, but Jung also recommends circumspection to the modern reader:

It goes without saying that there are good and bad authors in alchemical literature as elsewhere. There are productions by charlatans, simpletons, and swindlers. Such inferior writings are easily recognized by their endless recipes, their careless and uneducated composition, their studied mystification, their excruciating dulness [sic], and their shameless insistence on the making of gold. Good books can always be recognized by the industry, care and visible mental struggles of the author. 82

Within this - for us quite unusual - framework of reputable and un reputable texts, forged and authentic texts, I have relied on Jung's unique selection of texts. ⁸³ Not only did he have an exhaustive collection, but distinguished them according to psychological criteria of authenticity as the last quote indicates. A qualification must thus be made of the alchemists which are particular to the present study. The reflective man who sought something more profound and more lasting than mere material gain is for the most part considered.

One of the difficulties of dealing with such an obscure and multifarious subject such as alchemy is the tendency, as Eliade has suggested, of interpreting it in the light of one's own intellectual prejudices. To be clear about the context in which the present study is undertaken, it is useful to consider Eliade's description of three major approaches to the study of alchemy. First, there is the largest group comprised by historians of science or chemistry such as Marcelin Berthelot, F. Sherwood Taylor and John Read, who have regarded alchemy as an embryonic stage of chemistry with the selectiveness that this attitude entails. The second group is that of the traditionalists, as Eliade calls them, who are drawn by the significance of hermetic symbolism and view alchemy on its own terms as an operational and spiritual discipline. Among them are Fulcanelli and Evola. The third approach is the

psychological interpretation of alchemy. The chief representative in this category is, of course, Carl Jung, whose work Eliade considers to constitute, ⁸⁴ "a chapter apart in the historiography of alchemy." Other representatives in this category are Marie-Louise von Franz, James Hillman, Edward Edinger and Charles Poncé, all of whom have known Jung and/or studied his work and have lectured on alchemy. Thus far, only von Franz has published any new material which, as she explains, is difficult to come by:

. . . it is very depressing to lecture on alchemy in the Jung Institute. Each time I get into difficulties, because you cannot say or find anything important which Jung has not already said. The few texts he does not mention in his books or passages are mostly worthless. I have not yet found any revelant or interesting passage of an alchemical text from which Jung has not already extracted the essence.⁸⁵

Origins of the art

To understand why a psychological interpretation is necessary, let us consider the origins of the art. To the alchemists, the art was sacred and had its origins in the mythical past. According to Bernoulli:

Some say that its founder was the Hellenistic Hermes Trismegistos, a divine figure compounded of Thoth, the old Egyptian god of science and the Greek Hermes, with his diverse manifestations: guide of souls (Hermes Psychopompos), master of discourse, crafty messenger of the gods, carrier of the highest knowledge. Still others attribute the invention of alchemy to Tubal-cain or Moses, not to mention vague imputations of divine origin.⁸⁶

Hints at a greater and mysterious past prevail. C. A. Burland compares the development of alchemy with one of its own internal symbols:

In itself it was to be the foundation of a path of discovery which was ever seeking to return on itself and discover its own roots. It was strangely enough the equivalent of the serpent Ouroboros devouring its own tail.⁸⁷

Historically alchemy appeared in the peculiar and eclectic atmosphere of fading antiquity. Old currents were being submerged by new streams whose

origins, it turns out, were even older. Bernoulli shows that alchemy was formed out of a cross-pollination of elements of Greek culture founded on the theories of Aristotle and Plato, the late echoes of Neoplatonism and Gnosis, together with the influences of the technical arts of metallurgy and embalming of the Near East and Egypt. Gnosis and alchemy constituted parallel trends which were exterminated by the rise of the Catholic Church. Alchemy incorporated much of the Gnostic tradition and lived on thanks to its adoption by the Arabs, who translated the early texts and reintroduced
88
alchemy to Europe through Spain.

Eliade further points out that alchemy was fertilized by both the speculative, intellectual approach of Greek science and the practical knowledge of the ancient trades of mining, smelting and metallurgy, whose mystic secrets were passed down directly from master to novice rather than by writings:

Although the problem of the historical origins of Alexandrian alchemy is still unsolved, one could explain the sudden appearance of alchemical texts at the beginning of the Christian era as a result of the encounter of differing currents. On the one hand, these were the esoteric currents, represented by the Mysteries, neo-Pythagorism, neo-Orphism, astrology, the 'revealed wisdom of the East', gnosticism, etc. - currents arising from the work of cultivated people, the 'intelligentsia', and, on the other hand, those arising from popular traditions which acted as the custodians of the trade-secrets and the very ancient magical techniques.⁸⁹

The life of matter

Although the origins may be impossible to ascertain exactly, historians of
90
science such as F. Sherwood Taylor, as well as those with more spiritual interests, such as Bernoulli, Eliade and Jung, are all agreed that the desire to counterfeit or imitate gold-making was not the starting point of alchemy as an autonomous discipline. Eliade makes the interesting hypothesis, that it was in fact the belief of the artisans in the life of matter, which provided

the fascination and motivation for the alchemists to pursue their operations, and not an interest in empirical science:

Much more than the philosophic theory of the unity of matter, it was probably the old conception of the Earth-Mother, bearer of embryo-ores, which crystallized faith in artificial transmutation (that is, operated in a laboratory). . . But above all it was the experimental discovery of the living Substance, such as it was felt by the artisans, which must have played the decisive role.⁹¹

While the alchemist carried out physical operations in the laboratory, his purpose was not to understand the structure of matter, but rather to bring about, as we shall discuss later, the "passion," "death," and "marriage" of chemical substances in order to transform matter and with it human life.

Origins of psychological interpretation

Although Jung's interpretation is unique for its exhaustive study of countless original texts and the scope of its theory, Jung himself credits Herbert Silberer with the first psychological interpretation of alchemy in Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik in 1914.⁹² An interesting account of the development of the psychological approach is given by Luther H. Martin Jr. in his article, "A History of the Psychological Interpretation of Alchemy." In addition to Silberer, Martin goes on to include an even earlier writer among Jung's predecessors, an American:

. . . to fully understand the possibility of the application of a psychologically informed hermeneutic to alchemical symbolism is to step back yet another fifty-seven years to the theosophical writings of Ethan Allen Hitchcock.⁹³

Hitchcock was the first to suggest that the subject of alchemy was man himself and that the transmutation of metals was a symbolic enactment of man's transformation from evil to good, i.e., redemption or salvation as it has been variously called. These basic points were elaborated in Jung's psychological thesis. Jung's approach, however, was attacked both by the "hermeticists" and "traditionalists", and by theologians and philosophers for "psychologizing"

hermetic symbols and operations on the one hand, and religious or metaphysical notions on the other. His repeated rejoinder was that every religious or mystical experience implies a psychological phenomena whose content and structure can be studied by psychology:

The competence of psychology as an empirical science only goes so far as to establish, on the basis of comparative research, whether for instance the imprint found in the psyche can or cannot reasonably be termed a 'God-image'. . . The religious man is free to accept whatever metaphysical explanations he pleases about the origin of these images.

Ironically enough, Jung's approach has been favourably received by the historians of science, notably Walter Pagel (Isis, 39, pp. 44-8), Robert Multhauf (Isis, 62, pp. 236-238 and Ambix VI, 1957, pp. 47-51) and Gerard Heym (Ambix, III, 1948, pp. 64-7).

Language of mythology

Jung has opened up an avenue of interpretation which was unavailable to other researchers. The mistake of historians of science has been to compare alchemy to modern chemistry, according to Jung, whereas its true significance appears when considered in the light of the history of religion, comparative mythology and depth psychology. The language of the alchemists is the key according to Jung:

Had [the historian] only asked himself whether the chemistry of alchemy was authentic or not, that is, whether the alchemists were really chemists or merely spoke a chemical jargon, then the texts themselves would have suggested a line of observation other than the purely chemical. The scientific equipment of the chemist does not, however, fit him to pursue this other line, since it leads straight into the history of religion. Thus, it was a philologist, Reitzenstein, whom we have to thank for preliminary researches of the greatest value in this field.⁹⁴

The insight of Reitzenstein concerning the cosmological significance of alchemical language leads to caution concerning what language one must adopt in order to

analyze alchemical texts. Yet in spite of a psychological framework of analysis, Jung confesses, religious and mythical images break through:

I hope the reader will not be offended if my exposition sounds like a Gnostic myth. We are moving in those psychological regions where, as a matter of fact, Gnosis is rooted . . . Myth is the primordial language natural to these psychic processes, and no intellectual formulation comes anywhere near the richness and expressiveness of mythical imagery.⁹⁵

Jung was also aware of the dogmatic quality of mythological terms and metaphors. He therefore pointedly disclaimed any interest in either metaphysics or theology, however much the language of the latter crept into his work:

So if I make use of certain expressions that are reminiscent of the language of theology, this is due solely to the poverty of language, and not because I am of the opinion that the subject-matter of theology is the same as that of psychology. Psychology is very definitely not a theology; it is a natural science that seeks to describe experienceable psychic phenomena. In so doing it takes account of the way in which theology conceives and names them, because this hangs together with the phenomenology of the contents under discussion.⁹⁶

Participation in Nature

Jung's approach, therefore, is to consider alchemy as a sacred science, i.e., a practice which includes both the natural and the spiritual. Jung cites Evola's explanation that these spheres were not separate for mediaeval man, but rather constituted various aspects of a single knowledge:

The spiritual constitution of man in the pre-modern cycles of culture was such that each physical perception had simultaneously a psychic component which 'animated' it, adding a 'significance' to the base image, and at the same time a special and potent emotional tone.⁹⁷

Over the last three centuries man has increasingly experienced himself as separate from and even threatened by nature, leading to a split between the human realm and the world of matter. Mircea Eliade has called this process a "desanctification" of man's relation to nature. The alchemist, however,

thrived in an atmosphere of religious participation in the macrocosm:

It would be vain to wish to reconstitute [the alchemist's] experiences; too much time has elapsed since the cosmos has been desanctified as a result of the triumph of the experimental sciences. . . . But we have only to imagine a communion, no longer limited to the eucharistic elements of bread or wine, but extending to every kind of 'substance', in order to measure the distance separating a primitive religious experience from the modern experience of 'natural phenomena.'⁹⁸

Eliade's image of 'communion' between man and substance echoes Evola's description. Eliade goes on to point out that this sense of participation did not in any way exclude the possibility of logical thought or an understanding of causal relations. The point is, however, that logical thought was not detached from emotional and religious components.

Jung develops the contrast between the two types of thought, characterized by the analogical thinking of the alchemist and the directed thinking of the modern scientist respectively. He cites Lévy-Bruhl's notion of 'participation mystique', in which subject and object are one, as being appropriate to describe the alchemist's thought. ⁹⁹ Our scientifically trained minds, of course, treat subject and object as distinct and incommensurable:

Western man is held in thrall by the 'ten thousand things'; he sees only particulars, he is ego-bound and thing-bound, and unaware of the deep root of all being.¹⁰⁰

Jung's point is not to undermine the validity of modern scientific thought for it has after all led to many practical achievements; in addition, he placed his own work squarely in line with the demands of scientific rigour and empirical verification. However, in studying alchemy as well as Eastern or other cultures, he wished to relativize our scientific criteria or prejudices as it were, in order to understand these other ways of thinking. Nevertheless, it is still difficult for our century to accept, that although chemical

substances and processes could be discriminated by the alchemist, they were never considered apart from their larger cosmological significance:

. . . it is clear that a thinking dominated by cosmological symbolism created an experience of the world vastly different from that accessible to modern man. To symbolic thinking the world is not only 'alive' but also 'open': an object is never simply itself (as is the case with modern consciousness), it is also a sign of or a repository for, something else.¹⁰¹

The alchemical paradox: "tam ethice quam physice"

This baffling duality expressed as unity in alchemy, has evaded recognition by most previous scholars, chiefly because it goes against the empirical grain of modern science and differs from sheer esoteric mysticism or metaphysical speculation. Alchemy, as Jung stresses, is both experimental and symbolic:

Alchemy's 'tam ethice quam physice' (as much ethical - i.e., psychological - as physical) is impenetrable to our logic. If the alchemist is admittedly using the chemical process only symbolically, then why does he work in a laboratory with crucibles and alembics? And if, as he constantly asserts, he is describing chemical processes, why distort them past recognition with his mythological symbolisms?¹⁰²

Two erroneous explanations, according to Jung, have traditionally been given of the alchemist's motto "tam ethice quam physice." The first is to treat the motto as an alchemical version of the theory of correspondences which formed the background of much esoteric thinking. While this theory is the key to the alchemist's method according to Bernoulli,¹⁰³ Jung considers the theory of correspondences as a rationalization of experiences with matter which were beyond the alchemist's understanding:

The alchemist did not practice his art because he believed on theoretical grounds in correspondences; the point is that he had a theory of correspondence because he experienced the presence of pre-existing ideas in physical matter.¹⁰⁴

Eliade has made a similar point in arguing against the explanation that alchemy

sought to prove the long-standing tenet of Greek philosophy, namely, the unity of matter.¹⁰⁵ A second rationalization, according to Jung, originated with the alchemists and was taken up by modern interpreters; namely, that chemical secrets had to be disguised in the symbols of mythology in order to prevent charlatans from fabricating gold for selfish or evil purposes. Yet in the same treatise avowing the concealment of the ultimate secrets, the alchemist will assure that "aurum nostrum non est aurum vulgi" and that all recipes in any case are to be despised. Such seeming equivocation has an entirely different source as we shall see shortly. The fact is, Jung states, that the alchemists had nothing to divulge in the way of gold-making and thus no real advantage in mystification, since:

. . . it is certain beyond all doubt that no real tincture or artificial gold was ever produced during the many centuries of earnest endeavour.^{105A}

To consider the claims of secrecy as a sheer bluff does not hold up as an adequate measure for treating alchemy as a whole, says Jung, since numerous detailed, scholarly and essentially conscientious treatises were published anonymously out of dedication to the art. While there were, to be sure, many fraudulent productions, Jung argues against treating all alchemists under this rubric, since it clouds the basic question, why did they continue?

The importance of the laboratory

On the one hand, we see the alchemists clinging to chemical procedures which were, in chemical terms, nonsensical. Yet as long as the alchemists continued to work in the laboratory, they were gripped by an urgency and sense of possibility. As Jung points out:

To do them justice we must add that all knowledge of the nature

of chemistry and its limitations was still completely closed to them, so that they were as much entitled to hope as those who dreamed of flying and whose successors made the dream come true after all . . . what is more [the alchemist] could look back on a long tradition which contained not a few testimonies of such as had achieved the marvellous result.106

The decay of alchemy, in fact, is linked by Jung to the departure of the alchemists from the laboratory at the time of Jakob Boehme in the seventeenth century and their turning to Hermetic philosophy. The consequences of the loss of the empirical point significantly to its crucial role earlier:

Chemistry became natural science, whereas Hermetic philosophy lost the empirical ground from under its feet and aspired to bombastic allegories and inane speculations which were kept alive only by memories of a better time.107

On the one hand, therefore, chemical experimentation played an indispensable role in the alchemical search. Why then all the disclaimers to seeking real or vulgar gold? This apparent mystification, according to Jung, stemmed from an authentic mystery. Such mystery does not behave secretively, personally guarded by someone who is aware of its contents. Such mystery speaks a secret language and makes only vague hints since it is, in fact, virtually unknown. It was the numinous, compelling quality of this mystery which kept the alchemists searching for seventeen centuries. In locating this mystery outside of themselves, the alchemists were subject to the effects of unconscious projection, a process which lies at the heart of Jung's alchemical interpretation. As he writes:

I am therefore inclined to assume that the real root of alchemy is to be sought less in philosophical doctrines than in the projections of individual investigators. I mean by this that while working on his chemical experiments the operator had certain psychic experiences which appeared to him as the particular behaviour of the chemical process . . . He experienced his projection as a property of matter; but what he was in reality experiencing was his own unconscious.108

The reason for the apparent equivocation or mystification of the alchemist's

explanations becomes clear: projections are not made, they happen, while their author remains unaware of the complicity into which he is drawn with the external world. With the concept of projection, Jung was able to unravel and interpret the psychologically purposeful basis of alchemy and thus to revitalize its obscurity. In light of his discovery, any further doubt about the value of reconsidering alchemy for our age must be dispelled.

b) Entry into Alchemy through Psychological Notions

The psychological interpretation

Jung was encouraged in the psychological interpretation by hints made by the alchemists themselves which indicate that their goal was as much psychic as it was physical:

Whatever names the alchemists gave to the mysterious substance they sought to produce, it was always a celestial substance, i.e., something transcendental, which, in contrast to the perishability of all known matter, was incorruptible, inert as a metal or a stone, and yet alive, like an organic being, and at the same time a universal medicament.¹⁰⁹

The physical impossibility of such a substance, coupled with the compelling nature of its "aliveness," or numinous quality, suggested to Jung that its origins were in the psyche of the alchemist himself. He searched for further clues that the alchemists had recorded psychic experiences of any sort as opposed to recipes or "lab reports." The difficulty, of course, is that such experiences would be unconscious and would therefore remain unrecorded.

Jung did discover references to alchemical insight as in a vision or a dream.

Vision or understanding in a figurative sense is implied by such expressions as, "to see with mental eyes," and "eyes of the understanding and of the imagination." These and other examples:

. . . prove that during the practical work certain events of a

hallucinatory or visionary nature were perceived, which cannot be anything but projections of unconscious contents.¹¹¹

The second indication that alchemy in fact depicted an unconscious psychic process, lies in the frequent references to the psychological conditions of the opus and the moral attitude of the adept.¹¹² Thus Jung concluded that it did dawn on the alchemists that their work had to do with the human psyche, but only in the later period of writings:

The older alchemists were still so unconscious of the psychological implications of the opus that they understood their own symbols as mere allegories or - semiotically - as secret names for chemical combinations, thus stripping mythology, of which they made such copious use, of its true meaning and using only its terminology. Later this was to change, and already in the fourteenth century it began to dawn on them that the lapis was more than a chemical substance.¹¹³

Although the great majority of alchemists did not know what they were dealing with:

. . . it is equally certain that adepts like Morienus, Dorn, Michael Maier and others knew in their way what they were doing. It was this knowledge, and not their greed for gold, that kept them labouring at the apparently hopeless opus, for which they sacrificed their money, their goods, and their life.¹¹⁴

In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to outline the key psychological notions of projection and transformation which Jung employed to interpret the alchemical opus, notions without which it is impossible to understand the paradoxical and contradictory statements of the alchemists.

Projection: confrontation with the unconscious

The first notion is that of projection, a dynamic of the psyche which transfers spontaneous images of the unconscious onto phenomena occurring in nature or in the laboratory which are inexplicable or unknown. This process was, of course, unknown to the alchemists themselves, who sincerely believed they were

describing events outside of themselves:

. . . the alchemist, without realizing it and certainly without wanting it, fell victim in the loneliness and obscure problems of his work, to the promptings and unconscious assumptions of his own mind, . . . whose meaning he thought he understood in his own way; but in reality they touched and stimulated his unconscious.115

It is not the content of the projection which is crucial, but the unconscious relationship of the subject or person to something unknown which he cannot ignore and which calls for "explanation":

Practical experience [in modern psychotherapy] shows us again and again that any prolonged preoccupation with an unknown object acts as an almost irresistible bait for the unconscious to project itself into the unknown nature of the object and to accept the resultant perception, and the interpretation deduced from it, as objective.116

We are accustomed to limiting the notion of projection to everyday psychological phenomena of an interpersonal and emotional kind. In discovering this same dynamic in the work of the alchemists, i.e., in the relationship between man and matter, Jung brought the problem uncomfortably close to the workings of modern scientific thought, as Marie-Louise von Franz reminds us:

Although little notice has been taken of Jung's views so far, contemporary research in the fundamental problem of the sciences has already come very close to them, since today it is generally recognized that scientific knowledge is based on the creation of models in the researcher. It is still the case, however, that the preconscious origins of our conceptual models, which are observable in dreams, are not closely examined, so that the aspect of the projection which is peculiar to each model is still to a large extent ignored.117

It is important to note that Jung was not projecting conclusions from psychology onto alchemy. Although I have chosen to begin with the psychological framework before looking at the symbols of alchemy, the line of Jung's argument always moves from the alchemical material to the psychological interpretation. Jung took care to base his descriptive framework on modern material first, in order to validate it, before applying his analysis to historical examples.

The process of projection occurs whenever man, "tries to explore an empty darkness and involuntarily fills it with living form."¹¹⁹ Most important, the projection is experienced as an objective reality striking the person from outside. A dialectic arises between perceiver and object, for the more externalized the projection the more the perceiver in fact identifies with the object:

All projections are unconscious identifications with the object. Every projection is simply there as an uncriticized datum of experience, and is recognized for what it is only very much later, if ever. Everything that we today would call 'mind' and 'insight' was, in earlier centuries, projected into things, and even today individual idiosyncracies are presupposed by many people to be generally valid.¹²⁰

The projection is experienced as a given, so that the person to whom it occurs fails to ask where it comes from or to what end. Yet projections do have a purposive function in that they allow contents from the unconscious to be integrated into consciousness:

Projection is always an indirect process of becoming conscious - indirect because of the check exercised by the unconscious mind - by the pressure of traditional or conventional ideas which take the place of real experience and prevent it from happening. One feels that one possesses a valid truth concerning the unknown, and this makes any real knowledge of it impossible. The unconscious factor must necessarily have been something that was incompatible with the conscious attitude.¹²¹

The integrative function of the projection is the same whether the unconscious contents concern our personal psyche or impersonal contents dealing with nature, the cosmos, or the structure of matter. In the case of alchemy, it was the latter, impersonal, contents which were incompatible with the conscious attitudes created by the culturally determining dogma of the Catholic Church.

The predominant role of the Catholic Church and of ecclesiastical thought in the Middle Ages forced alchemy to take up a compensatory role to that of the Church, preserving that which the Church was unable to accept; for instance, the classical Greek feeling for nature. Such compensation was necessary as

the conscious attitude of the Church progressively split off from man's dark, instinctual side:

Whereas in the Church the increasing differentiation of ritual and dogma alienated consciousness from its natural roots in the unconscious, alchemy and astrology were ceaselessly engaged in preserving the bridge to nature, i.e., to the unconscious psyche, from decay.¹²²

Since the contents of consciousness and the unconscious are always relative to each other, the spiritual, moral, intellectual emphasis of the Church forced natural man underground, so to speak. Although alchemy borrowed much of its symbolism from Christianity, it existed on the edge of heresy and was opposed by the Church.¹²³ In spite of this ban, many isolated or rebellious clerics were serious alchemists, although they also considered themselves good Christians. Among these were Albertus Magnus, Vincent de Beauvais, Roger Bacon, Alain de Lille, Raymond Lully and possibly Thomas Aquinas, as Franz¹²⁴ has suggested. Their defiance of official decrees was probably sparked by an inner urge to relate their limited knowledge to the vast unknown which they experienced as the mystery of matter.

Thus the alchemists' philosophy was in fact projected psychology as Jung put it. Because of their ignorance of the structure of matter and of chemical processes, and because of the incompatibility of material concerns with the spiritual emphasis of the Catholic Church, the alchemists could only express their unconscious preoccupations with the life of matter and the processes of nature via projections. The role of projection in Jung's psychological interpretation of alchemy, therefore, is the confrontation of consciousness with the unconscious via its externalized form in matter.

Transformation: the goal of integration

We have said that the purpose of projection is to allow the possibility of integrating unconscious contents into consciousness. The idea of integration

has been called by various terms in Jung's psychology, such as wholeness or individuation, but in the alchemical context it is referred to as transformation. The latter term has advantages over these other terms, in that it does not imply that the goal is ever finally reached. As Jung points out, the completely integrated individual does not exist:

What the nature is of that unity which in some incomprehensible way embraces the antagonistic elements eludes our human judgment, for the simple reason that nobody can say what a being is like that unites the full range of consciousness with that of unconsciousness. . . . We might therefore say that perhaps the One is like a man, that is determined and determinable and yet undetermined and indeterminable. Always one ends up with paradoxes when knowledge reaches its limits.¹²⁵

Transformation as a goal, however, does imply change in a particular direction, i.e., from a natural, imperfect state to a condition of "subtle embodiment," i.e. of relatively greater spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness.

Using the symbols familiar to them, the alchemists identified the natural condition with evil and thus saw its transformation as a process of salvation or redemption. Although the moral aspect of transformation is difficult to ascertain psychologically, nevertheless, the transformation implies an overcoming of any dualistic way of interpreting experience, whether it is as good and evil or as some other pair of opposites. As Jung explains, when the difficult operation of thinking in paradoxes has succeeded: "...the process of transformation or integration sets to work."¹²⁶

As this quote implies, the transformation is not a single experience. It is rather a gradual process, by which consciousness integrates previously unconscious contents and in so doing withdraws the projections through which the latter are made manifest. Thus the process of transformation is linked to the withdrawal of projections.

Withdrawal of projections

In order to become aware of a projection, one must pass through five levels of consciousness. Jung illustrates this process by taking the incident of a tree speaking in a fairytale.¹²⁷ At the first level of consciousness, one perceives that the tree has spoken. At the second level of consciousness one differentiates between the object "tree" and a spirit or daemon which inhabits the tree and seems to make the tree itself speak. At the third level, the stage of moral judgment, evil is ascribed to the spirit. At the fourth level, which according to Jung is the level generally prevalent today, one denies the objective existent of any daemon and disqualifies the experience as an auditory hallucination peculiar to the person who heard it. At the fifth level, one acknowledges that the "voice," though not the tree nor any spirit implanted in the tree, is nevertheless an actual phenomenon whose origin lies in the unknown realm of the hearer's psyche. At this level the unconscious is assumed to exist and to have a reality like any other existent:

The crucial point is that so long as the evil spirit cannot be proved to be a subjective psychic experience, then even trees and other suitable objects would have, once again, to be seriously considered as its lodging places.¹²⁸

Thus any attempt to consider alchemical secrets as "only" projections or figments of imagination falls through. Jung placed great value in projections, since they are the key to a conscious integration of the unconscious.

The process of individuation

Taken together, the notions of projection and transformation mark two crucial stages in what Jung called the process of individuation. Thus the confrontation with the unconscious via projections and the subsequent integration of unconscious

contents in the transformation constitutes a "dialectical discussion" between consciousness and the unconscious. ¹²⁹ Furthermore, this discussion seeks its goal independently of external factors. The goal is in all ages and cultures the same, according to Jung: a tending to wholeness, to the condition of homo totus, the as yet unmanifest but greater, future man. Alchemy provides a pictorially compelling example of just such a search for wholeness. ¹³⁰ The centrality of the process of individuation in alchemy is confirmed by the fact that the alchemists had only to make the philosopher's stone in order to benefit from it, without requiring a further step of applying it in any way. In other words, the value of the stone lay not in its instrumental effects, but rather in the very process of attaining it. Jung's key to the work lay in the discovery that psychological integration was more important than chemical secrets:

The goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the opus which leads to the goal: that is the goal of a lifetime. In its attainment 'left and right' are united, and conscious and unconscious work in harmony. ¹³¹

The "dialectical discussion" or dialogue between conscious^{ness} and ^{the} unconscious is a process fundamental to psychic life. The communicative aspect of this process is suggested by Jung's use of the term "discussion" to describe the dynamic give-and-take between the two poles of the psyche. The two notions of projection and transformation are the key components of the communicational aspects of the process of individuation. While these terms are used in Jung's psychological interpretation of alchemy, they had their alchemical equivalents, since, of course, all psychological processes were projected by the alchemists into chemical ones. By studying the alchemical art, Jung hoped to understand a universal psychic process at work, and not merely to explain a curious assembly of fantastical images. While modern man might give a different

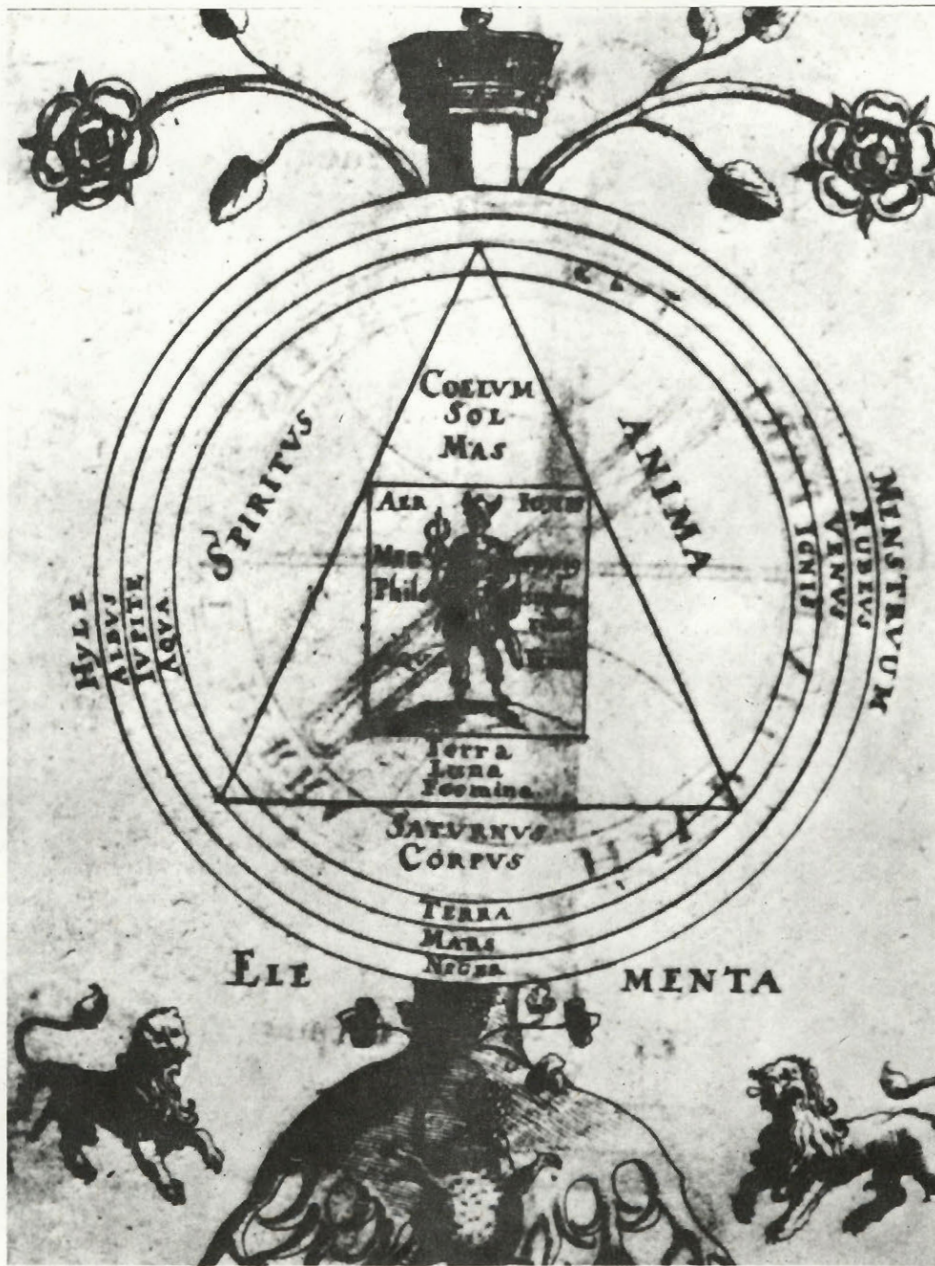
form to similar unconscious contents, the underlying patterns of meaning are everywhere and always the same, according to Jung:

In other words, there is no ground for the assumption that human beings in other epochs produced fantasies for quite different reasons, or that their fantasy images sprang from quite different idées forces, than ours. . . Thus, the language of the alchemists is at first sight very different from our psychological terminology and way of thinking. But if we treat their symbols in the same way as we treat modern fantasies, they yield a meaning such as we have already deduced from the problematical modern material.¹³⁵

For this reason alchemy offers a rich body of images paradigmatic for the process of individuation and the communication process on which it is based.

CHAPTER 3:

The Individuation Process in Alchemy:
Projection and Transformation



3.

Solve et coagula.

Summary

The following chapter describes the dynamics, stages and goal of the individuation process as Jung discovered it among modern individuals. This process is exemplified by the alchemical opus, by virtue of the existence of archetypes of the collective unconscious, which give rise both to alchemical symbolism and to modern dream or fantasy material. The chapter deals specifically with two aspects of the individuation process which are pertinent to establishing the psychological dynamics of communication. These are projection and transformation.

The profuse imagery of the alchemical stages, equivalents of the stages of the individuation process, is suggested as an example of projections which individual alchemists experienced. Next, the dynamic and purpose of projection is described and distinguished from the alchemical operation of projectio. Finally, an example from Gerhard Dorn serves to show that the projection is not merely based on an illusory relationship to reality, but brings up material from the unconscious making the transformation possible. Meditatio and imaginatio are given as alchemical illustrations of the process of transformation, while the coniunctio which joins Sol and Luna is considered as a profound and only partially fathomable symbol of transformation. The chapter concludes with the implications to be drawn from the processes of projection and transformation for communication. Inasmuch as projection and transformation have a communicative basis or rely on communication for their taking place, the individuation process is also a process of communication. Communication is thus a process of experiencing the polarity of psychic and physical reality, as a prerequisite for experiencing their unified, transcendental background; it depends equally on developing the faculty of discrimination and the ability to enter into relationships with others.

Text

The process of psychic integration

In his earlier psychotherapeutic work, Jung found that there is a natural, integrative process in the psyche which seeks its own goal even after the work with the doctor is terminated. ¹³³ This goal is experienced as the desire for self-knowledge or self-realization, as the ability to declare, "As I am, so I act." Initially, however, the urge for changing one's psychic condition is negatively motivated; it stems from an untenable conflict which arises between one's consciously held, usually one-sided beliefs about oneself, and one's potentially greater yet largely unknown nature:

From all states of unconscious contamination and non-differentiation there is begotten a compulsion to be and to act in a way contrary to one's own nature. Accordingly a man can neither be at one with himself nor accept responsibility for himself. He feels himself to be in a degrading, unfree, unethical condition. . . . the unconscious contents are the cause of blinding illusions which falsify ourselves and our relations to our fellow men, making both unreal.¹³⁴

Thus the push to integration arises out of a condition of relative ignorance; individuation comes about as an extension of consciousness through the acquisition of new knowledge about oneself. Hence Jung first defined his concept of the individuation process in Psychological Types, as a "process of differentiation." ¹³⁵ Out of the myriad, universal physical and psychic factors which constitute our human inheritance, every human being must, at some point, face his own unique set of functions and faculties:

Individuation, therefore, can only mean a process of psychological development that fulfils the individual qualities given; in other words, it is a process by which a man becomes the definite, unique being he in fact is. In so doing he does not become 'selfish' in the ordinary sense of the word, but is merely fulfilling the peculiarity of his nature, and this, as we have said, is vastly different from egotism or individualism. ¹³⁶

This new knowledge about oneself, however, is not merely an intellectual improvement. It brings with it an important change in personality which Jung earlier called the transcendent function and later termed transformation. Furthermore, the process of transformation was the symbolic object of alchemy:

This remarkable capacity of the human psyche for change. . . is the principle object of late medieval alchemical philosophy, where it was expressed in terms of alchemical symbolism. . . The secret of alchemy was in fact the transcendent function, the transformation of personality through the blending and fusion of the noble with the base components, of the differentiated with the inferior functions, of the conscious with the unconscious.¹³⁷

Ultimately, this change in personality is the only evidence that the process of individuation is under way. Because the process has as many variations as there are individuals, and because it is only convincing to the person whose deepest experience it is, individuation is difficult to describe scientifically, although it is objectively verifiable in dream images. Nevertheless, Jung points out, we can only come to an understanding of another's uniqueness via our own awakened experience:

He is different. The most we can do, and the best, is to have at least some inkling of his otherness, to respect it, and to guard against the outrageous stupidity of wishing to interpret it. . . We must simply believe it by reason of its analogy with our own experience.¹³⁸

Individuation is not only a process of increasing self-knowledge, but also of increasing moral responsibility to live out or in accordance with the experience of greater consciousness. In the course of the individuation process, the individual becomes a problem to himself. His knowledge becomes increasingly relative, while his very nature becomes ambiguous or even paradoxical. The process is ultimately bound up with a displacement of the centre of one's existence. As the conscious mind is increasingly confronted by contents welling up from the unconscious, the centre of the total personality no longer coincides with the ego or centre of consciousness, but with a point midway

between the conscious and the unconscious:

This would be the point of new equilibrium, a new centering of the total personality, a virtual centre which, on account of its focal position between conscious and unconscious, ensures for the personality a new and more solid foundation.¹³⁹

Jung called this new centre the self, which represents the greater, more differentiated and integrated personality. However, the self as a psychic function is a postulate and cannot be directly observed. We have access to the self as the goal of the individuation process only through the particular symbols which tend to unite the opposites.

Four stages of individuation

Although individuation is different in its passage for each individual, i.e., the way in which it is experienced, the individuation process is characterized by four typical stages. First, there is an initial condition of untenable conflict within oneself or with the environment. Secondly, a transformation of personality occurs when fantasies from the personal unconscious bring to consciousness the inferior and hitherto repressed aspects of personal identity, which were responsible for the conflict. Once this equilibrium is established, the contrasexual figure (animus or anima) and its aspects is brought up by the unconscious. This figure or figures arise from the collective or impersonal unconscious, since it is a content which the individual shares with all other people of the same sex. The anima, which represents the function of relationship between consciousness and the unconscious in men, and the animus, which represents the function of discrimination between consciousness and the unconscious in women, bring about a second transformation. Finally, the superior personality, which is of the same sex as the individual in question, appears in dreams or fantasies and points to an integration of consciousness and the unconscious. One important proviso must be added; while the individuation process, according to Jung, is

a natural process which seeks its own goal regardless of intervention from outside the individual, not everyone becomes automatically individuated. Jung has amply described the setbacks and pitfalls which may be part of the process in the essay, "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious." The process is an individual destiny and although the symbols which point to the goal may appear, the individual may fail to recognize and thus to integrate them. One's conscious attitude and the ability of the ego to face these unconscious contents is determining:

. . . the normal man will never be burdened, either, with this knowledge, for he is everlastingly content with the little that lies within his reach.140

Thus the individuation process can only be furthered by a great need to resolve a state of conflict or tension. No wonder that those who suffer, whether involuntarily through neurosis or through deliberate martyrdom come closer to the goal of individuation. The psychological meaning of sacrifice is the key to the mystery of transformation.¹⁴¹

Archetypes of the collective unconscious

The structure of the individuation process is exemplified by alchemical symbolism. To understand, however, why Jung could interpret alchemy as a paradigmatic manifestation of the individuation process, we must consider Jung's notion of archetype. Archetypes are the irrepresentable, a priori forms or patterns of symbolization carrying out the same functions on the psychic level, which instincts fulfill on the physiological level. Because the border between psychic and physical realms is unclear, Jung wished to retain the unknown ground of the archetype by calling it psychoid in nature.

The archetypes or a priori forms acquire a content when they enter the conscious experience of an individual person through dreams, fantasy or in storytelling,

to name but a few examples. Jung used the concept of archetype as a hypothetical construct similar to that of the psyche. The origins of both are beyond the realm of psychology to determine. Above all, the existence of the archetype cannot be proven, only its concrete manifestation as an archetypal image or symbol can be verified:

The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a facultas praeformandi, a possibility of representation which is given a priori.¹⁴²

The main point in relation to alchemy is that archetypes are personalized when they are consciously experienced. Thus the archetype cannot be grasped as a concept alone, for its distinctive feature is its feeling tone or numinosity in relation to the living individual through whom the archetype appears. The constellation of the archetype according to the personal formula of the individual accounts for the hundreds of different descriptions of the alchemical opus. Each alchemist handled the activated archetypes in his own way, for:

The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.¹⁴³

Four alchemical stages

While the psychological basis of alchemy was everywhere the same, since it arose from universal archetypes marking the process of individuation, the symbolic content varied from alchemist to alchemist. Accordingly, one finds hardly any agreement as to the exact course of the process or the sequence of its stages. Nevertheless, the four stages of the individuation process appear as archetypal images in the four stages of the alchemical process. The stages are each characterized by a colour. These are: the blackening

(nigredo), the whitening (albedo), the yellowing (citrinitas), and the reddening (rubedo). After the 15th or 16th centuries, the citrinitas stage was seldom used, a change which stemmed from the opposition central to alchemy between the archetypes of three and four:

In alchemy there are three as well as four regimena or procedures, three as well as four colours. There are always four elements, but often three of them are grouped together, with the fourth in a special position - sometimes earth, sometimes fire. Mercurius is of course quadratus, but he is also a three-headed snake or simply a triunity. . . Four signifies the feminine, motherly, physical; three the masculine, fatherly, spiritual. Thus the uncertainty as to three or four amounts to a wavering between the spiritual and the physical - a striking example of how every human truth is a last truth but one.¹⁴⁴

Whether one retains the names of three or four stages, the transformations still correspond to that of the individuation process. One begins with the original state of untenable conflict or nigredo, through which the first transformation or integration of personal unconscious contents comes about.
¹⁴⁵
In Gerhard Dorn's version, this transformation corresponds to the unio mentalis, or the unification of mind and soul. Next, in the albedo or first conjunction (coniunctio), the contrasexual figure makes its appearance and the tension between consciousness and the unconscious thereby constellated is represented as Sol and Luna or the royal pair. In Dorn's explanation, this stage corresponds to a unification of mind, soul and body, whereby the masculine figure represents the unified psyche and the feminine figure represents the body. Now one might consider this quite a successful and difficult achievement and in general so it was. The alchemists were for the most part old men by the time they could claim to have realized this stage. The third and final transformation, the rubedo, represented the ultimate coniunctio, the union of consciousness and the unconscious and the appearance of the greater personality or self. In Dorn's version, this transformation represents the union of the

psychophysically integrated individual with the physical or material realm outside the individual and thus a manifestation of the unus mundus or unified world of mediaeval philosophy. In view of the unknown ground of the archetype of the self, and the occurrence of synchronistic phenomena, i.e. meaningful coincidences in the material world when the greater personality becomes manifest, Jung felt that it is justifiable to postulate a transcendent unity of the psychic and physical realms. He retained the mediaeval term unus mundus to refer to this hypothetical unity. ¹⁴⁶ No alchemist, however, could claim to have reached this stage because he failed to acknowledge the psychic side of the opus and looked instead into his retort for the final union of elements in the form of gold. There were, at best, only intimations that the gold is actually a symbolic entity, as mentioned earlier, in the insistence on philosophical and not vulgar gold.

Alchemical symbolism: examples of projection

Jung's notion of projection is central to understanding the lack of a consistently defined procedure in the alchemical opus. Although the process was often depicted as a cycle of suffering and death followed by redemption and rebirth, the many visualizations of this cycle illustrate the fact that the alchemist was projecting archetypes of the collective unconscious into his chemical experiments. The many terms used in describing the stages, the prima materia and the goal serve as examples.

For instance, the nigredo may exist as a quality of the prima materia, also called chaos or massa confusa, which is to be worked on. Otherwise the nigredo may need to be brought about through a prior step of separating the elements, variously called solutio, separatio, divisio, or putrefactio.

The next stage of albedo or whitening is achieved either directly by washing, called ablutio or baptisma, or by the resurrection of the soul released at the "death," which appears as the peacock's tail (cauda pavonis) or the white colour which contains all colours.

The albedo (tinctura alba, terra alba, foliata, lapis albus) is the first main goal of the process and is considered the silver or moon condition. It must still be raised to the gold or sun condition. The transition to the rubedo earlier occurred via the citrinitas stage, but when the latter was omitted, the rubedo followed directly by raising the heat of the fire to its greatest intensity. The synthesis of white and red are also personified as the Queen and the King who celebrate their "chemical wedding."¹⁴⁷

The richness of individual fantasy life in the alchemical opus is further witnessed by the many names for the original matter to be transformed, as well as for the goal. All of them are projections of the archetypal stages of the individuation process as noted earlier, and follow a certain metaphorical design according to the disposition of the particular alchemist. For instance, among the many symbols for the goal there are: the white or red tincture (aqua permanens), the hermaphroditic philosopher's stone (lapis philosophorum), the panacea (aurum potabile, elixir vitae), philosophical gold, golden glass, or malleable glass. The stone is conceived both as a substance and as a mystical being referred to as Deus terrestris, Salvator, or filius macrocosmi/philosophorum. The latter concepts bring out the redemptive aspects of the transformation of matter. The paradoxical nature of the goal throughout consists in the fact that names of concrete substances refer in fact to an ineffable material. For instance, in the following alchemical text, the philosophical water both forms the stone, while also being its solvent:

And by whatever names the philosophers have called their stone they always mean and refer to this one substance, i.e., to the water from which everything [originates] and in which everything [is contained], which rules everything, in which errors are made and in which the error is itself corrected. I call it 'philosophical' water, not ordinary [vulgi] water but agua mercurialis, whether it be simple or composite. For both are the philosophical water, although the vulgar mercury is different from the philosophical.148

In the attempts to capture the essence of all opposites in the stone, the longing for unity was expressed:

The commonest [designations] are the idea of its permanence (prolongation of life, immortality, incorruptibility), its androgyny, its spirituality and corporeality, its human qualities and resemblance to man (homunculus), and its divinity.149

The projections of the starting point of the process take on even more varied, imaginative form. The prima materia was regarded as one of the most famous secrets of alchemy. Yet Jung points out, that it was given all too many names which even contradicted each other. Among the names one finds are: quicksilver, ore, iron, gold, lead, salt, sulphur, vinegar, water, air, fire, earth, blood, water of life, lapis, poison, spirit, cloud, sky, dew, shadow, sea, mother, moon, dragon, Venus, chaos, microcosm, medicine, Lucifer, fiery water, betrothed, wife, virgin, virgin's milk, menstruum, moon spittle, children's urine, loose stool, muck, material of all forms.

The dynamics of projection

It might reasonably be asked how the alchemist made sense of so many terms and images. To begin with, the alchemist could not afford to be trapped or mesmerized by the process itself, but looked to the impending transformation:

So long as the alchemist was working in the laboratory he was in a favourable position, psychologically speaking, for he had no opportunity to identify himself with the archetypes as they appeared, since they were all projected immediately into the chemical substances.152

Silberer gives an interesting explanation of how to avoid being confused by the profusion of terms. In any consideration of the process, the relation of the elements to each other and to their context is uppermost:

Apart from a certain practice in the figurative language of the alchemists, it is necessary, so to speak, to think independently of the words used and regard them only in their context. For example, when it is written that a body is to be washed with water, another time with soap, and a third time with mercury, it is not water and soap and mercury that is the main point, but the relation of all to each other, that is the washing, and on closer inspection of the connection it can be deduced that all three times the same cleansing medium is meant, only described three times with different names.¹⁵³

In order to understand this last point, it is necessary to add that the alchemist was not interested in the material itself, the object per se, but in the properties which distinguish its relationship to other materials. Thus, "soap," refers not only to soap, but to any material which acts like soap, that is, enters into relationships with other objects as soap does. The relational aspect of matter was at one time considered magical. However, any belief in occult properties proves "that the material in question was the focus of projections which lent it a numinous significance."¹⁵⁴ Thus the perceived properties of matter in fact reflect properties of the psyche which have been projected:

. . . if the adept really concocted such potions in his retort, he must surely have chosen his ingredients on account of their magical significance. He worked, accordingly, with ideas, with psychic processes and states, but referred to them under the name of the corresponding substance.¹⁵⁵

It must be emphasized that the substances which enacted these psychic processes were not serendipitously chosen; there was some symbolic property in the substance which attracted or "caught" the projection:

Even when he spoke of a union of the 'natures,' or of an 'amalgam' of iron and copper, or of a compound of sulphur and mercury, he meant it at the same time as a symbol: iron was Mars and copper was Venus, and their fusion was at the same time a love-affair.¹⁵⁶

In other words, the projection of unconscious contents occurred because they were attracted by something analogous in the outside world, though unknown to the perceiver. Because of the impersonal nature of chemical matter, the unconscious contents constellated were also impersonal:

The contents under consideration were those that lent themselves to projection upon the unknown chemical substance. Owing to the impersonal, purely objective nature of matter, it was the impersonal, collective archetypes that were projected: first and foremost, as a parallel to the collective spiritual life of the times, the image of the spirit imprisoned in the darkness of the world. In other words, the state of relative unconsciousness in which man found himself, and which he felt to be painful and in need of redemption, was reflected in matter and accordingly dealt with in matter.157

We have already seen that projection has as its purposive goal, the manifestation and eventual integration into consciousness of unconscious contents.

When the unconscious has no means of expressing itself due to the conscious attitude, it has no alternative, as Jung says, but to generate projections or
158
neurotic symptoms. In extreme circumstances, such unconscious contents become autonomous complexes cut off from consciousness and leading independent lives. Yet these very complexes, which often take on personified forms when projected, possess a powerful fascination for the conscious mind inasmuch as
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the unconscious content belongs to the total personality or self. This fascination harbours within it a healing potential, for the healing medicine is in the resisting part or in the contents which have been cast off. For this reason, the opus begins in the basest material and its secret is to be
160
found in sewers and gutters. Herein lies the difference of alchemy from many other spiritual disciplines according to Franz:

. . . the real man, as he is, is the object and even the vehicle of the inner transformation. That is where Jung and we agree with alchemy more than any other tradition: Do not first indulge in this little trick of putting away what you cannot change or transform and then have a wonderful idealistic result which does not hold when it comes to the test.161

The secret of the transformation of personality is, therefore, to find the

projecting factor which originates within the personality and produces the internal conflict or division. The projection is the key to unification.

Projection vs proiectio

Strange to say, the alchemists used the term proiectio to indicate one of the operations of the opus.¹⁶² Once one had gotten the substance which can penetrate all substances and can transform base metals into noble ones, i.e. the philosophical Mercurius, one can "project" it into other substances, thereby transforming them from the imperfect to the perfect state:

The idea is that the philosopher's stone, which is also a form of the mystical gold the alchemists were trying to make, is made and is then thrown upon other unclean matter - that is, other matter which has not been included in the process like ordinary iron, ordinary lead, or any other material. It shows then a transformative quality, for it transforms these other materials through proiectio, projection.¹⁶³

Connected with this operation is the multiplication of the healing or transforming effect in other materials via the multiplicatio. Psychologically speaking, this is the stage where the unconscious simply flows through one without hindrance. In fact, the dynamic of projection, as a bringing up of unconscious contents, and of proiectio or casting of the philosophical stone, is essentially the same. The projection, comes however, at the beginning of the process and often has negative side-effects, while the proiectio follows the transformation and has positive effects. While it is important to withdraw one's projections, thereby acknowledging the role of the unconscious, in the final operation the proiectio entails a necessary and unifying externalization of the unconscious:

For instance, in analysis, when people project onto the outer world, or give in to their feelings and affects naively, we try to make them see that they are projections: we try to make them take the projections back and see the thing objectively as an inner factor. Just that very exercise is now reversed, and the unconscious is allowed to flow through one and then have this positive

effect upon the surroundings.164

Proiectio has found its modern equivalent in the technique of active imagination, discovered by Jung. It is a way of deliberately entering into contact with the unconscious, in contrast to the unwitting contact projections provide, so that unconscious contents do not become repressed and do not reappear as projections:

This method enable us to get a grasp of contents that also find expression in dream life. The process is in both cases an irrigation of the conscious mind by the unconscious, and it is related so closely to the world of alchemical ideas that we are probably justified in assuming that alchemy deals with the same, or very similar, processes as those involved in active imagination and in dreams, i.e., ultimately with the process of individuation.165

While active imagination will be discussed in chapter four as the technique par excellence for communicating with the unconscious, suffice it here to point out that alchemy was a striving to transform one's original state of chaos, manifest in projections, into a process of active imagination. The comparison is possible since many substances, even chemical ones, can be used for the externalization of the unconscious, as Franz illustrates:

You can lend very different means of self-expression to the unconscious. With your body, you can dance a fantasy, or with a brush you can paint a weird image. So why couldn't you lend your unconscious chemical material and produce your fantasy with that? Why. . . not take different materials which strike you to express something in yourself and mix them together?166

The alchemical method: projection at work

The alchemist's method of work confirms the inextricable complicity between his unconscious images and his experience of chemical operations, i.e., projection at work. The method of the opus is made up of two parts; as the illustration on the title-page to the Tripus aureus (1618) shows (c.f. illustration #6), these two parts are epitomized by the laboratory and the library:

Part of this work is practical, the operatio itself, which is to be thought of as a series of experiments with chemical substances.167

While being interested in the chemical part of the work, of course, the alchemist used chemical substances in Jung's view, "to devise a nomenclature for the psychic transformations that really fascinated him." Thus the operatio was linked in each case to an individual body of ideas, concocted by the alchemist from the writings of the philosophers and from a variety of analogies appropriate to the concepts of alchemy:

. . .lacking one single language by which to unify physical chemical facts with psychological facts, the alchemist simply begins to make analogies: like this, like that, like this, like that - that's the closest he can come to the union.¹⁶⁸

The method of explanation accompanying the operatio was ostensibly a rationale for dabbling in the unknown. The way of the opus explained: obscurum per obscurius, ignotum per ignotius (the obscure by the more obscure, the unknown by the more unknown). Herein lies the second part of the opus:

The method of alchemy, psychologically speaking, is one of boundless amplification. The amplificatio is always appropriate when dealing with some obscure experience which is so vaguely adumbrated that it must be enlarged and expanded by being set in a psychological context in order to be understood at all. . . . This amplificatio forms the second part of the opus, and is understood by the alchemist as theoria.¹⁶⁹

Jung argues that the identity between the theoria and the operatio, which is the locus of the projection, is based on visionary experience. He gives examples from among the later, psychologically more astute, alchemists, which suggest analogies between the alchemist's "observations" in the laboratory and dream-states. That vision in a figurative sense is required by the artifex appears in expressions such as "eyes of the understanding and of the imagination" and "to see with mental eyes." In these images, Jung saw collective archetypes of the unconscious being activated:

. . . Hoghelande's remarks prove that during the practical work certain events of an hallucinatory or visionary nature were perceived, which cannot be anything but projections of unconscious contents.¹⁷¹

Although the laboratory and the library are distinct parts of the opus, it

will be noticed that the furnace with the alchemical vessel stands squarely in the middle (cf. Tripus Aureus). One cannot divorce the operatio from the theoria, so to speak. The integrative tendency of these two parts of the opus is symbolized by the dragon devouring its own tail, the Ouroboursus, which figures on the round flask in the illustration mentioned. Herein lies the central paradox of alchemy:

The dragon symbolizes the visionary experience of the alchemist as he works in his laboratory and 'theorizes.'¹⁷²

As Jung has shown, it did dawn on the later alchemists that the opus was connected with the human psyche. In particular, Gerhard Dorn wrote a series of treatises concerning the relationship between the work and the man. In "Philosophia meditativa" he writes:

Thou wilt never make from others the One that thou seekest,
except there first be made one thing of thyself.¹⁷³

Dorn makes the correspondence between the opus and the man complete in urging:

"Transform yourselves from dead stones into living philosophical stones!"
^{de lapidibus mortuis} ¹⁷⁴
(Transmutemini in vivos lapides philosophicos)

The caelum: not "mere" projection

While Gerhard Dorn is considered by Jung to be one of the most astute alchemists in recognizing the role of the individual in the opus, nevertheless Dorn failed to distinguish the psychic contents of the opus from chemical substances. An example of the projection or identity that Dorn experienced between the psychic and the chemical can be seen in his description of the spagyric heaven or caelum:

The caelum therefore is a heavenly substance and a universal form, containing in itself all forms, distinct from one another, but proceeding from one single universal form. Wherefore, he who knows how individuals can be led on to the most general genus by the spagyric art, and how the special virtues, one or more, can be impressed upon this genus will easily find the universal

medicine.175

In the same passage, the universal medicine is said to be found nowhere but in heaven (caelum). Yet at the same time the caelum refers to an actual chemical substance distilled from the "philosophic wine," which included a mixture of honey, Chelidonia, rosemary flowers, Mercurialis, the red lily and human blood. Finally, the caelum was equally for Dorn a celestial substance hidden in man, the secret "truth" of the opus. Similarly, the corpus Dorn refers to at first seems to be his own human body. But as soon as the chemical process is under way, the "body" is the residue which remains from the distillation of the wine. In spite of his insights, Dorn was ultimately unable to recognize in these examples the projection of psychic contents into chemical substances:

Thus it is that the psychic sphere representing the body miraculously appeared to the adept to be identical with the chemical preparation in the retort. . . and that is why his chemical caelum coincided with the heavenly substance in the body, the 'truth'. For him this was not a duality but an identity; for us they are incommensurables that cannot be reconciled because, owing to our knowledge of chemical processes, we are able to distinguish them from psychic ones. In other words, our consciousness enables us to withdraw this projection.177

Yet at the same time that Dorn was caught up in a confusion of psychic and chemical realms, the projection did point to a deeper, symbolic meaning which his unconscious was attempting to realize:

The production of the caelum is a symbolic rite performed in the laboratory. . . Psychologically, it was a representation of the individuation process by means of chemical substances and procedures, or what we today call active imagination.178

The transformation

To sum up, I have considered the dynamic of projection as one of the aspects of the communication process involved in individuation. Yet, projection is never "mere" projection as the case of Dorn's caelum shows, but tends to the

transformation. Transformation is the second aspect of the communication process involved in individuation. In alchemical symbolism, transformation brings "gold," as Dorn himself was aware:

If man can transform things outside himself then he can do that even better within his own macrocosm, and he can recognize things even better within himself. Therefore in man himself is the greatest treasure and nothing is outside him. Therefore one should start from within or from the medium which is outwardly visible and one must recognize who and what one is within oneself and then one will, within the light of nature, recognize oneself via the outer.¹⁷⁹

Here Dorn is concerned with the profound change in the personality at which the opus aims. To begin with, I will look more closely at the transformation in the first two conjunctions, the unio mentalis and the vir unus.¹⁸⁰ The question of the third union, between the whole man and the material world, can be put aside for the time being, as this was the rarely achieved and difficult conjunction of the final stage.

The psychological equivalents of the first two alchemical stages are the integration of the personal unconscious and the integration of the contra-sexual figure (anima/animus). Integration is not merely an intellectual exercise but a profound and demanding challenge, for:

. . . one is confronted not only with what [the archetypal images] mean but also with their moral demands.¹⁸¹

The final transformation involves an activation of symbols of the superior personality or self. However, this symbol of unity does not suddenly appear in the final stages, as Jung points out in his comparison of modern dream material with the alchemical opus:

The fact is, however, that [the self] only appeared more and more distinctly and in increasingly differentiated form; in reality it was always present and even occurred in the first dream - as the nymphs say later: 'We were always there, only you did not notice us.'¹⁸²

Thus, the symbol of the self is the guiding image for the earlier transfor-

mations also, even though it is fully visualized only in the final transformation.

Meditatio and imaginatio: illustrations of the process of transformation

The dynamic of the transformation in alchemy is made explicit by the operation of meditatio and imaginatio. Ruland, author of a 17th century alchemical lexicon, defines the meditatio as an inner dialogue with someone unseen, whether God, oneself or a good angel. For Jung, such a dialogue implies a dialectical relationship with the unconscious:

Ruland's definition proves beyond all doubt that when the alchemists speak of meditari they do not mean mere cogitation, but explicitly an inner dialogue and hence a living relationship to the answering voice of the 'other' in ourselves, i.e., of the unconscious. . . . by means of which things pass from an unconscious potential state to a manifest one.¹⁸⁴

The meditatio was an activity carried out by the alchemist during the nigredo stage. In Jung's terms, such an inner dialogue activates the unconscious archetypes.

The second mental activity, the imaginatio refers to the externalization of the fantasy process called for by the opus. According to Ruland, the imaginatio is the celestial body or star in man. The act of imagining transcends mind and matter:

We have to conceive of these processes not as the immaterial phantoms we readily take fantasy-pictures to be, but as something corporeal, a 'subtle body', semi-spiritual in nature. . . . the imaginatio, or the act of imagining, was thus a physical activity that could be fitted into the cycle of material changes, that brought these about and was brought about by them in turn.¹⁸⁵

Imagination brought the alchemist into relation, therefore, both with his own unconscious and with the substance which he hoped to transform. One wonders, in fact, whether alchemical transformations took place more in the material or more in the spiritual realm. For Jung, however, such a question reflects the

split between mind and matter typical of our age:

Actually, however, the question is wrongly put: there was no "either-or" for that age, but there did exist an intermediate realm between mind and matter, i.e., a psychic realm of subtle bodies whose characteristic it is to manifest themselves in a mental as well as a material form.187

Ironically enough, this intermediate realm between mind and matter ceases to exist as soon as matter is investigated for itself, and remains beyond recall as long as we believe we know anything conclusive about matter and the psyche. At such a point, the "inner dialogue" with the unconscious is severed:

But the moment when physics touches on the "untrodden, untreadable regions," and when psychology has at the same time to admit that there are other forms of psychic life besides the acquisitions of personal consciousness - in other words, when psychology too touches on an impenetrable darkness - then the intermediate realm of subtle bodies comes to life again, and the physical and the psychic are once more blended in an indissoluble unity. We have come very near to this turning-point today.188

Thus the imaginatio maintained a contact with the "greater things," the things extra naturam as the alchemist put it; i.e., contents of the unconscious which are not a datum of the empirical world, but in Jung's terms an a priori of archetypal character. The work of imaginatio was a process of actualizing these "greater things":

The place or medium of realization is neither mind nor matter, but that intermediate realm of subtle reality, which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol. The symbol is neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal.189

The symbol, for Jung, contains the seed of a greater future, of a "definite
190
but not yet recognizable goal," which rationalism cannot encompass. It has instructive as well as redemptive value:

In so far as the standpoint of analytical psychology is realistic, i.e., based on the assumption that the contents of the psyche are realities, all these figures stand for an unconscious component of the personality which might well be endowed with a higher form of consciousness transcending that of the ordinary human being.191

In other words, the imaginatio can actualize superior insights which are not yet conscious. This movement towards the "greater" or "superior" is characteristic of transformation which, as we have seen, involves self-knowledge and the reconciliation of opposites. For Jung, the alchemical transforming substance which combined both the contemptible and the divine constituted an archetypal idea that supplied the missing link in the Christian view of the world, namely, the unbridged gulf between the opposites, especially good and evil:

In general, the alchemists strove for a total union of opposites in symbolic form, and this they regarded as the indispensable condition for the healing of all ills. . . It had to be material as well as spiritual, living as well as inert, masculine as well as feminine, old as well as young, and - presumably - morally neutral.192

The transformation is morally neutral in that it transcends the confrontation between good and evil. Instead, good and evil are united.

In view of the goal of psychic transformation, the action of projecting this process into the phenomena of chemical change gains more importance. In fact, one is led deeper into the mystery of actualizing fantasy in the material world, and away from what may have been one's initial response of minimizing alchemical transformations as "mere" projection. Jung has shown that projection serves a crucial function in activating the dialogue with the unconscious, which is fully realized in the transformation:

The rites of renewal [and transformation] are attempts to abolish the separation between the conscious mind and the unconscious, the real source of life, and to bring about a reunion of the individual with the native soil of his inherited, instinctive make-up. . .193

Thus Jung concluded that the desire to create philosophical gold, or the panacea, out of matter was only partly an illusion stemming from projection. Its major significance, however, was that this desire corresponds, "to certain psychic facts that are of great importance in the psychology of the uncon-

194
scious."

The coniunctio: alchemical symbol of transformation

I have frequently referred to the transformation as an integration of consciousness and the unconscious. When dealt with intellectually, this union is more easily schematized than achieved. Perhaps by bringing up one of the symbols of this union, the extreme difficulty of ^{achieving} this process will become more evident.

The chief symbol of the transformation, according to Dorn, is the coniunctio or marriage of opposites:

. . . [the transforming substance] in his regeneration has obtained the power of Above and Below, wherefore he is likened to their marriage, as is evident from the white and the red that are conjoined in him. The sages have affirmed in their wisdom that all creatures are to be brought to one united substance.¹⁹⁵

Prior to Jung, Silberer had recognized that the coniunctio is the central symbol of the alchemical opus.¹⁹⁶ The coniunctio is often depicted as the white and red hermaphrodite or androgyne. The white and red also have many other corresponding pairs of opposites as Jung describes in Mysterium Coniunctionis. Suffice it to say in general that white is associated with Luna and the Queen, and red with Sol and the King. The symbol of the royal marriage represents, in psychological terms, the union of consciousness and the unconscious.

Roughly speaking, the alchemical process follows an allegorical pattern whereby the old king (or senex) must die in order to be transformed. This death is often enacted as the absorption of the king, i.e., the chemical called the king, into the "mother liquid," a solution or womb:

At this moment something in the nature of a miracle occurs: the material solution loses its earthy heaviness, and solvent and solute together pass into a higher state. . . namely the albedo. This denotes the first stage of completion and is identified with

Luna.197

Luna then joins her partner Sol, bringing the second and usually final stage, that of the rubedo. As we have already noted, no definition of the combined opposites is complete:

What the outcome will be can never be seen in advance. The only certain thing is that both parties will be changed; but what the product of the union will be it is impossible to imagine.198

The renewed king, or son (puer) must combine both the standpoint of ego-consciousness and the standpoint of the archetypes in the unconscious. If either of the opposites is stronger, the conflict continues and union is impossible. Furthermore, the union of antagonistic elements is an irrational event. Psychologically speaking, the ego must step into the background and accept its limitations:

It [the ego] still remains the sine qua non of consciousness, but it no longer imagines that it can settle everything and do everything by the force of its will.199

The ego's renunciation and submission to the decrees of fate, so to speak, is consonant in alchemical symbolism with the royal marriage:

The transformation of the kingly substance from a lion into a king has its counterpart in the transformation of the feminine element from a serpent into a queen. The coronation, apotheosis, and marriage signalize the equal status of conscious and unconscious that becomes possible at the highest level -- a coincidentia oppositorum with redeeming effects.200

The opposites in their highest form are personified as Sol and Luna. Sol represents the active part of the transforming substance (the lapis), while Luna is the passive part. In other words, these symbols function as projections of consciousness and the unconscious respectively:

Just as the day-star rises out of the nocturnal sea, so, ontogenetically and phylogenetically, consciousness is born of unconsciousness and sinks back every night to this primal condition. This duality of our psychic life is the prototype and archetype of the Sol-Luna symbolism.201

Consciousness and the unconscious exhibit certain compensatory qualities.

Sol and Luna are archetypal images of these psychic functions; their intellectual equivalents on the other hand are Logos and Eros, concepts which Jung had earlier developed:

By Logos I meant discrimination, judgment, insight, and by Eros I meant the capacity to relate. I regarded both concepts as intuitive ideas which cannot be defined accurately or exhaustively. . the two concepts mark out a field of experience which it is equally difficult to define.202

It is important to distinguish between masculine and feminine psychology. In masculine psychology, consciousness corresponds to Sol and the qualities of discrimination etc., while the unconscious, i.e., the undeveloped function, represents the relational capacity of Luna. In feminine psychology, the situation is reversed: Luna is consciousness, Sol is the unconscious. Pathological cases, where the contrasexual archetype has overwhelmed consciousness, producing masculinized women and effeminate men are, of course, the exception. In any case, alchemy deals with the first case, since it was a masculine preoccupation which produced masculine formulations. Although no authoritative woman's view of alchemical symbolism has been handed down, modern dream cycles reveal a symbolism which is inverted:

It will be clear from all this that the 'soul' which accrues to ego-consciousness during the opus has a feminine character in the man and a masculine character in the woman. His anima wants to reconcile and unite; her animus tries to discern and discriminate.204

From the equal status of Sol and Luna in the coniunctio, it is evident that the alchemists wished to avoid a development solely of conscious functions, i.e. intellectual understanding. Feeling, which imparts a lasting value to what has been understood, must be a part of the opus. For the male individual, this means the integration of the soul or anima:

The alchemists thought that the opus demanded not only laboratory work, the reading of books, meditation, and patience, but also love.205

In the psychology of the transference, Jung shows that love is equally a challenge and prerequisite for psychological wholeness, for the individual can never be complete unless related to another individual:

The unrelated human being lacks wholeness, for he can achieve wholeness only through the soul, and the soul cannot exist without its other side, which is always found in a 'You.' Wholeness is a combination of I and You, and these show themselves to be parts of a transcendent unity whose nature can only be grasped symbolically, as in the symbols of the rotundum, the rose, the wheel, or the coniunctio Solis et Lunae.206

As Jung adds in a footnote concerning the foregoing quote, relationship paves the way for individuation, but it is not the proof of it. Relationship must function in a compensatory way with the ability of the conscious ego to discriminate (in masculine psychology it is understood). Only then does individuation become possible, for the elements must be separated or discriminated in order to be united, as the alchemical motto solve et coagula proves:

As indicated by the very name which he chose for it - the 'spagyric' art - or by the oft-repeated saying 'solve et coagula' (dissolve and coagulate), the alchemist saw the essence of his art in separation and analysis on the one hand and synthesis and consolidation on the other.207

The symbol of the coniunctio, often depicted as the physical embrace of Sol and Luna, provides a compelling image of the tension between the psychic and the physical. For the act of making love itself is analogous to the bridging of the instinctual and the archetypal spheres:

Our pictures of the coniunctio are to be understood in this sense: union on the biological level is a symbol of the unio oppositorum at its highest. This means that the union of opposites in the royal art is just as real as coitus in the common acceptance of the word, so that the opus becomes an analogy of the natural process by means of which instinctive energy is transformed, at least in part, into symbolical activity. The creation of such analogies frees instinct and the biological sphere as a whole from the pressure of unconscious contents.208

That the coniunctio remains at bottom a mystery, regardless of how detailed and analytic Jung's scrutiny of it has been, is only so for the individual

who approaches these matters from the center of his or her own experience. Neither is it the intention of the present writing "to cover up reality with clear concepts." Ultimately, knowledge of the process of transformation rests on a great sea of the unknown. For Jung, the notion of transformation or individuation falls into an obscure field of research in need of exploration; that is the centralizing, integrative processes in the unconscious:

These processes are steeped in mystery; they pose riddles with which the human mind will long wrestle for a solution, and perhaps in vain. For, in the last analysis, it is exceedingly doubtful whether human reason is a suitable instrument for this purpose. . . The alchemists themselves warned us: 'Rumpite libros, ne corda vestra rumpantur' (Rend the books, lest your hearts be rent asunder), and this despite their insistence on study. Experience, not books, is what leads to understanding.²⁰⁹

Projection, transformation and communication

What are the consequences for communication of the sketch here made of the individuation process in its alchemical formulation? What does the description of the psyche's dynamic life indicate for the project of considering how psychic processes within the individual affect communication? First of all, I assert that my understanding of these phenomena, like the transformations of the individuation process, undergoes processual change.

To begin with, it seems that reality has two aspects, or rather that our experience has a psychic dimension (of dreams, fantasies, thoughts, affects, sensations etc.) and a physical dimension (material objects and events). At the beginning of the individuation process these dimensions are perceived as a kind of split between "inner" and "outer" reality; furthermore, inner reality has relative precedence. The ego is "larger than life" and in fact outer objects and events are not experienced as they are, but in terms of projections of the inner dimension. As the individuation process takes its course and

projections are withdrawn, the opposition of psychic and physical spheres is gradually drawn. A second opposition between the objective reality of the unconscious and that of the conscious ego is also constellated. At this point, both the psychic and physical dimensions, as well as the two poles within the psyche stand poised as incommensurable opposites. Finally, as the individuation process reaches its highest moments of realization, i.e., when the individual experiences in symbolic terms the increasing oneness of his own psychic being (a state which is beyond the experience of most and therefore which one understands only analogously to similar moments in one's own lives), the psychic and physical dimensions gradually fuse into one transcendental world. Now according to Franz:

The phenomenon of archaic identity, which is the feeling of being one with the environment and which is also the basis of all communication between human beings, is ultimately rooted in the existence of the collective unconscious.²¹⁰

The development of an active dialogue or on-going compensatory relationship between the unconscious and consciousness is the functional goal of individuation. Hence the individuation process is also a process of communication. As the psyche establishes a communicative dialogue between its parts, the individual is increasingly able to communicate objectively with his or her environment. For example, when one has established a communicative relationship with the persona, i.e., the mask or image of ourselves which we present to others, and recognizes that it is only a small part of our greater personality and so on, one is able to communicate objectively with someone who is totally unconscious of the persona via which he adapts to his environment by recognizing that this is only one part of that individual's greater, though perhaps as yet unacknowledged, personality. Rather than projecting some negative attribute such as superficiality to the other person, one is able to

accept the other's unconscious psyche out of a direct experience of one's own. In this sense, individuated communication implies the ability both to distinguish oneself from the environment (withdraw projections) and to relate to it (feel connected or one with it). Furthermore, the symbol of the self, which constitutes the central uniting principal of the psyche, is equally central in the process of communication which accompanies individuation, for:

. . . man-kind's 'group-soul' the self is, namely, an image of the bond uniting all men, . . . the preconscious ground of all communication and community among men, . . .211

Ultimately, communication and individuation are intimately linked, for inasmuch as individuation has a communicative basis, communication has a potentially integrative function.

In the case where two persons communicate with each other via their respective projections, an individuated approach to communication would try to address the unconscious part of the communication. This is the situation in the therapeutic situation, as the phenomenon of the transference testifies. As Jung has shown, the transference has a positive effect, if it can lead to communication or discussion concerning the transference itself:

. . . without a fundamental discussion of the situation, it is often simply impossible to break. . . infantile projections. As this is the legitimate aim and real meaning of the transference, it inevitably leads, whatever method of rapprochement be used, to discussion and understanding and hence to a heightened consciousness, which is a measure of the personality's integration.212

This discussion can also be engaged in when the projections are cast upon material objects. Here we see that individuated communication has a dual aspect: communication with the external partner and communication with one's own projected unconscious contents. Thus the process of individuated communication follows a path of differentiation and reconciliation or union.

Communication between consciousness and the unconscious can be considered to be the medium in which the union of these two is realized, i.e., made real. Interestingly enough, alchemy contained a mediating principle, in addition to the active and passive principles, i.e. Sol and Luna respectively. The medium of the alchemical conjunction was personified as the mythological figure of Mercurius:

Beneath this spiritual and corporeal binarius lieth hid a third thing, which is the bond of holy matrimony. This same is the medium enduring until now in all things, partaking of both their extremes, without which it cannot be at all, nor they without this medium be what they are, one thing out of three.²¹³

In the following chapter, I shall look more closely at the symbol of Mercurius and the amplification it provides for understanding the psychological dynamics of human communication.

CHAPTER 4:

Mercurius: Archetype of the Communication
Process in Individuation



4.

Et hoc imaginare per veram imaginationem, et non phantasticam.

Summary

The present chapter considers Mercurius, who is the central figure in alchemy and the alchemical personification of the secret transforming substance. Psychologically amplified, the symbol points to the archetypal psychic function of mediation, as this constitutes the essence of the individuation process. Mediation, or dialogue, between consciousness and the unconscious is the goal of the opus, i.e., the coniunctio oppositorum (union of opposites), as well as the goal of the psychological work of integration. Mercurius thus points to the communication process via which individuation takes place. This communication process is best illustrated by active imagination, a technique Jung developed for entering into relationship with the unconscious. The faculties of relationship and discrimination are crucial for a) the activation of unconscious images and b) distinguishing the imaginal forms which unconscious contents take from the psychic functions underlying them. Above all, the polar nature of communication is established, since both consciousness and the unconscious must face each other as equally valid partners. Only when the tension between the opposing poles of consciousness and the unconscious has been experienced, can the creative, transforming solution be found. The establishment of dialogue with the unconscious is significant, for it reflects our ability to withdraw projections and to communicate objectively with the environment.

Text

Personification of the transforming substance

According to the theory of analytical psychology, every unconscious psychic function acting as a relatively autonomous complex, has the tendency to appear in dreams or fantasies as a personified figure.²¹⁴ In the case of alchemical images, Jung considered these figures paradigmatic of the structure and dynamics of the individuation process itself. In the present chapter, I would like to consider the central figure of Mercurius in the alchemical opus, as it represents the communication process underlying individuation.

The significance of the Mercurius symbol is manifold and complex, as Jung has suggested in his essay, "Der Geist Mercurius" (1943). For the present purpose, I would like to consider Mercurius in his role as the transforming substance and as the spirit of revelation or messages, or, to put it in the terms of analytical psychology, the archetype of communication.

Jung calls Mercurius the paradox par excellence.²¹⁵ It is the principal designation for the arcanum, the magical substance which represented the archetypal idea in alchemy of a third or unifying condition between the opposites. In this guise, Mercurius is the prima materia or beginning - that which is to be united - he is the lapis or goal, - the state of union - and he is also the medium by which the union takes place, the principium individuationis.²¹⁶ Important to note is that the term "Mercurius",^{used here in Jung's sense,} has a number of overlapping referents: the god Mercury (Hermes) and the planet Mercury, the alchemical element quicksilver and the secret transforming substance, as well as the spirit in all creatures.²¹⁷ Mercurius is central to the opus because it is, in fact, a catch-all for projections from the unconscious:

. . .one simple and unmistakable term in no way sufficed to designate what the alchemists had in mind when they spoke of Mercurius. It was certainly quicksilver, but a very special quicksilver, 'our' Mercurius, the essence, moisture, or principle behind or within the quicksilver - that indefinable, fascinating imitating and elusive thing which attracts our unconscious projection. The 'philosophic' Mercurius, this servus fugitivus. . . is a highly important unconscious content which. . . threatens to ramify into a set of far-reaching psychological problems. The concept swells dangerously and we begin to perceive that the end is nowhere in sight.218

In detailing the myriad manifestations of Mercurius in the forementioned essay, as water and fire, as soul and spirit or wind, as multiplicity, trinity, duality and unity, Jung points out that the concept of Mercurius, like the chemical quicksilver, is a fluid one:

. . .this fluid substance, with all its paradoxical qualities, really signifies the unconscious which has been projected into it. The 'sea' is its static condition, the 'fountain' its activation, and the 'process' its transformation.219

The three principles of the passive, the active, and the transforming correspond in turn to the beginning stage, the goal and the synthesizing medium respectively. Small wonder that almost every conceivable metaphor and fantasy was projected onto Mercurius:

Mercurius. . . is the arcanum, the prima materia, the 'father of all metals,' the primeval chaos, the earth of paradise, the 'material upon which nature worked a little, but nevertheless left imperfect.' He is also the ultima materia, the goal of his own transformation, the stone, the tincture, the philosophic gold, the carbuncle, the philosophic man, the second Adam, the analogue of Christ, the King, the light of lights, the deus terrestris, indeed the divinity itself or its perfect counterpart.220

Put succinctly, Mercurius is the first and the last stage:

. . .Mercurius is also the process which lies between and the means by which it is effected. He is the 'beginning, middle, and end of the work.'221

Archetype of the process of mediation

If there is a simple way to understand these seemingly contradictory descriptions

it is, according to Jung, as a process of mediation. The idea of a process is supported by Jung's observation that Mercurius has no object referent:

The stress they laid on his capacity for self-generation, self-transformation, self-reproduction, and self-destruction contradicts the idea that he is a created being.²²²

The idea that Mercurius in fact constitutes a projection of the psychic function of mediation is confirmed by a poem from Verus Hermes (1620) quoted by Jung in the article on Mercurius. The poem, which describes the transformation of Mercurius, suggests that all of the contradictory synonyms for Mercurius make sense if he is understood as a dynamic process with different qualities at different points. Mercurius is both a "babe" and a "greybeard." Though "surnamed the Dragon" and "languishing in a dungeon," he will be reborn a "king."²²³ It becomes clear why Mercurius was considered the "transformative substance":

In this poem Mercurius is describing his own transformation, which at the same time signifies the mystic transformation of the artifex; for not only Mercurius but also what happens to him is a projection of the collective unconscious. This, as can easily be seen from what has gone before, is the projection of the individuation process. . . ²²⁴

Mercurius ultimately represents the bridge to the unconscious. It is Jung's contention that the progressive development of consciousness, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, has led to a split between consciousness and the unconscious:

The emphatic differentiation of opposites is synonymous with sharper discrimination, and that is the sine qua non for any broadening or heightening of consciousness. . . But clarification of consciousness necessarily entails an obscuration of those dimmer elements of the psyche which are less capable of becoming conscious, so that sooner or later a split occurs in the psychic system.²²⁵

According to the principle of compensation cited by Jung in the work on Mercurius, every psychic development "possesses an optimum which, when exceeded, . . . turns into its opposite." Thus the one-sided psychic development of

consciousness beyond what is allowable if psychic equilibrium is to be maintained, has triggered the unconscious development of a compensatory psychic function, of which Mercurius is an archetypal image:

[Mercurius] owes its existence to the law of compensation, and its object is to throw a bridge across the abyss separating the two psychological worlds by presenting a subtle compensatory counterpoint to the archetype of consciousness. . .226

In a number of texts, referred to in the same article, Mercurius is outright called the Mediator and in this he resembles the pagan god Hermes. Characteristics of Hermes reproduced in the alchemists' descriptions of Mercurius are as: pointer of the way, revealer of divine secrets, messenger of the gods, hermeneut (interpreter)²²⁷ and psychopomp or initiator.²²⁸ All of these guises reinforce the image of Mercurius as depicting the communicative aspects of the opus. This image is further supported by the fact that Mercurius was considered the spirit in all living creatures. The title of Jung's essay also refers to him as "the spirit Mercurius." The winged god Mercury/Hermes is thus interestingly enough related to a word "Geist" which is etymologically associated with something frothing or effervescing such as cold air in motion. Jung considered the spirit to be a psychic occurrence experienced as a breath-like presence which orders inner images and thoughts in a meaningful way:

Spirit, therefore according to Jung, is in the first instance the composer of dreams: a principle of spontaneous psychic motion which produces and orders symbolic images freely and in accordance with its own laws.229

In so far as Mercurius depicts the workings of the spirit, he is the principle that communicates the unknown, i.e. meaningfully orders the images and fantasies which well up from the unconscious.

It is beyond the scope of this investigation to do more than establish the connection between Mercurius, the central personification of the alchemist opus, and the psychic function of mediation or communication to which this personific-

ation points. To do justice to the richness of the Mercurius (Hermes) symbolism and its relevance to communication, a lengthier treatment would be required. A non-psychological approach has already been offered by Michel Serres in Hermès ou la Communication.

The principle of individuation as communication

I would now like to consider the psychological significance of the symbol of Mercurius. It carries in itself the essence of the individuation process (principium individuationis). This essence stands in a compensatory relation to rational understanding and discrimination, i.e. the principle of consciousness. For Mercurius precisely mediates between the rational and the irrational:

The magic of his name enables him, in spite of his ambiguity and duplicity, to keep outside the split, for as an ancient pagan god he possesses a natural undividedness which is impervious to logical and moral contradictions.230

Such a symbol of mediation is particularly timely in the present century when, according to Jung, reason is in danger of becoming unreason. The latter tendency is inevitable when mediation or dialogue with the unconscious is preempted by a one-sided development of consciousness. The equation of Mercurius with the psychic function of mediation or communication is tellingly confirmed by the passage with which Jung closes his essay. In Jung's estimation, the dominance of consciousness as a cultural value in our day, and the lack of a general acknowledgment of the value of the unconscious, means that the archetype of Mercurius cannot be manifest in its positive aspect, but rather is projected as a nefarious tendency. Mercurius, the light-bearer (Lucifer) offers little revelation to our century:

Lucifer, who could have brought light, becomes the father of lies whose voice in our time, supported by press and radio, revels in orgies of propaganda and leads untold millions to ruin.231

Whether or not one agrees with the strong terms in which Jung castigates the

use made of modern mass media, suffice it to say that the use of mass media as a tool of propaganda is , for Jung, symptomatic of the phenomenon of the mass man, who stands opposed to the individuated person. More will be said about the implications of Jung's theory of individuation in relation to the mass psyche in the final chapter.

Finally, James Hillman has given an imaginative description of the central role of Mercurius as mediator between parts of the psyche^{in his version of psychic} integration called soul-making:

The movements of Mercury among the multiple parts, fragmentation as moments of light.[sic] Truth is the mirror, not what's in it or behind it, but the very mirroring process itself; psychological reflections. An awareness of fantasy that cracks the normative cement of our daily realities into new shapes.232

In bringing together some of the various amplifications of the Mercurius archetype made by the alchemists and by Jung's psychology, I have tried to demonstrate that Mercurius is a personification of the psychic function of mediation between conscious^{ness} and ^{the} unconscious, as well as to suggest that this function constitutes the communicational basis of the individuation process.

Dialogue with the unconscious

In the following section, I would like to consider what form the mediation between conscious and unconscious actually takes. Jung has used a variety of metaphors including "dialectic," "bridge," and "dialogue." Although a bridge to the unconscious may be established when one begins to experience dream- or fantasy-images, a further step must be taken if one is to be something more than a passive observer of his own fantasies. As one places oneself in the drama of the fantasy, not as one of the fictitious personalities but as a critical partner, a dialogue is established.

Jung has described the dialogue with the unconscious as an actual technique in the essay, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious." I would like to consider this technique at length here, since it constitutes the closest Jung came to setting out a program for studying the communication process inherent in individuation. The technique described by Jung is a deliberate way of establishing contact with the unconscious. From the discussion of projection it is evident that where the conscious attitude makes a deliberate relation impossible, the unconscious attempts to "communicate" by way of affects, neuroses or projections. I say "attempts," since all of these psychic manifestations imply a purposive end, according to Jung. But in the case of the deliberately-sought dialogue, it is assumed that one wishes to hear what the unconscious, in this citation, for example, the anima or contrasexual archetype in a man, has to say:

The art of it consists only in allowing our invisible partner to make herself heard, in putting the mechanism of expression momentarily at her disposal, without being overcome by the distaste one naturally feels at playing such an apparently ludicrous game with oneself, or by doubts as to the genuineness of the voice of one's interlocutor.²³³

It is not unusual to assume the possibility of such a dialogue, considering that most people are able and often do engage in talking to themselves. The important feature of this technique, however, is to dis-identify with the thoughts and images that occur and see them as objective occurrences following a known pattern. Only then can one avoid selectively hearing or censoring what may appear:

It certainly requires the greatest objectivity and absence of prejudice to give the 'other side' the opportunity for perceptible psychic activity. . . without regard to our rational criticism. So long as the affect is speaking, criticism must be withheld. But once it has presented its case, we should begin criticizing as conscientiously as though a real person closely connected with us were our interlocutor. Nor should the matter rest there, but statement and answer must follow one another until a satisfactory

end to the discussion is reached.234

The end to the discussion is a transformation of the personality and dissolution of the autonomous complex which had appeared in personified form. The priority in the dialogue, however, is not understanding or analysis, or at least not to begin with. It is a question of releasing the unconscious processes and allowing them to take imaginal or fantasy form:

For the important thing is not to interpret and understand the fantasies, but primarily to experience them. . . By 'human' experience I mean that the person. . . should not just be included passively in the vision, but that he should face the figures of the vision actively and reactively, with full consciousness.235

When the experience of the vision or voice has passed and the material stands before one objectively, then a process of discrimination sets in to distinguish the fantasy-image from the operative psychic function underlying it. At this point, what appeared personified as anima or animus dissolves and converts into its function as a bridge to the unconscious:

The purpose of the dialectical process is to bring these contents into the light: and only when this task has been completed, and the conscious mind has become sufficiently familiar with the unconscious processes reflected in the anima, will the anima be felt simply as a function.236

Active imagination

Jung came to call the technique of dialogue with the unconscious, active imagination. Hull's bibliography (Spring 1971), shows the emergence of the concept in Jung's lectures and published writings. Jung's first public exposition of the technique in the Tavistock lectures (1935), drew upon an alchemical formulation as introduction:

. . . our work, ought to be done 'per veram imaginationem et non phantastica' - by true imagination and not by a fantastical one. In other words, if you take the correct meaning of this definition, fantasy is mere nonsense, a phantasm, a fleeting impression; but imagination is active, purposeful creation.237

As I have outlined in chapter three, the alchemical opus was a kind of striving towards active imagination, towards "an irrigation of the conscious mind by the unconscious."²³⁸ Marie-Louise von Franz gives a useful definition in her chapter of Man and his Symbols:

Active imagination is a certain way of meditating imaginatively, by which one may deliberately enter into contact with the unconscious and make a conscious connection with psychic phenomena.²³⁹

Important to note is that although the relationship is consciously chosen and later consciously examined, when one is experiencing the images that arise, one is devoid of any program or goal. The spontaneous flow of the unconscious is the only purpose:

We depend entirely upon the benevolent co-operation of our unconscious. If it does not co-operate, we are completely lost. Therefore I am convinced that we cannot do much in the way of conscious invention: we overestimate the power of intention and the will.²⁴⁰

It may be helpful to recall that two psychic functions are being activated as the dialogue is established, or as the opus reaches its goal of integration. These are discrimination and relationship. When the unconscious flows freely, bringing images into consciousness without censorship, the ability to relate to the other or the strange part in oneself is brought about. When the unconscious contents have become manifest, then the power of discrimination comes to bear in distinguishing personifications from the underlying psychic function.

Jung elaborates on the communicative nature of active imagination in "The Transcendent Function" (1916; revised 1958). The first and the main prerequisite, is that both parties, the ego and the unconscious, be granted equal authority or weight, each with its own say:

It is exactly as if a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights, each of whom gives the other credit for a valid argument and considers it worthwhile to modify the conflicting standpoints by means of thorough comparison and discussion or else to distinguish them clearly from one another.

Since the way to agreement seldom stands open, in most cases a long conflict will have to be borne, demanding sacrifices from both sides.241

Although the dialogue may take the form of talking-to-oneself, other more complicated cases arise when visual or physical media are chosen by the unconscious to manifest itself. These other forms seem to speak a language:

. . . which is eloquent enough for one who understands it, but which seems like deaf-and-dumb language to one who does not.242

Presumably, a rich grasp of the significance of the archetypes and the forms in which they manifest themselves is a vital prerequisite for entering into the "languages" of the unconscious. For this reason perhaps, Hillman suggests that the name "analytical" psychology be replaced by the term "archetypal" psychology, owing to the centrality of the concept of the archetype:

The archetype is the most ontologically fundamental of all Jung's psychological concepts, with the advantage of precision and yet by definition partly indefinable and open. Psychic life rests upon these organs; even the self is conceptually subsumed among the archetypes; and they are the operative agents in Jung's idea of therapy. . . Analysis may be an instrument for realizing the archetypes but it cannot embrace them. Placing archetypal prior to analytical gives the psyche a chance to move out of the consulting room. It gives an archetypal perspective to the consulting room itself.243

The polarity of communication

Analysis alone, in the sense of discriminatory judgment, is not enough to bring about a satisfactory resolution of the conflicting points of view.

If discrimination and relationship are to work together, one must distinguish between one's ego viewpoint and the messages from the unconscious, while also keeping both equally before one's view or related to one another. Balancing both simultaneously brings out the creative third:

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing - not a logical stillbirth in accordance with

the principle tertium non datur but a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. The transcendent function manifests itself as a quality of conjoined opposites.²⁴⁴

The new, third thing has a unifying effect since the process of coming to terms with the counter-position brings home that which had hitherto been excluded. The technique of active imagination, as a communicative dialogue with the unconscious, is all the more relevant to considerations of communication in general, since the ability to carry out an inner dialogue with the voices and figures of one's unconscious bears upon the possibility of dialogue with actual persons and objective knowledge of physical objects:

The present day shows with appalling clarity how little able people are to let the other man's argument count, although this capacity is a fundamental and indispensable condition for any human community. Everyone who proposes to come to terms with himself must reckon with this basic problem. For, to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the 'other' within himself the right to exist - and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity.²⁴⁵

To the extent that one fails to achieve the inner dialogue, the very contents that have been excluded by our differentiated consciousness, will be projected elsewhere. And to the extent that one experiences the outer world via one's own projections, communication with that world is based on illusion:

It is certainly no ideal for people always to remain childish, to live in a perpetual state of delusion about themselves, foisting everything they dislike onto their neighbours and plaguing them with their prejudices and projections.²⁴⁶

Whether one works to withdraw projections or to enter into contact with the unconscious via active imagination, the goal is the same: to distinguish between what one is and what one imagines oneself to be, and so to know one's objective partner as well as one's self. The technique of dialogue emphasizes the polarity necessary for individuated communication:

As alchemical symbolism shows, a radical understanding of this kind is impossible without a human partner. A general and merely

academic 'insight into one's mistakes' is ineffectual, for then the mistakes are not really seen at all, only the idea of them. But they show up acutely when a human relationship brings them to the fore and when they are noticed by the other person as well as by oneself. Then and then only can they really be felt and their true nature recognized.247

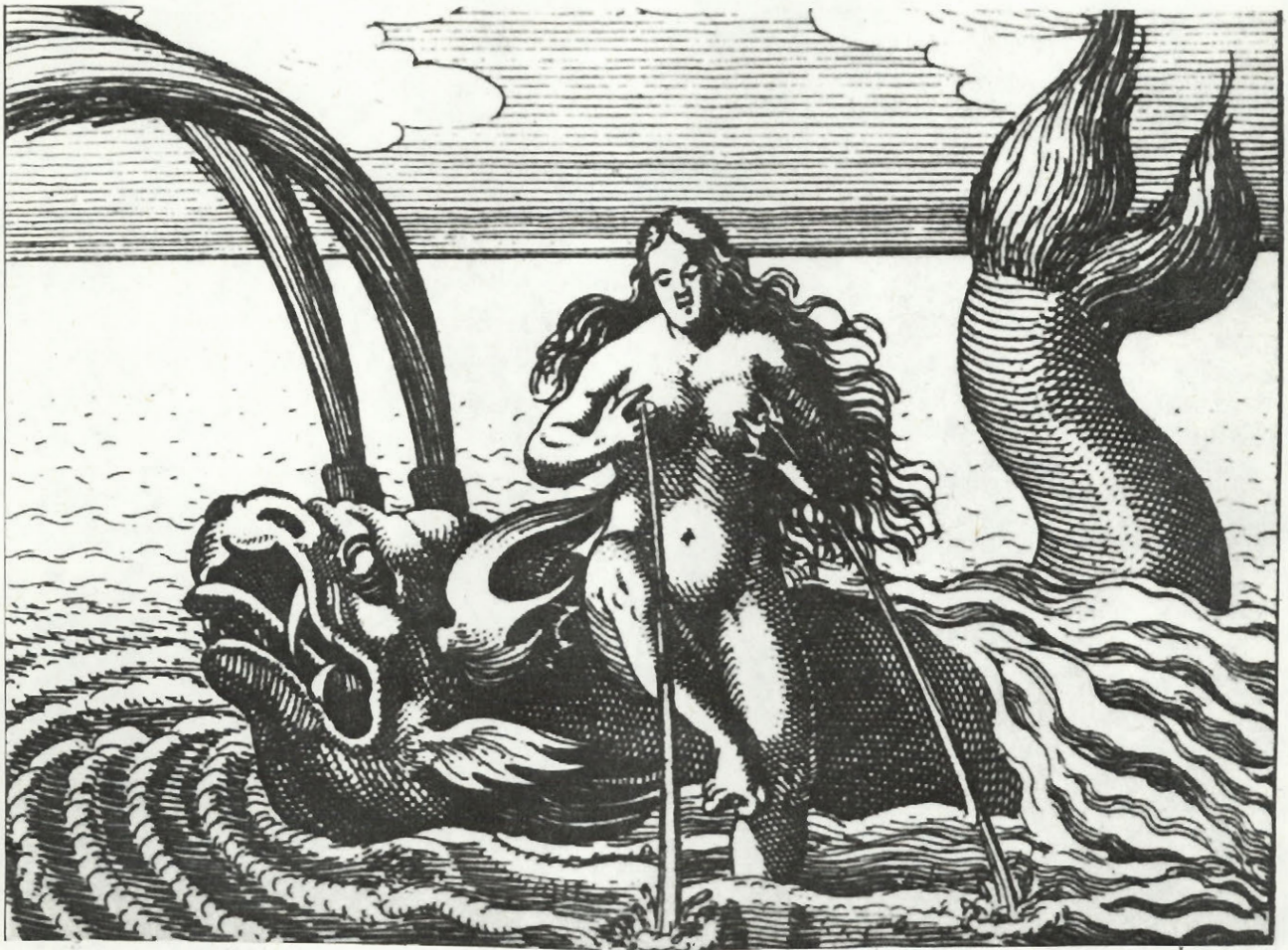
The polarity necessary for communication also explains the slippery contrariety of the alchemical personification for the psychic function of mediation, i.e., Mercurius, with which we started out this chapter. Jung writes on the one hand of "Mercurius' impish drolleries, his inexhaustible invention, his insinuations, his intriguing ideas and schemes, his ambivalence and - often - his unmistakeable malice." Yet these negative qualities stand beside his revelatory and god-like powers:

. . . I can well understand why the alchemists endowed their Mercurius with the highest spiritual qualities, although these stand in flagrant contrast to his exceedingly shady character. The contents of the unconscious are indeed of the greatest importance, for the unconscious is after all the matrix of the human mind and its inventions.248

To sum up, Mercurius represents the archetype of the unconscious and the psychic function of mediation. Mercurius thereby points to the communicative nature of the individuation process, as mediation between consciousness and the unconscious. Now if the goal of the process, i.e., the establishment of a dialogue between conscious^{ness} and 'unconscious', is to be operationalized as a form of active imagination, the unconscious must be acknowledged as an equal and real partner. In the next chapter, therefore, I shall consider the implications of accepting the unconscious as an objective psychic phenomenon and its role in communication. A second consideration is how the inner dialogue with the unconscious may facilitate the withdrawal of one's projections from outer reality, and thereby bring about a more objective or individuated communication with the environment.

CHAPTER 5

The Reality of the Unconscious



5.

Transmutemini in vivos lapides philosophicos.

Summary

The present chapter looks at the fundamental prerequisite for establishing a communicative dialogue between the conscious and unconscious poles of the psyche; namely, the acknowledgment by the conscious pole of the psychic reality of the unconscious pole. The polar nature of the psyche and of the communication process in individuation is expressed in the structure of the symbol, which contains a known content accessible to conscious interpretation, while also pointing to a numinous, as yet only hinted at and basically unconscious content. The difficulty of discovering the unconscious content lies in the fact that as soon as the unconscious manifests itself, it is already transformed into partly conscious, partly differentiated form. Dreams consist of archetypal images, not archetypes themselves. An intellectual account of such images may clarify their conscious aspects while petrifying their numinous quality. A symbolic account is able to retain the dynamic and vivid nature of the dream or fantasy experience. Thus the articulation of personal experience in symbolic form is the only means of approaching the unconscious integrally. Once the unconscious is accepted as an autonomous partner, projections can be withdrawn. While further study is needed, some basic features of projections can be identified. The external object or person onto which the projection is cast, is seen to act as a catalyst for the unconscious to manifest itself. When the special case of projections into objects is considered, for example the projection of the archetype of wholeness into the philosophical stone, the incommensurability of the psychic and physical worlds is questioned. The projection, when it is retrieved, assumes the psychic reality of the unconscious; yet it also brings into question its physical basis in instincts and the body. Empirical evidence in the form of

synchronistic events suggests the possibility of a unified world or unus mundus, of which the psychic and physical are complementary aspects. Therefore the postulated third coniunctio in alchemy, or union of the whole man with the physical universe seems in principle to be possible.

Over all, Jung's theory of individuation or psychological wholeness implies a communicative relationship intrapsychically, between conscious^{ness} and ^{the}unconscious, and extrapsychically, between the psyche and the physical world. The psychological necessity of the latter communicative relationship as a prerequisite for objective knowledge of the physical world, raises doubts about the objectivity of scientific description which fails to take into account the psychic basis of science in the scientist. The perception-communication approach of David Bohm in the contemporary debate on the structure of scientific theories substantiates the need for returning to a way of thinking characteristic of alchemy, for instance, which saw in analogous similarities of all things, evidence for a greater unity in the universe.

Text

The psychic reality of the unconscious

In the preceding chapter, I have shown that the process of communication in individuation begins with the experience of one's projection of unconscious contents and tends towards the goal of an ongoing dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious. Somewhere between these two points a crucial transformation on the part of consciousness takes place. The centrality of consciousness is displaced or made relative. Gradually, the objective reality of the unconscious, i.e., the source of spontaneous images, projections or affects, is accepted by the individual's consciousness. To put it another way, if we recall the fifth level of consciousness reached in withdrawing a projection described in chapter two, the projection which becomes differentiated from the object or person onto which it had been cast assumes a real psychic content which is part of the personality.

In Jung's terms, the projections which produced alchemical symbols are evidence for:

. . .the phenomenology of an 'objective' spirit, a true matrix of psychic experience, . . .249

The alchemists located this unknown spirit in matter. Jung's contribution to the understanding of alchemy was to suggest that the objective spirit functions as the psychic unconscious. Like the alchemist's conception of matter, the unconscious for us is refractory, mysterious and elusive. In fact, the objective psychic reality of the unconscious is problematic for those who, since the Enlightenment, have identified all of the psyche with consciousness, with "what I know," as Jung says. Before one can begin to study the manifestations of the unconscious, one must begin to accept its presence and its

influence on daily experiences:

It seems to me of some importance, therefore, that a few individuals, or people individually, should begin to understand that there are contents which do not belong to the ego-personality, but must be ascribed to a psychic non-ego. . . the only course left to us is to repudiate the arrogant claim of the conscious mind to the whole of the psyche, and to admit that the psyche is a reality which we cannot grasp with our present means of understanding.250

The objective psyche was epitomized by Mercurius, who personified and concretized for the alchemists what Jung calls the collective unconscious.

In proposing the latter term, Jung wished to withdraw from the language of metaphysics or theology, and to treat the symbols of alchemy as psychological facts which modern science has either obscured or relegated to a form of disease:

Once we accept the fact that the voices and delusions of the insane and the phobias and obsessions of the neurotic are beyond rational control, and that the ego cannot voluntarily fabricate dreams but simply dreams what it has to, then we can also understand that the gods came first and theology later.251

Important to note is that such psychological concepts as the collective unconscious have a discriminatory function, only after one has experienced the archetypal images of which the former attempt to make sense. Franz has pointed out that where medical psychology lacks a notion of the collective unconscious, psychological conflicts within the individual are either ascribed to the body or to the subject. According to her, both explanations are projections of the conflict elsewhere, out of a failure to recognize the rupture of relations between consciousness and the unconscious:

Among modern people, eighty percent still think that way, because they have not yet seen the importance of the concept of the unconscious. They still see only a subject with personal conflicts, . . . There has always been a tendency to misunderstand the [inner] conflicts either materialistically - namely, that the whole problem is in the body (materialism) when there is a physical medicine to cure with - or psychologically, but with the implication the problem lies simply in what the subject thinks about itself,

the complications the ego has with and makes for itself. The idea that the conflict could lie in another realm, that is, in the unconscious psyche where the cure lies also, naturally did not exist.252

The unconscious realm mentioned is collective, i.e., it is not personal and therefore does not stem merely from personal problems. As for the materialist projection, the delusion of the alchemists that the secret substance was in chemical matter is paralleled, according to Jung, by the modern delusion that shock "treatment" can actually treat mental illness. In other words, psychological facts are projected into the physical realm:

We can understand this [alchemical] deus ex machina the more easily when we remember with what passion people today believe that psychological complications can be made magically to disappear by means of hormones, narcotics, insulin shocks, and convulsion therapy. The alchemists were as little able to perceive the symbolic nature of their ideas of the arcanum as we to recognize that the belief in hormones and shocks is a symbol.253

The unknown expressed in the symbol

Jung's use of the term "symbol" implicitly affirms the equal importance of conscious^{ness} and ^{the} unconscious. Symbolic contents of the psyche express something unknown or unconscious, for Jung, in contrast to semiotic contents of the psyche whose referent or basis we do know or at least think we know. ²⁵⁴ In other words, the symbol is the psychological equivalent of the coniunctio described in chapter 3, which resolves the tension between Sol and Luna, consciousness and the unconscious:

In psychic matters we are dealing with processes of experience, that is, with transformations which should never be given hard and fast names if their living movement is not to petrify into something static. The protean mythologem and the shimmering symbol express the processes of the psyche far more trenchantly and, in the end far more clearly than the clearest concept; for the symbol not only conveys a visualization of the process but . . . it also brings a re-experiencing of it, . . . which too much clarity only dispels.255

In considering symbols as psychological facts, Jung wished to interpret their

content as far as possible, while bearing in mind that the numinosity of the symbol points to an unknown content yet to be realized or integrated. The symbol constitutes the central mediating agent between the unconscious and consciousness, in so far as it contains some aspects of both. Although one may readily fall into the trap of explaining the symbol only intellectually, a response from the total psyche would have to be based not only in consciousness, but also in the unconscious. This criterion points to the limiting nature of language:

Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language. (Indeed, language itself is only an image.) The most we can do is to dream the myth onwards and give it a modern dress.256

Such a response would first require an acknowledgment of the objective reality and complementary role of the psychic unconscious. Why is this so difficult to accept?

Discovering the unconscious in experience

We have noted how difficult it is to distinguish the many symbols and images produced by the unconscious. Each alchemical term, for instance, has myriad synonyms and pictorial renditions. Images overlap and fuse. Here we encounter the problem of making precise in consciousness what is by nature imprecise. The essence of the conscious mind is discrimination. Awareness presupposes separating qualities by distinguishing them from their opposite. Yet it is the essence of the unconscious for the opposites to seek one another:

The indistinguishableness of [the unconscious'] contents gives one the impression that everything is connected with everything else and therefore, despite their multifarious modes of manifestation, that they are at bottom a unity.257

As soon as the unconscious manifests itself, the archetypal unity is split apart and symbolic contents cluster around motifs or types. Because one meets the

archetypal images in dreams, i.e., contents which have already been partially differentiated, and not the archetypes themselves, no unmediated experience of the unconscious is possible:

We meet with a similar situation in physics: there the smallest particles are themselves irrepresentable but have effects from the nature of which we can build up a model. The archetypal image, the motif or mythologem, is a construction of this kind.²⁵⁸

As long as one is looking for an actual thing or organ, the unconscious fails to materialize. In abstracting the nature of the individuation process from his own experience and from alchemical symbols, Jung adopted the hypothesis of the unconscious as a necessary part of the energetic processes making up the psyche. Writing in 1954, half a century after Freud shook the medical world, Jung noted:

Today, once again, we hear tendentious voices still contesting the hypothesis of the unconscious, declaring that it is nothing more than the personal prejudice of those who make use of this hypothesis. . . . But, young as the psychology of unconscious processes may be, it has nevertheless succeeded in establishing certain facts which are gradually gaining general acceptance. One of these is the polaristic structure of the psyche, which it shares with all natural processes. Natural processes are phenomena of energy, constantly arising out of a 'less probable state' of polar tension. The formula is of special significance for psychology, because the conscious mind is usually reluctant to see or admit the polarity of its background, although it is precisely from there that it gets its energy.²⁵⁹

As long as one is in the position of an observer looking to see some object, one has not established a relationship with the unconscious. One must enter into the relationship, in other words, one must experience rather than merely observe. As Jung points out, where one's experience stops, there begins the unpopular and distressingly nebulous:

I would therefore counsel the critical reader to put aside his prejudices and for once try to experience on himself the effects of the process I have described, or else to suspend judgment and admit that he understands nothing. For thirty years I have studied the psychic processes under all possible conditions and have

assured myself that the alchemists as well as the great philosophies of the East are referring to just such experiences, and that it is chiefly our ignorance of the psyche if these experiences appear 'mystic.'260

Inasmuch as experience is a function of the entire psyche, the unconscious manifests itself in our experience. It is impossible to get at the unconscious only intellectually, since the intellect is by definition that part of the psyche which has differentiated itself away from the unconscious.

Even in areas where materialistic determinism does not get in the way, various philosophers and psychologists reject Jung because they are unable to grasp the fact that the unconscious really is unconscious or, in other words, because, in their very different ways, they regard the unconscious as a kind of phantasmagoria appertaining to the ego, rather than as something autonomous and existing in its own right; in short, they do not see it as psychically objective.261

As Jung has stated and Franz adds, only a personal experience of the objective reality of one's inner world, whether through psychotherapy or some form of active imagination, can bring one into contact with the unconscious. Even this is only possible, however, provided the person does not rationalize away his experience or flee in anxiety. The recognition of the unconscious pole of the psyche is of particular significance to the study of human communication for:

. . . the psyche is in fact a conscious-unconscious whole, an 'all-embracing One.' As mentioned above, conscious and unconscious, as a kind of two-in-one, are the substrate of psychic processes in which now the unconscious predominates, as in dreams, or again the conscious, as in the waking state. The phenomenon of archaic identity, which is the feeling of being one with the environment and which is also the basis of all communication between human beings, is ultimately rooted in the existence of the collective unconscious.262

Projections or the commensurability of psychic and physical reality

Once the polarity of the psyche is recognized, the process of communication between its poles gets underway. The withdrawal of projections now becomes

possible, and the objects and persons which caught the projections are distinguished from the inner psychic factor which had earlier been split off from consciousness. According to Franz, the concept of projection needs further refinement, and the conditions under which it is withdrawn need to be investigated. The effects of understanding this dynamic of the psyche could be shattering, she suggests, since it relativizes the centrality in our culture of the social outgrowth of one-sided consciousness, i.e., science itself:

Because the withdrawal of a projection involves considerable moral effort, it is not generally a popular exercise. If a wider acceptance were given to Jung's concept of projection, profound and far-reaching changes would result, for all scientific and religious doctrines would ultimately prove to have been projections.²⁶³

In the midst of this emphasis on the unconscious, it must be added that the need to recognize the unconscious is relative to a culture which denies the latter's existence. The unconscious is no more than a partner, albeit a necessary one, in the "dialogue" or process of communication with consciousness. For it is consciousness which integrates the projected contents:

If our psychology is forced, owing to the special nature of its empirical material, to stress the importance of the unconscious, that does not in any way diminish the importance of ego-consciousness. It is merely the one-sided over-valuation of the latter that has to be checked by a certain relativization of values. But this relativization should not be carried so far that the ego is completely fascinated and overpowered by the archetypal truths . . . If [the ego] is absorbed by the unconscious to such an extent that the latter alone has the power of decision, then the ego is stifled, and there is no longer any medium in which the unconscious could be integrated and in which the work of realization could take place.²⁶⁴

The notion of projection may be furthered by considering the role of the object or person which catches or receives the projection. To begin with, we have already noted in the alchemical material that the substance onto which unconscious material is projected is appropriately chosen. In general:

Experience shows that the carrier of the projection is not just any object but is always one that proves adequate to the nature of the content projected - that is to say, it must offer the content a 'hook' to hang on.265

As Jung further suggests in a footnote, this special similarity explains why the projection has some effect on the carrier. The "stone," for instance, was expected to effect transmutations of base metals. Among modern examples we find, for instance, the transference phenomena where the unconscious anima or animus is projected onto the analyst by the patient. If caught unawares, the analyst may identify with the projection and be inflated, i.e., believe himself to be as wonderful or as terrible, etc. as the patient supposes. Yet the transference reinforces Jung's contention that differentiation of the ego from the unconscious projection requires a partner:

Similarly, confessions made to one's secret self have little or no effect, whereas confessions made to another are much more promising.266

The transference situation illustrates a more general principle characteristic of individuation; namely, that the unconscious needs an external catalyst to bring up its contents, which cannot be surfaced directly. This principle reflects the polar nature of communication. The manifestation of unconscious contents, whether in projections or dreams, is always relative to one's conscious circumstances and attitudes. Personal contents arise in response to personal circumstances. Collective or impersonal contents arise in response to social, cultural and historical circumstances, as we have seen in considering alchemical symbolism vis-a-vis the cultural dominant of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. There is, of course, a difference between external catalysts which have not been chosen by the individual, as is the case when an object unwittingly "catches" a projection, and catalysts which have been deliberately chosen, as in active imagination or psychotherapy when some specific

medium or person is used. Other examples of catalysts derive from folklore, esoteric arts, psychological testing; among them are cracks, fire, water, tea-leaves, stars, hand-lines and the well-known Rorschach test:

You show a lot of dots and irregular patterns to people and they read what is in the unconscious in that way. There are many of these tests, and the Rorschach test is quite obviously one of them. It is a kind of catalyzing trick to bring out what the unconscious knows already.267

In both projection and active imagination, the object or person which acts as the catalyst plays a necessary part in bringing to consciousness the unconscious pole in the dialogue between the poles of the psyche. While further work remains to be done, the fundamental question remains, how can a psychic content be compared^{to} or "put into" a physical object? Is this not the basic confusion suffered by the alchemists of psychic and physical realities?

In this "confusion" lies the psychological discovery of Jung which is the most problematic for our rational thinking. For by withdrawing the alchemical projection, i.e., in distinguishing contents of the psychic unconscious from chemical substances, the qualities of the object which attracted the projection remain inextricably linked with the psyche:

Something of the projection-carrier always clings to the projection, and even if we succeed to some degree in integrating into our consciousness the part we recognize as psychic, we shall integrate along with it something of the cosmos and its materiality; or rather, since the cosmos is infinitely greater than we are, we shall have been assimilated by the inorganic.268

In other words, the projections onto chemical substances in alchemy point to an archetypal image of the union of spirit and matter. In trying to integrate this symbol into consciousness, we are forced to reassess what is the consciousness into which they are to be integrated. To paraphrase Jung, something of one's physical body is integrated also:

... alchemical projections...show us, as the redemptive goal of our

active, desirous life, a symbol of the inorganic - the stone - something that does not live but merely exists or 'becomes,' the passive subject of a limitless and unfathomable play of opposites. 'Soul,' that bodiless abstraction of the rational intellect, and 'spirit,' that two-dimensional metaphor of dry-as-dust philosophical dialectic, appear in alchemical projection in almost physical, plastic form, like tangible breath-bodies, and refuse to function as component parts of our rational consciousness.269

While recognizing one part of the content of the alchemical symbol of the stone as a hitherto unconscious psychic function, that of the unconscious itself, a part of the symbol points to something unknown and indeterminate, that is, the relation between the unconscious and the physical body. The stone points to an indescribable and superempirical totality of man:

This totality is a mere postulate, but a necessary one, because no one can assert that he has complete knowledge of man as he is. Not only in the psychic man is there something unknown, but also in the physical.270

Research in psychosomatic medicine, parapsychology and nuclear physics, as
271
Koestler reports, is drawing the psychic and physical worlds closer and closer together. Yet for the moment, psychology rests with fragmented indications:

. . . we do not know whether what we on the empirical plane regard as physical, may not, in the Unknown beyond our experience, be identical with what on this side of the border we distinguish from the physical as psychic. Though we know from experience that psychic processes are related to material ones, we are not in a position to say in what this relationship consists or how it is possible at all.272

The archetype of the unus mundus

Because the psychic and physical worlds are mutually dependent, it has often been conjectured that they may be identical somewhere beyond our ordinary experience. Furthermore, it seems that their unitary being cannot even be conceived, since our powers of thought and language are limited to antinomian statements:

All that is is not encompassed by our knowledge, so that we are not in a position to make any statements about its total nature. Microphysics is feeling its way into the unknown side of matter, just as complex psychology is pushing forward into the unknown side of the psyche. Both lines of investigation have yielded findings which can be conceived only by means of antinomies, and both have developed concepts which display remarkable analogies. . . . The common background of microphysics and depth psychology is as much physical as psychic and therefore neither, but rather a third thing, a neutral nature which can at most be grasped in hints since in essence it is transcendental.273

While Jung called this common background transcendental, which strictly speaking means outside of our experience, it would seem to be accessible to experience at certain extraordinary or paranormal occasions. It is on the expectation of just such an experience that the alchemist based his opus:

With this conjecture of the identity of the psychic and the physical we approach the alchemical view of the unus mundus, the potential world of the first day of creation, when there was as yet 'no second.' . . . Undoubtedly the idea of the unus mundus is founded on the assumption that the multiplicity of the empirical world rests on an underlying unity, and that not two or more fundamentally different worlds exist side by side or are mingled with one another. Rather, everything divided and different belongs to one and the same world, which is not the world of sense but a postulate, . . .274

The state of the unus mundus represented the third and only anticipated stage of conjunction, i.e., union of the whole man with the cosmos. Just as the self is the postulated unified ground of the personality, past, present and future, the one world meant "the eternal Ground of all empirical being."²⁷⁵ Not only ordinary experience speaks against an identity of the psychic and physical worlds, but scientific thinking has also emphasized discrimination:

The causalism that underlies our scientific view of the world breaks everything down into individual processes which it punctiliously tries to isolate from all other parallel processes. This tendency is absolutely necessary if we are to gain reliable knowledge of the world, but philosophically it has the disadvantage of breaking up, or obscuring, the universal interrelationship of events so that a recognition of the greater relationship, i.e., of the unity of the world, becomes more and more difficult.276

Evidence for the one world in synchronistic events

The transcendental unity of the psychic and physical is pointed to by events which have popularly been called telepathic, clairvoyant or extrasensory and which defy causal explanation. Together with physicist Wolfgang Pauli, Jung explored the concurrence of such events under the rubric synchronicity:

The characteristic feature of all these phenomena. . . is meaningful coincidence and as such I have defined the synchronistic principle. This principle suggests that there is an inter-connection or unity of causally unrelated events, and thus postulates a unitary aspect of being which can very well be described as the unus mundus.²⁷⁷

While the explanatory hypothesis is thus far a tentative one, (cf. Jung's "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" and Koestler's "Seriality and Synchronicity"), synchronistic phenomena seem to cluster in situations where an archetype is constellated in the unconscious. The possibility of such a relationship between the dynamic of the psyche and physical events further supports the suggestion that archetypes may have a non-psychic aspect. Jung's position in this respect is an addition to his earlier treatment of the archetypes solely as psychic phenomena, since he had originally investigated only ideas and images. In undertaking a general analysis of the psyche and in incorporating the work with Pauli, Jung came to a more complex treatment of the archetype. Furthermore, there are indications:

. . . that psychic processes stand in some sort of energy relation to the physiological substrate.²⁸⁰

The need for greater collaboration between microphysics and depth psychology has been argued, not only by Jung, but by physicists such as Wolfgang Pauli and Pascual Jordan. Jung's work with Pauli on synchronicity, however "bold" yet "vague" as Koestler calls it, nonetheless was an important attempt to open up the field of paranormal experiences:

It was for the first time in the history of modern thought that

the hypothesis of a-causal factors working in the universe was given the joint stamp of respectability by a psychologist and a physicist of international renown.²⁸¹

The present inquiry can only recall these seminal inquiries and suggest their importance. What the archetype of the unus mundus and synchronistic phenomena put into question, says Franz, is the supposed split or incommensurability of the psychic and physical worlds:

Concretely, the unus mundus manifests, as Jung pointed out, in the synchronistic phenomena. While we normally live in a dual world of 'outer' and 'inner' events, in a synchronistic event this duality no longer exists; outer events behave as if they were a part of our psyche, so that everything is contained in the same wholeness.²⁸²

However, Jung was limited to establishing certain analogous relations between our knowledge of the psyche and that of matter.

What about the object in scientific objectivity?

Broader implications of Jung's position also ensue as far as the cultural dominant of science in our day is concerned. While the alchemists laboured to recapture what the official dogma of the Catholic Church had rejected in medi-aeval times, depth psychology is probing what the scientific worldview has overlooked. The "scientifically" attested views:

. . . each and all relate to knowledge of the external object and in a chronically one-sided way, so that nowadays the backwardness of psychic development in general and of self-knowledge in particular has become one of the most pressing contemporary problems. As a result of the prevailing one-sidedness, and in spite of the terrifying optical demonstration of an unconscious that has become alienated from the conscious, there are still vast numbers of people who are the blind and helpless victims of these conflicts, and who apply their scientific scrupulosity only to external objects, never to their own psychic condition.²⁸³

When the psychological ground of the scientist is considered (cf. Pauli's "The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on the Scientific Theories of Kepler"), as a matter of scientific necessity and not merely out of historical interest,

the origin of scientific theories in projection, as Franz suggests, is not a far-fetched proposal. For if projections aid the individual in communicating with the unconscious, perhaps recognition of possible projections in science will aid the scientist in differentiating the unknown aspects of nature or society which attracted the projections from psychic archetypes which had been projected. Would it usher in a chaos of subjectivity to suggest that scientists, for instance physicists, propose theories according to their particular psychological disposition? Not so, according to Franz:

The more responsible scientists, therefore, are trying to find out what the difference is between a kind of fantastic subjective theory which is just a farct in the brain, and a subjective theory of the physicist which may be useful and could be applied by and repeated and taught by other scientists. Niels Bohr, for instance, and Wolfgang Pauli formulated the difference in that they said that a physical theory which can be communicated and understood by others is one which should be recognized as relatively objective, while one which cannot be communicated or taught to others should be discarded.²⁸⁴

The major point of our previous chapter was to argue for the necessity of entering into an ongoing communicative relationship with the unconscious in order to integrate its contents into consciousness. The major contention of the present chapter is that the objective reality of the unconscious and its interrelationship with matter, as the centuries-old alchemical symbol of the stone has intimated, necessitates a re-thinking of the scientific investigation of matter to incorporate its psychic basis in the scientist. Whereas the subjective basis of consciousness becomes increasingly objective as one communicates with the unconscious, it may be that the subjective bias in science, if this can be shown, will become relatively objective as scientists communicate with each other concerning the unconscious psychological foundations of their theories. Even within the findings of his own field, Jung felt communication

to play a central role:

We are concerned here with a new questioning, a new - and yet age-old - field of psychological experience. We shall be able to establish relatively valid theories about it only when the corresponding psychological facts are known to a sufficient number of people. The first things to be discovered are always facts, not theories. Theory-building is the outcome of discussion among many.285

Communication and polarity

Communication in this sense is seen not only as an integration of the conscious/unconscious polarity of the psyche, but also as the integration of the polarity between psychic and physical reality. The latter consideration implies that no description of either psychic or physical reality is complete without a consideration of the other, since the psychic manifests itself in the physical, whether through the human body itself or in all manner of creative acts, and conversely, apprehension of the physical world is potentially subject to projections of psychic factors which must be recognized in order to be integrated into a more complete personality and to obtain a more objective experience of the world. Fundamentally, we do not know what "matter" is any more than what the "objective psyche" or "spirit" is:

Both can be described only indirectly, by means of the traces they leave in our conscious minds, but they cannot be defined in themselves. . . 286

Both spirit and matter are archetypal ideas which are projected as soon as reality is seen in terms of one or the other.

Communication, science and wholeness

Viewing spirit and matter from the perspective of a larger whole is a theme which is emphasized by physicist David Bohm, discussant in the contemporary debate on scientific theorizing. Bohm considers science to be an extension of

perception into new contexts and forms and adds that it is also determined by the communication which ensues concerning these perceptions:

. . . I want to emphasize that scientific research does not consist of first looking at something and then communicating it. Rather, the very act of perception is shaped and formed by the intention to communicate, as well as by a general awareness of what has been communicated in the past, by oneself and by others. Even more, it is generally only in communication that we deeply understand, that is, perceive the whole meaning of, what has been observed. . . Perception and communication are one whole, in which analysis into potentially disjoint elements is not relevant.²⁸⁷

In slightly different terms, Bohm echoes the importance of taking into account the way the individual scientist perceives (experiences) reality and how he communicates both to himself and to others. Furthermore, Bohm attempts to retrieve an idea or meaning of wholeness which has been lost since the "modern analytical view of 'wholeness' spread into every aspect of human knowledge."²⁸⁸ The latter way of thinking analyzes a system into parts and considers "wholeness" to be a result of their interaction. Examples are given from the famous Bohr discovery of the impact on the measured results of the observed system by the scientific observer. The analytic method of thinking divides the observer from the observed and looks at their interaction. This method is quite different from that used by Bohr and Heisenberg themselves, who treated the experimental situation as a whole:

What is meant here by wholeness could be indicated in a somewhat informal and metaphoric way by calling attention to a pattern (for example, in a carpet). Insofar as what is relevant is the pattern, it has no meaning to say that different parts of such a pattern (for example, various flowers or trees that are to be seen in the carpet) are disjoint objects in interaction. Similarly, in the 'quantum' situation, terms like 'observed object,' 'observed instrument,' 'experimental conditions,' and 'experimental results' are just aspects of a single overall 'pattern' that are, in effect, abstracted and 'pointed out' or 'made relevant' by our mode of discourse. Thus, it has no meaning to say, for example, that there is an 'observed object' that interacts with the 'observing instrument.'²⁸⁹

Bohm points out that there are grave social and political consequences generated

by the seemingly "small" theoretical shift between the "whole" and the "interaction" approach:

More recently. . . the mechanical approach to 'wholeness' has been questioned in science. Thus, in medicine, it has been noted that a disharmonious way of life favors disharmony of every kind. For example, one may consider the notion that, ultimately, there is no real division between the social disharmony that leads to war and the destruction and pollution of natural resources and the disharmony that leads to susceptibility to infection, cancerous growths, and psychological disturbances.²⁹⁰

Here we see the alchemical idea of the interconnection of the psychological ("ethice") and the physical ("physice") reappear in modern form. Small wonder, for the "perception-communication," in Bohm's terms, of wholeness in science has ancient antecedents:

In ancient times, there was a general notion that things that are similar or analogical are aspects or indications of universally pervasive forces, that are 'wholes.' Such a way of thinking was common not only to medicine, but also to physics, astrology, alchemy, magic, and so on.²⁹¹

Bohm's assessment of the "mechanical approach to wholeness" clarifies the modern philosophical prejudice against analogical thinking, for instance Schumaker's disqualification of the alchemical endeavour as "primitive" since it was based on analogizing rather than analysis.²⁹² Bohm's point, which Schumaker misunderstands in the alchemical context, is that to be aware of the whole pattern requires an ability to think analogically.

Jung's contribution to science has been to argue for a psychological understanding of the psychic wholeness possible in the human person. This wholeness implies a relationship based on communication intrapsychically, i.e., between consciousness and the unconscious, and also extrapsychically between the psyche and the material world.

CHAPTER 6:

Individuated Communication



6.

Mercurius, utriusque capax.

Summary

In the closing chapter, a general sketch of the aspects, dynamics and structure of individuated communication is presented, as suggested by the consideration of Jung's psychology and his interpretation of alchemy. The need for individuated communication is shown within the context of the contemporary problem of "loss of soul" or psychic dissociation. Finally, the scientific status of Jung's psychology is reconsidered. Although analytical psychology is empirically verifiable, by acknowledging that the roots of what can be observed and described consciously lie in the unconscious, Jung delimited the boundaries of scientific thought. Likewise individuated communication is only partially amenable to scientific formulation. The remainder depends on the manifestation of the imagination and the use of analogical thought.

Text

The medium of individuation

The present thesis has demonstrated the inextricable link between the individuation process, as Jung described it using alchemical symbols, and a psychic process of communication which is the medium of individuation.

Metaphors such as "dialogue" or "converse" confirm that the encounter with the self, the archetype of wholeness guiding the process of individuation, comes about as a process of mediation or communication. For the self:

. . . is not a goal in the sense of something attained, but it is a way sustained - the developed consistency of ability to interact with images and to engage in regular and daily converse with the world of subtle bodies.²⁹³

The psychological equivalent of the subtle body is the symbol, which is both psychic insofar as it carries the projection of unconscious contents and physical, in so far as it constitutes an objective experience from which the unconscious content must be distinguished and thereby integrated into consciousness. Individuated communication, following Jung's notion of individuation, is the communication process which constitutes the medium for realization of psychic wholeness and appears as the "daily converse" with manifestations of the unconscious psyche.

To summarize our findings, not so much by way of conclusion, but in order to establish a basis for further work, I would like to gather all that I have found to describe the psychological dynamics of individuated communication in Jung's interpretation of alchemy.

Aspects: intrapsychic integration/extrapsychic relationship

To begin with, individuated communication has two aspects, namely the intra-

psychic and extrapsychic. Regarding individuated communication from the point of view of the single individual, intrapsychic refers to processes within the psyche of one individual while extrapsychic refers to psychic processes of one individual which extend to other persons or objects. The two aspects of individuated communication are paralleled by the two aspects of individuation which Jung has described. Intrapsychic communication corresponds to "an internal and subjective process of integration" while extrapsychic communication corresponds to a concomitant "process of objective relationship."²⁹⁴ The intrapsychic and extrapsychic aspects of individuated communication exhibit two characteristic stages which constitute the dynamic of individuated communication. These two stages are: projection and transformation. While their psychological functions within the process of individuation have been described at length in chapters two and three, let us summarize their function within the context of individuated communication.

Dynamics: projection and transformation as communication phenomena

Projections in individuated communication are all manner of externalizations of unconscious contents, both unintentional and deliberate. This would include dreams, fantasies, unconscious projections, as well as deliberate forms of active imagination or dream analysis in psychotherapy. Transformation in the communication sense refers to the holding in conscious balance of both the psychic opposites, as defined by the tension between our conscious ideas and the compensatory images arising out of the unconscious and appearing in the projection.

The withdrawal of projections cast onto external objects does not resolve the balance in favour of either the conscious standpoint or the unconscious

standpoint in intrapsychic communication. Neither does it reinforce the duality of psychic and physical phenomena in extrapsychic communication. In fact, although one speaks of the retrieval or withdrawal of a projection, projections are not really withdrawn, since this would be a regression to the previous condition of unconsciousness. Rather, the projection is transformed, in that both the subjective psychic content inherent in the projection is recognized, while the identity or similarity of that content with the external object or person is also acknowledged. As we begin to question what made it possible in the catalyzing object - the tea leaves, clouds, inkblots, etc. - to illicit unconscious contents, we are drawn into complicity with the subtle body or mediating third. David Holt claims that the subject-object dualism that has dominated philosophy and science since the seventeenth century and is presupposed by Western technological civilization, is put in doubt by the alchemical example of how projections onto matter function. For Holt, to question our projections is to question the divorce of mind and matter.²⁹⁵ But what does it mean to keep both of the psychic opposites in conscious balance? Transformation in the latter sense constitutes an expanded relatedness to the world which a consciousness enlarged by communication with the unconscious makes possible:

This widened consciousness is no longer that touchy, egotistical bundle of personal wishes, fears, hopes and ambitions which always have to be compensated or corrected by unconscious counter-tendencies; instead, it is a function of relationship to the world of objects, bringing the individual into absolute, binding, and indissoluble communion with the world at large.²⁹⁶

Here we have another metaphorical depiction of communication, in this case as relationship. Communication-as-relationship is another formulation of the paradoxical image of the marriage between Sol and Luna. Psychologically speaking, in a relationship of communication one identifies with the other per-

son or object while distinguishing oneself from the other at the same time. The difficulty of balancing the opposites in this way, i.e., of entering into a relationship while distinguishing between oneself and the other, is constellated most vividly, as Franz points out, in the central problem of love for our culture.²⁹⁷

Structure: polarity resolved in the transformation

The interdependence of intra - and extra - psychic communication manifests itself in the polar structure of individuated communication, which of course rests on the polarity of the psyche itself. For example, the deeper we descend into the subjective realm, the more objective it becomes. As Kreinheder puts it, whether we look into ourselves or into a reflecting substance which has caught our projections, an independent, autonomous and objective "other" appears.²⁹⁸ This is the objective psyche, which is the polar opposite of subjective consciousness. Yet the notion of polarity also implies relativity. Consciousness is seen as subjective relative to the objective unconscious. But the psyche appears to be subjective relative to the objectivity of the external object or person. Inasmuch as individuated communication is a process mediating the opposites, the polarities of the psyche are resolved in the transformation. This latter experience goes beyond all distinction between subject and object, as Holt says, between artificer and artefact.²⁹⁹ In an act of "total improvisation" psyche and matter coincide.

Antidote to the mass psyche

The state of integration brought about in the transformation is presaged by the uniting principle of the psyche, the self in Jung's terms. According to Jung, Franz and others, the image of the self is constellated so intensely in

the dreams of contemporary individuals, because of the collective need for a counterbalance to the one-sided rationality of the conscious mind which has lost contact with its instinctual roots in the unconscious. Images of wholeness and relatedness well up from the deeper layers of the collective unconscious, images which are concerned not only with the individual's relationship to family or social group, but to society and the human community in general. ³⁰⁰ In "The Psychology of the Transference," Jung describes two polar forms of psychic energy which determine social life; these are, the exogamous tendency which serves to break the individual out of the confines of family or social group, and the endogamous which serves to hold the family together. In Jung's analysis, the exogamous tendency, i.e., the ability to resist the pressures of family or social group has lost its balancing effect with the result that increasing collective conformity in the guise of a mass psyche threatens to dissolve the individual:

While exogamy was limited by endogamy, it resulted in a natural organization of a society which has entirely disappeared today. Everyone is now a stranger among strangers.³⁰¹

This condition is witnessed by the "loss of soul" or psychic dissociation ³⁰² within the individual. The self, symbol of union with the ground of being, is spontaneously produced by the unconscious as a reminder of what has been lost. Jung is most urgent in his stressing of the need for the inner consolidation of the individual:

It is as though the psyche were the indispensable instrument in the reorganization of a civilized community as opposed to the collectivities which are so much in favour today, with their aggregations of half-baked mass-men. . . But the mass-man is good for nothing - he is a mere particle that has forgotten what it is to be human and has lost its soul. What our world lacks is the psychic connection; and no clique, no community of interests, no political party, and no State will ever be able to replace this.³⁰³

The psychic connection

Since the need for unity is projected outwards into political and religious collectivities of every sort, which substitute conformity to group ideals for personal integration, these collectivities, in Jung's estimation, do more to hinder individuation than to enhance it. In other words, the endogamous tendency which manifests itself in personal experience as striving for cohesion must be drawn into the individual. Paradoxically, by breaking away from the collective, the individual creates the tension between exogamous and endogamous instincts which provides the energy to integrate the fragments of his or her own personality and thus become secure within him or herself. In psychotherapy, Jung felt the patient must ultimately experience being alone, in order to discover what supports him when he can no longer support himself through conscious rationalizations. Therefore the first task is to regain the psychic connection within oneself. The second obligation is that this process take place consciously, i.e., by beginning with the acknowledgment that the loss is within each one of us. Only then can the projection or blame onto one's family, the authorities, the delinquents, the politicians, the dissidents or any other externalized locus for evil be put in its place - within the individual psyche. Until one consciously acknowledges that those around one are faced with the same loss, there can be no integration of personality and reunion with the ground of collectivity. More importantly, if the projection remains externalized and evil is also ascribed to it, the destruction of the perceived enemy can be justified. When the projection is collective, for instance when the self is projected onto a race or social class, social upheavals ensue. As Franz warns:

All depends on how many individuals are conscious, are personally

related to the Self within them and thus are not projecting their opposite, the shadow, on to others. That and only that can prevent outbursts of mass possession and mass psychosis.³⁰⁵

In summary, conscious acknowledgment of the need for connection with the psyche, for mediation between the poles of the psyche, constitutes the underlying context for individuated communication. As an individual task of cultural and social importance, individuated communication stands in compensatory relationship to the propagandistic tendencies of the mass media which, psychologically speaking, aid to submerge modern man in the mass psyche. ³⁰⁶ As Jung says, the archetype of Mercurius has developed as the compensatory image of mediation in an age of consciousness run rampant, when the loss of conscious connection with the dark sphere in the psyche threatens to overwhelm the very achievements of the enlightenment. In an article that approaches the self-regulating balance of the psyche from the point of view of information, Nathan Schwartz shows that our complexes, those parts of the personal unconscious which have been cut off from consciousness, are sources of information or negentropy:

. . . if the ego could connect to complexes, then they could become negentropic sources for the ego-system. This is a modern statement of the ancient notion that 'like cures like,' or that the complex cures the complex. What is fundamental is connection rather than repression.³⁰⁷

Such psychic connection or communication, as I wish to call it, with the unconscious is posited on the dialectical equality of both poles: consciousness must voluntarily suspend its discriminatory function in order to let the unconscious flow out. As the trickster who appears to be deluding us, Mercurius in fact offers the key, for in suspending one's fear of the irrational and letting it speak, the threat of the irrational is dissolved. This dialectic was tellingly expressed by the alchemists in their aphorism about the duplicity, literally the doubleness, of Mercurius. Rather than being one-sidedly conscious, ³⁰⁸ Mercurius is utriusque capax, i.e., capable of either. Only by speaking both

through consciousness and through the unconscious, therefore can Mercurius act as mediator.

Science and the imagination

I began the inquiry into the significance of Jung's psychology for human communication by considering the self-understanding Jung had of his own work as a part of natural science.

Concerning the question whether analytical psychology is a science, Jung qualified his view. Taking cognizance of the "personal equation" or the roots of his scientific work in his own unconscious, he wrote:

I fancied I was working along the best scientific lines, establishing facts, observing, classifying, describing causal and functional relations, only to discover in the end that I had involved myself in a net of reflections which extend far beyond natural science and ramify into the fields of philosophy, theology, comparative religion, and the humane sciences in general. . . Quite apart from my personal incompetence in these fields, it seemed to me that my reflections were suspect also in principle, because I am profoundly convinced that the 'personal equation' has a telling effect upon the results of psychological observation.³⁰⁹

Lacking a vantage point from which to study its object, especially when that object is psychic wholeness or integration, psychology as Jung says, "inevitably merges with the psychic process itself." Inasmuch as the psyche strives to know itself, however, the process of integration attains to consciousness:

In this way, psychology actualizes the unconscious urge to consciousness. It is, in fact, the coming to consciousness of the psychic process, but it is not, in the deeper sense, an explanation of this process, for no explanation of the psychic can be anything other than the living process of the psyche itself.³¹⁰

It is as if the self-knowledge of the psyche which grows out of experience in the beginning, can only fade back into life at the point of culmination, if it is truly an expression of psychic wholeness. Such deliberations do not

undermine the scientific basis of Jung's work, but suggest rather that scientific understanding is only a moment in a larger psychic process. Thus Jung's work points to the limits of science. Mysterium Coniunctionis, in which Jung felt he had "reached the bounds of scientific understanding" (MDR, p. 221), was his last work.

The limits of science must be acknowledged within a discussion of individuated communication, inasmuch as the latter process seeks the path of mediation between consciousness and the unconscious. In order to achieve the mediation between consciousness and the unconscious, the "directed thinking" of science must be combined with the "primitive thinking" of mythology. While directed thinking is necessary for the process to be a conscious one, primitive or analogical thinking is needed to maintain open access to the unconscious and therefore to maintain the psyche in a state of equilibrium. Individuated communication can thus be understood in scientific terms, but only as one pole in the tension with a mythological or symbolic formulation. Like the subtle body to which the alchemist aspired, individuated communication is incomplete in a conceptual form. To paraphrase Hillman,³¹¹ individuated communication attempts to differentiate the images communicated by the unconscious, to discover the laws of their appearance and "moods" of discourse. But the scientific work can only begin when the imagination has spoken.

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