

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

A Comparative Study of  
E. Underhill's Criteria of Mysticism and  
C.G. Jung's Theory of Individuation  
by

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## **Abstract**

Evelyn Underhill studied the experiences of Western mystics and formulated four criteria of mysticism. A large number of terms used by Underhill in her writings about mysticism are found in C.G. Jung's theories of individuation and synchronicity; these common terms may denote that mysticism and individuation are parallel processes. The end point of the phases of the psychological experience of mysticism, which Underhill terms the "Mystic Way," is union with Absolute Life, with God. The end point of Jung's theories is the individuation of the God-image archetype that is contained within the unconscious of each individual. When this archetype is integrated into consciousness the individual realizes absolute wholeness, an experience that Jung calls "the immediate religious experience". By applying Evelyn Underhill's criteria of mysticism to Jung's Psychology of Wholeness, this thesis examines the points of similarity and difference that exist between these systems.

## Acknowledgements

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Linda my spirit sister, whose embrace of love strengthens me.

This paper is dedicated to  
my dear friend  
Faith  
who knows union with the One

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

*"I think in order to recover what I already know, to re-collect my essence, to savor the promise that has been unfolding since my birth, to see my cosmic face in the mirror of my mind." Sandor McNab*

My first encounter with Jung occurred in 1973 when I was introduced to his writings by a friend. It was a time in my life when everything that I thought was important as a young girl began to lose its appeal. I was on a search for answers to the puzzling questions I was asking about my life and life in general. Having a long standing interest in the psychology of the day, it was natural that my interest would be stimulated when my friend offered me a book about Jung. Although I do not remember the title of that book I remember thinking that it sounded more like a religious text than a psychological one. The memories of the hours we spent mulling over the ideas we encountered in that book are filled with the feelings of excitement and challenge that come with the discovery of a new intellectual focus in one's life. In that introduction to Jung's thinking I found a treasure of information much of which was expressed in what seemed to be the language of religion—spirit, soul, wholeness, God-image, dreams, visions, dark night, unity, etc.

Since that introduction I have been fascinated with the idea of determining the extent to which Jung's Psychology of Wholeness, and in particular his



theory of individuation, coincides with the tradition of mysticism in Christianity. When I was introduced to Underhill's book *Mysticism* I recognized a possible structure to use for this study. Although it feels like it has been a "long time coming," this thesis is the realization of that fascination. The task that I have set out to accomplish is to compare the criteria of mysticism developed by Evelyn Underhill with Jung's theory of individuation to determine what similarities and differences exist between them.

I consider this an important undertaking. With the proliferation of books and articles that relate to Jung's ideas, the findings of this thesis will enable me to analyze interpretations of Jung's ideas more critically. In a recent article by John Pennachio, he states that "Individuation is a divine process."<sup>1</sup> Having completed this thesis I hope to be able to assess accurately the validity of this type of statement.

The comparative study undertaken in this thesis is presented in nine chapters. In chapter two and three I summarize Underhill's criteria of mysticism and the basic concepts needed to understand Jung's theory of individuation. In the following five chapters I compare the psychological experience of mysticism which Underhill calls the Mystic Way with the process of individuation. The comparison is based on Underhill's articulation of the five phases of the Mystic Way and Jung's analysis of the writings of the medieval alchemists. A consistent format is used in chapters four to eight. Each chapter contains an overview of one of the phases of the

Mystic Way, a summary of Jung's analysis of the corresponding alchemical symbols, and a comparison of the information that has been included on the Mystic Way and individuation. The last chapter of this thesis contains a general comparative summary of the findings of the preceding chapters. A chart outlining the correspondencies between the Mystic Way and individuation is included in Appendix A.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Pennachio, John. "Gnostic Inner Illumination and Carl Jung's Individuation." Journal of Religion and Heath. Vol.31. #3. Fall, 1992. p.242.

## Chapter II

### Underhill's Criteria of Mysticism

*"Song I call, when in a plenteous soul the sweetness of eternal love with burning is taken, and thought into song is turned, and the mind into full sweet sound is changed." St. Francis of Assisi*

In 1907, Coventry Patmore described mysticism as the science of *ultimates*. "[It is] the science of self-evident Reality, which cannot be 'reasoned about,' because it is the object of pure reason or perception."<sup>1</sup> It was this "science of the *ultimates*," the science of the union with the Absolute, which Evelyn Underhill studied. She writes: "Mysticism, in its purest form is the science of the union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and ... the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to *know about*, but to *Be*, is the mark of the real initiate."<sup>2</sup> Through the examination of the mystical experiences of Western mystics, Underhill developed a theory of mysticism characterized by specific identifiable criteria, phases and practices. She outlines these in *Mysticism: A Study in The Nature and The Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*.

### The Criteria of Mysticism

In this chapter the four criteria of mysticism and a corollary to these will be presented. In addition, the mystic's medium—introversion will be described.

#### Criterion I. Mysticism Is Active and Practical

The first criterion of mysticism that Underhill proposes is that mysticism is active and practical. Mysticism, unlike philosophy which Underhill describes as a passive, theoretical activity of the intellect, is an organic life-process of the *whole* self. It is an experience that is centered in the body which is the container of the possibility and the manifestation of that experience and is deeply rooted in that part of the self from which intuitive knowing springs. The uniqueness of the experience of mysticism is shaped by the personality which is at the same time, shaped by that experience. Underhill considers mysticism "the most complete and difficult expression of life which is as yet possible to man. It is at once an act of love, an act of surrender, and an act of supreme perception."<sup>3</sup> As such, it is final and personal: personal because it is experienced in a way that is unique to each individual, and final because it is based on "intuitions of a Truth which is for [the individual] absolute."<sup>4</sup> It is life grounded in encounters which the mystic experiences as the ultimate reality and is "the art of establishing a conscious relationship with [this reality], the Absolute."<sup>5</sup>

Underhill's use of the word intuition, which is for her, the inner experience, is a significant aspect of this first criterion. In her interpretation, mysticism is

a lived inner experience. Mechthild of Magdeburg describes this experience when she writes about the revelation that formed the basis of her writings. "The writing of this book was seen, heard, and experienced in every limb ... I see it with the eyes of my soul, and hear it with the ears of my eternal spirit."<sup>6</sup> Mechthild's description indirectly reveals another important aspect of this criteria. Her reference to seeing with the eyes of her soul and hearing with the ears of her eternal spirit depicts the transitional aspect of mysticism. In the mystical experience, a transition from sense to spirit occurs, and intuition, the inner experience, becomes the ground of the mystic's reality. This movement from sense to spirit is the quest of the mystic and is most often symbolized as an inner pilgrimage, battle, or search.

#### Criterion II. Mysticism is Transcendental and Spiritual.

Mysticism is a spiritual activity that diverts the attention of the mystic away from the reality of the everyday world and mundane life to the invisible universe.

His spirit is as it were sunk and lost in the Abyss of the Deity, and loses the consciousness of all creature distinctions. All things are gathered together in one with the divine sweetness, and the man's being is so penetrated with the divine substance that he loses himself therein, as a drop of water is lost in cask of strong wine. And thus the man's spirit is so sunk in God in divine union, that he loses all sense of distinction ... and there remains a secret, still union, without cloud or colour.<sup>7</sup>

Knowing the divine sweetness, the mystic is not bound by the lesser cravings of human nature for "he possesses God, and needs nothing more."<sup>8</sup> This fullness is manifested in the life the mystic undertakes in the visible world, free of the desire for an increase in personal power, happiness, knowledge or

virtue. The experience of the Divine becomes the ground and source of all of life's activities.

Criterion III. The Energy of Mysticism is Love.

The path that the mystic walks to union with the Divine is love. "[T]he word Love as applied to the mystics is to be understood in its deepest, fullest sense; as the ultimate expression of the self's most vital tendencies. ... Mystic Love is a total dedication of the will; the deep-seated desire and tendency of the soul towards its Source."<sup>9</sup> It is expressed in the experience of intimate and impassioned love common in the writings of the mystics. Typical of these are the writings of mystic Gertrude More, who longs for the experience of the divine. "O sight to be wished, desired, and longed for; because once to have seen thee is to have learnt all things. Nothing can bring us sight but love. ... For that soul that hath set her whole love and desire on thee can never find any true satisfaction, but only in thee."<sup>10</sup>

The love of the mystic is the active expression of the mystic's will and desire for the Absolute. This desire is an innate tendency of the soul, which when obeyed is a continual source of joy and vitality. It is "the secret of the universe, the vivifying principle of things."<sup>11</sup> Underhill describes the mystic's outlook as the lover's outlook. "It has the same element of wildness, the same quality of selfless and quixotic devotion, the same combination of rapture and humility. This parallel is more than a pretty face: for mystic and lover, upon different planes, are alike responding to the call of the Spirit of Life."<sup>12</sup>

Criterion IV. Mysticism Involves A Distinct Psychological Experience.

The goal of mysticism is reached not through intellectual realizations or through emotional longings, but through an arduous psychological and spiritual process "entailing the complete remaking of character and the liberation of a new, or rather latent, form of consciousness; which imposes on the self the condition ... named the Unitive State."<sup>13</sup> Underhill specifies the form of the "remaking" as "the organizing of the whole self, conscious and unconscious, ... a remaking of the whole character on high levels in the interests of the transcendental life."<sup>14</sup>

Underhill describes the inner reorganization that occurs in mysticism as "moral perfection" or "sanctity," and considers it the bridge between the "Absolute" and the "Self." This moral perfection occurs because of the mystic's consciousness of Absolute Perfection, which the mystic adapts to, thus becoming worthy of that Absolute Perfection. Underhill calls this adaptation "inward alchemy." It involves the "establishment within the field of consciousness, the making 'central for life,' of those subconscious spiritual perceptions that are the primary material of mystical experience."<sup>15</sup> This is a process of "the raising of the whole self to the condition in which conscious and permanent union with the Absolute takes place."<sup>16</sup> The processes of the "inward alchemy" are described in what Underhill labels the "Mystic Way." The permanent union that is the outcome of the inward alchemy is the "Unitive State."

Corollary Mysticism is Never Self-seeking

Having described the four criterion of mysticism: mysticism is active and practical, it is concerned with the transcendental and spiritual, its motivating factor is love, and it involves a definite psychological experience—the Mystic Way, Underhill adds a corollary: mysticism is never self-seeking. This corollary is echoed throughout her description of the criteria. The mystic does not undertake the spiritual quest for personal reward or gain, to realize supernatural joy, or to be unified with some divine reality. No promises or claims are needed. Surely the price that must be paid would be too great for most: the pain and suffering experienced with the annihilation of selfhood and all attachments.

The spiritual quest is undertaken and endured simply because it is the "way of life" and this "way" is difficult for it is paradoxical. Satisfaction cannot be sought, for in the mystic way, satisfaction is obtained because the individual does not seek it, the individual cannot work to complete the personality because walking the Mystic Way, personality must be given up. "Attainment comes only by means of this sincere, spontaneous, and entire surrender of yourself and all things."<sup>17</sup> And so the mystic travels a mysterious journey driven by "the passion for perfection for Love's sake."<sup>18</sup> Impelled by impassioned love, the mystic journeys beyond the visible universe because this is what life is—"an invitation to the soul to attain that fullness of life for which she was made,"<sup>19</sup> and answers the call of the soul to union with the reality of the invisible Absolute.



Underhill calls the psychological experience of mysticism "The Mystic Way." It is a series of phases that: vary in length and intensity, exhibiting the characteristic variety and spontaneity of life; and oscillate between pain and pleasure, "the sunshine and the shade."<sup>20</sup> The phases of the Mystic Way are: a) *the awakening of the self*, b) *the purification of the self*, c) *the illumination of the self*, d) *the dark night of the soul*, and e) *the unitive life*.<sup>21</sup>

### The Mystic's Medium—Introversion

In the preceeding description of the criteria of mysticism, the primary focus has been on mysticism as a life-process of natural and spontaneous growth and involuntary adjustments to the consciousness of a transcendental universe. Underhill suggests that correspondent to this organic growth there is a spiritual practice which is characteristic of the mystic. She calls this practice *Introversion*.<sup>22</sup>

Introversion, as described by Underhill, is a "journey towards the center."<sup>23</sup> "[It is] a gathering up and turning 'inwards' of the powers of the self, ... a gazing into the ground of the soul."<sup>24</sup> It occurs through training the faculties to concentrate on the invisible and intangible to such a degree that the individual empties the mind of all images and thoughts. In this emptying, the individual "sinks into his nothingness: into that blank abiding place where busy, clever Reason cannot come."<sup>25</sup> Underhill outlines three specific activities that are used in the "gathering up and turning inwards of the powers of the self": recollection, quiet, and contemplation.

#### Recollection

Recollection involves the "simplification of consciousness" for the purpose of fixing attention on the inner world, a shift in the threshold between the two planes of being and the emergence of the "subliminal intuition of the Absolute."<sup>26</sup> The primary tool of recollection is the practice of meditation. In meditation, which can take a variety of forms, the external universe is ignored, the mind is stilled, and a condition of reverie is reached. The individual severs the connection with the external world and retreats to "the inner world of spirit."<sup>27</sup> Underhill quotes the writings of St. Teresa who describes the discipline and rewards of the process of recollection.

[Y]ou will feel your senses gather themselves together: they seem like bees which return to the hive and there shut themselves up to work at the making of honey: and this will take place without effort or care on your part. God thus rewards the violence which your soul has been doing to itself; and gives to it such a domination over the senses that a sign is enough when it desires to recollect itself, for them to obey and so gather themselves together. At the first call of the will, they come back more and more quickly. At last, after countless exercises of this kind, God disposes them to a state of utter rest and of perfect contemplation.<sup>28</sup>

### Quiet

The second activity of introversion is *quiet*, "the Prayer of Quiet or Simplicity, the Interior Silence."<sup>29</sup> Underhill describes it as a means to an end, "the bridge which leads from its old and uncoordinated life of activity to its new, unified life of deep action—the real 'mystic life' of man."<sup>30</sup> Quiet is characterized by "an immense increase in the receptivity of the self, and by an almost complete suspension of the reflective powers,"<sup>31</sup> a surrender to

something beyond the normal everyday reality. In this state, the mystic reaches an indescribable consciousness of "the Infinite."

Like the process of purification where I-hood was given up, contemplation involves the cessation of the all effort. "Thus the act by which [the self] passes into the Quiet is a sacrament of the whole mystic quest: of the turning from doing to being, the abolition of separateness in the interest of the Absolute Life."<sup>32</sup> Meister Eckhart writes of this process when he says: "[t]hen [the individual] must come into a forgetting and a not-knowing. He must be in a stillness and silence, where the Word may be heard."<sup>33</sup>

The activity of the interior silence, like the mystical journey of which it is part, is paradoxical. It is at once active and passive, a surrender that is not self-abandonment but free giving of self. In quiet the rational intellect is silenced and the total character tuned to the reality of the transcendent. Augustine Baker, an early twentieth-century writer on mysticism, describes this paradox as an analogy of the flight of the eagle.

[It is] like the soaring of an eagle when the flight is continued for a good space with a great swiftness, but withal with great stillness, quietness and ease, without any waving of the wings at all, or the least force used in any member, being in as much ease and stillness as if she were reposing in her nest.<sup>34</sup>

The result is an ineffable peace and certainty, an introduction of the self to contemplation.

### Contemplation

The culminating activity of introversion is *contemplation*. "Now, in Contemplation, [the self] is to transcend alike the stages of symbol and of silence; and 'energize enthusiastically' on those high levels which are dark to the intellect but radiant to the heart."<sup>35</sup> Contemplation represents the final state of union with the divine reality. "In it, man's 'made Trinity' of thought, love, and will, becomes our apprehensions of beauty, our best contacts with life. It is an act, not of the Reason, but of the whole personality working under the stimulus of mystic love."<sup>36</sup> Contemplation is the realization of "the solemn presence of the whole."<sup>37</sup> It brings with it a sense of expansion, "a power of knowing" that could only come with an encounter with the universe.

Delacroix describes the results of contemplation as an elevation above the world to a state of indifference, peace, and freedom. He suggests that a deeper and purer soul replaces the individual's normal self. From the perspective of this new soul, "consciousness of I-hood and consciousness of the world disappear, the mystic is conscious of being in immediate relation with God Himself; of participating in Divinity."<sup>38</sup> In this participation the mystic has a sense of being and knowing as one condition. "The mystic has more and more the impression of being that which he knows, and of knowing that which he is."<sup>39</sup>

Contemplation, at times, gives way to abrupt and irresistible experiences of ecstasy. In the experience of ecstasy "the concentration of interest on the

Transcendent is so complete, the gathering up and pouring out of life on this one point so intense, that the subject is more or less entranced."<sup>40</sup> In this state the mystic is unconscious of the external world and manifests certain symptoms of hysteria which include physical rigidity, varying degrees of anesthesia, and depression of breathing and circulation. While these characteristics are present in the physical realm, on the emotional level the experience is one of "joyous exaltation ... the inebriation of the Infinite."<sup>41</sup> True ecstasy is an experience of profound inward grace, of renewed health and strength, and of the exaltation of life.

Like contemplation, the complete unification of consciousness that occurs in ecstasy results in exalted perception which is for some even more expansive than the perception that occurs in contemplation. Underhill distinguishes between the two. She describes the apprehension that occurs in ecstasy as being more "beatific" than in the union of contemplation. The mystic who experiences this type of ecstasy, claims "an exultant certainty—a conviction that he has known for once the Reality which hath no image, and solved the paradox of life."<sup>42</sup> St. Teresa describes it as "more excellent than union, the fruits of it are much greater, and its other operations more manifold."<sup>43</sup> For others, the nature of perception experienced in ecstasy is no different from that experienced in contemplation.

Underhill suggests that there is only one valid distinction between contemplation and ecstasy: the involuntary nature of ecstasy called *entrancement* which St. Teresa describes as "absolutely irresistible",

involuntary absorption into divine reality. Entrancement is the experience of "being ravished out of fleshly feeling."<sup>44</sup>

The state of union achieved through contemplation and ecstasy results in consciousness of nothing and at the same time everything, a condition that is no longer recognizable or that can be described in human terms.

This utter transformation of the soul in God continues only for an instant: yet while it continues no faculty of the soul is aware of it, or knows what is passing there. Nor can it be understood while we are living on the earth; ... because we must be incapable of understanding it. *I know it by experience*.<sup>45</sup>

Underhill presents this mystical state of union as the highest expression of consciousness attained by humans. While this consciousness is latent within each individual, she considers the mystics geniuses for "the Absolute." Their journeys of "splendor and terror" are examples of an organic process of life that is part of each human life. Their lives are a call to a "heroic endeavor, incentives to the remaking of character about new and higher centres of life ... [T]o a humble acceptance of the universal law of knowledge: the law that 'we behold that which we are,' and hence that 'only the Real can know Reality'."<sup>46</sup>

### Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Quoted in Underhill, Evelyn. Mysticism. New American Library. New York. 1974. p.25
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.72.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.84.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.83.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.81.
- <sup>6</sup> Mechthild as quoted in Underhill, p.84.
- <sup>7</sup> Tauler as quoted in Underhill, pp.84-85
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.84.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.85.
- <sup>10</sup> More as quoted in Underhill, p.89.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.86.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.89.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.81.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.90.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.91.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Dionysius the Areopgite as quoted in Underhill, p.93
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.92.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.93.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.168.

<sup>21</sup> An description of each of these phases is given in the following chapters of this paper and a comparison is made with the corresponding alchemical image from Jung's writings.

<sup>22</sup> Underhill's use of this word contrasts with the regular sense of introversion as a primary focus on personal thoughts and feelings.

<sup>23</sup> Underhill, p.302.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.303.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.314.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.315.

<sup>28</sup> St.Teresa as quoted in Underhill, p.316.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.316.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.321.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.317.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.318.

<sup>33</sup> Eckhart as quoted in Underhill, p.319.

<sup>34</sup> Baker as quoted in Underhill, p.323.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.328.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.329.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.330.



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<sup>38</sup> Delacroix as quoted in Underhill, p.330.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.358.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p.367.

<sup>43</sup> St.Teresa as quoted in Underhill, p.369.

<sup>44</sup> St.Paul as quoted in Underhill, p.368.

<sup>45</sup> St.Teresa as quoted in Underhill, p.371.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.446.

## Chapter III

## The Psychology of Wholeness

*"I am always becoming. Beneath my persona-psyche-gender, I extend fathoms deep into the measureless, the undefinable, into the unknowable totality." Sam Keen*

"The kingdom of heaven lies within." This statement encapsulates the essence of the writings of C.G. Jung and is a description of one of Jung's central ideas: that the "soul"<sup>1</sup> by nature possesses a religious function, that it is *"naturaliter religiosa."*<sup>2</sup> Jung suggests that the ultimate goal of this religious nature of the soul, or psyche, is the manifestation of the Self<sup>3</sup> or God-image archetype. The realization of this archetype "enables [the soul] to be an eye to behold the light".<sup>4</sup> It yields an experience of intrapersonal wholeness and universal unity that endows existence with ultimate meaning and value.

This ultimate meaning and value is realized through individuation,<sup>5</sup> "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'."<sup>6</sup> Robert Aziz, in *C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion and Synchronicity*, describes individuation as "the intrapsychic model of the spiritual search for wholeness."<sup>7</sup> It is a process that culminates with the complete integration of the human personality and the realization of an indivisible inner whole person.

Jung postulates that the process of individuation occurs naturally, that inherent within each individual is an urge that propels him/her toward the birth and growth of this inner whole person. Individuation is "an irrational life-process"<sup>8</sup> in which the contents of the personal and collective contents of the unconscious are integrated into consciousness. The energy for this process comes from the Self or God-image archetype. This archetype embodies unity and wholeness, which when assimilated into consciousness, a change results in the psyche. The locus of control that formally existed in the ego, the center of consciousness, shifts to what Jung describes as "the hypothetical point between conscious and unconscious. This new center might be called the [S]elf."<sup>9</sup> With this shift, the individual achieves what Storr (1983) describes as "a new synthesis between conscious and unconscious, a sense of calm acceptance and detachment, and a realization of the meaning of life."<sup>10</sup>

### **The Psyche - Context of Individuation**

The context within which the individuation process occurs is the psyche. The psyche, in Jung's system, differs from the common simplistic conception of psyche as mind, consciousness, or rational powers. He uses the word to represent a formulation of a much expanded and more complex idea. Hopecke describes Jung's expansion of the word as representing all nonphysical life, and as encompassing the irrational and the rational, the collective and the personal, and the conscious and the unconscious. "This view includes within psyche much more than the narrow physico-rationalistic phenomena understood as psychological before Jung and makes

room for those aspects of psyche that go beyond thought and mind, such as sensation, feeling, intuition, and instinct."<sup>11</sup>

Jung describes the psyche as an infinitely complex reflection of the world and the individual. "[T]he psyche consists essentially of images. It is a series of images in the truest sense, not an accidental juxtaposition or sequence, but a structure that is throughout full of meaning and purpose; it is a 'picturing' of vital activities."<sup>12</sup> These vital activities come from two sources: the life experiences of the individual, and the experiences of humanity. Included is the totality of activities that the human race has found necessary for survival and development. As such, the psyche is timeless.

The psyche is not of today; its ancestry goes back many millions of years. Individual consciousness is only the flower and the fruit of a season, sprung from the perennial rhizome beneath the earth; and it would find itself in better accord with the truth if it took the existence of the rhizome into its calculations. For root matter is the mother of all things.<sup>13</sup>

In this passage Jung symbolically represents the two primary processes of the psyche, the conscious and the unconscious, and alludes to the ideal relationship between them.

### The Conscious Aspect of The Psyche

The conscious aspect of the psyche enables the individual to experience directly. This experience may be based on information from the outer or inner reality gathered through sense perceptions and becomes the content of of consciousness. "For it is the function of consciousness not only to

recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality the world within us."<sup>14</sup>

### *The Ego*

The aspect of consciousness that translates these inner and outer worlds into the content of consciousness is the ego. Jung describes the ego as "the complex factor to which all conscious contents are related."<sup>15</sup> As such, it is the precondition for consciousness. Jung writes that everything an individual is conscious of, is so because it has "come into association with the ego. If there is no such association, it remains unconscious."<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the ego can be thought of as the subject of all the personal acts of an individual and that which "forms the criterion of its consciousness."<sup>17</sup>

While ego is the precondition for consciousness, it is also part of the content of consciousness, thus the ego is able to reflect upon itself. "It [the ego] is made up of images recorded from the sense-functions that transmit stimuli both from within and from without, and furthermore of an immense accumulation of images of past processes."<sup>18</sup> Ego, described this way, appears indistinguishable from consciousness as a whole but this is not so. In *Aion* Jung suggests that ego is not consciousness itself but rather "the ego 'rests' on the total field of consciousness."<sup>19</sup>

The ego is developed during the individual's lifetime through the assimilation of the outer and inner worlds of the individual. It is the individual and unique point of reference of the conscious, possessing a high

degree of identity and continuity. The development of the ego in the first half of an individual's life constitutes the first stage of individuation. This development represents a movement from the unified state of infancy to a state of conscious awareness. In infancy there is no discrimination of subject from object, negative from positive, etc., and no awareness of experience; the self subsumes the ego. As ego-consciousness develops it becomes the focal point of experience.

### *The Persona*<sup>20</sup>

As the ego develops, the persona is formed. "The persona ... is the individual's system of adaptation to, or the manner he assumes in dealing with the world."<sup>21</sup> The individual adapts to the world through roles which he or she assumes are necessary in order to survive in the groups and communities that are a part of that individual's life. It is the individual's concession to the external world. The "masks we wear" symbolize the persona. "One could say, with a little exaggeration, that the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is."<sup>22</sup>

### The Unconscious Aspect of The Psyche

If we are not really who we think we are, then who are we? For Jung the key to knowing who we are, in addition to the persona we have assumed to adapt to the world around us, lies within the unconscious aspect of the psyche: the unknown inner world.

[T]he unconscious depicts an extremely fluid state of affairs: everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the

moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious.<sup>23</sup>

Jung categorizes this myriad of complex information contained within the unconscious into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.

### *The Personal Unconscious*

The personal unconscious is made up of information gained from "all the acquisitions of personal life, everything forgotten, repressed, subliminally perceived, thought, felt."<sup>24</sup>

[It] consists firstly of all those contents that became unconscious either because they lost their intensity and were forgotten or because consciousness was withdrawn from them (repression) and secondly of contents, some of them sense impressions, which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche.<sup>25</sup>

The personal unconscious lies on the periphery of consciousness. This means that the contents of the personal unconscious interact with and flow into the conscious awareness of the individual. These contents may appear as thoughts, memories, feelings, intuitions, or behaviors. At times they manifest in symbolic form through dreams, déjà vu experiences, and creative activities.

### *The Shadow*

Some of the contents of the personal unconscious that rise into consciousness may be part of what Jung describes as the repressed "negative" side of the

personality—the shadow. The shadow is made up of repressed features or characteristics that the individual has rejected having experienced them as negative at some time in their life, and of insufficiently developed characteristics which Jung calls functions. Jung suggests that the shadow contains not only base or evil contents but may also contain life affirming qualities that the individual has experienced as negative and has therefore repressed. "The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself."<sup>26</sup> Jolande Jacobi in *The Way of Individuation*, describes the shadow.

[It is] the ego's mirror-image, and is compounded partly of repressed, partly of unlived psychic features which, for moral, social, educational, or other reasons, were from the outset excluded from consciousness and from active participation in life and were therefore repressed or split off.<sup>27</sup>

These rejected, unlived, and unformed features and qualities, although split from consciousness, are not absent from the personality of the individual. Jung writes: "The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness"<sup>28</sup> for although unconscious, the shadow is active. It has a kind of autonomy or possessive quality that "is always thrusting itself upon him [the individual] directly or indirectly."<sup>29</sup> The shadow, like the other contents of the personal unconscious, manifests itself through what Jung calls "inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies."<sup>30</sup> These would be described by the person experiencing them as not typical of them or even as, not who they really are. In addition to the shadow material that manifests itself in blunders, asocial behavior, egoisms,



etc., there is other shadow material "which offers the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove[s] almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with projection, which are not recognized as such."<sup>31</sup>

A projection occurs when some rejected quality or characteristic is perceived to be a trait of some other person or object. A strong emotional reaction to that object or person may indicate that the individual is projecting some shadow aspect on to that object or person. Although these projections may be "calls to consciousness," they may ultimately have a devastating effect for the individual. Jung writes: "The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one."<sup>32</sup> The individual experiences this illusory world as the reality of the objects and the people in that world. In actuality, it is a reflection of the shadow aspect of the individual.

### *The Collective Unconscious*

The personal unconscious is not the sole domain of the shadow. The collective unconscious also has shadow aspects. The contents of the collective unconscious do not originate in personal experience as do the contents of the personal unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are inherent within the psyche and are common to all humankind. Jung describes the collective unconscious as being "the inherited possibility of psychic functioning in general, i.e., in the inherited structure of the brain."<sup>33</sup> The collective unconscious contains all the potentialities of human

characteristics and behavior including both the "light" and the "dark" aspects of humanity. "The unconscious is not just evil by nature, it is also the source of the highest good: not only dark but also light, not only bestial, semi-human, and demonic but superhuman, spiritual, and, in the classical sense of the word, 'divine'."<sup>34</sup> Any of the "light" and "dark" human qualities that a culture rejects or represses becomes part of the collective shadow.

Like the personal unconscious, the contents of the collective unconscious also erupt into the consciousness of the individual and the cultural collective. The primary manifestations of the collective unconscious are "the mythological associations, the motifs and images that can spring up anew anytime, anywhere, independently of historical tradition or migration."<sup>35</sup> Jung regards the collective unconscious as "the source not only of our modern symbolical pictures but of all similar products in the past."<sup>36</sup>

When Jung describes the contents of the collective unconscious as springing up anew it sounds as though the collective unconscious is a container of the totality of the symbols produced by humankind. In *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, Jung postulates that the unconscious is more than a container. It is the originator.

[T]he unconscious is not just a receptacle but is the matrix of the very things that the conscious mind would like to be rid of. We can go a step further and say that the unconscious actually creates new contents. Everything that the human mind has ever created sprang from contents which, in the last analysis, existed once as unconscious seeds.<sup>37</sup>

### *Archetypes*

Within the dynamic ocean of possibilities, the collective unconscious, are found the blueprints for all human experience. Jung labels these blueprints archetypes and defines them as "irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent forms that seem to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche."<sup>38</sup> Jung uses the analogy of the crystal lattice that exists as the invisible framework in a saturated solution to clarify his concept of archetypes. Each archetype, like each lattice, contains a specific form. The specific forms of each archetype are themes that relates to universal patterns of "psychic apprehension." These primordial images "are living entities which cause the preformation of numinous ideas or dominant representations."<sup>39</sup> In addition, an archetype "brings with it a certain influence or power by virtue of which it either exercises a numinous or a fascinating effect, or impels to action."<sup>40</sup> As such, archetypes are experienced as both images and energies. The impetus to action comes from the psychic energy of the archetypes and for this reason Jung describes them as "living matter"<sup>41</sup> and as the blueprints for the religions of humankind, the universal symbols of mythology, and artistic expression.

The universality and the timelessness of themes and images that emerge spontaneously from the archetypes of the unconscious are, for Jung, evidence of the existence of a unified ground in which the human psyche is rooted. Jung's collaboration with Wolfgang Pauli, a physicist of his time, led him to believe that the exploration of matter by the physicist and the exploration of the unconscious by the psychologist, might in fact be an investigation of the

same underlying reality. For Jung, this reality is the background of the psyche. "[T]he psychic lies embedded in something that appears to be of a non-psychic nature."<sup>42</sup> Through his observance of what he called "meaningful coincidences," Jung came to see archetypes as existing outside of time and space, and as therefore related to this non-psychic background. Aziz describes Jung's theory of archetypes as constituting "a psychophysical continuum of meaning in which the traditional concepts of space, time, and causality simply do not exist."<sup>43</sup>

Archetypes are simultaneously, "psychoïd" factors of the collective unconscious and psychophysical factors, able to manifest themselves physically and mentally, simultaneously.

Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.<sup>44</sup>

Jung remarks on the universality and the timelessness of themes and images that emerge spontaneously from the archetypes of the unconscious and that are the basis of myths and religions. He sees these as further evidence of the existence of a unified ground in which the human psyche is rooted.

The experience of the unified reality in which the archetypes are rooted and thus the experience of the totality of all the themes or blueprints of the archetypes is itself an archetype. Jung calls this totality the Self-archetype and describes it as "both ego and non-ego, subjective and objective, individual and

collective. It is the 'uniting symbol' which epitomizes the total union of opposites"<sup>45</sup> and at the same time it is the source of energy for this union. Its energy is experienced as "the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is."<sup>46</sup> The instrument for this "becoming" is the union of opposites which Jung calls "transcendent function."

It has been named the "transcendent function" because it represents a function based on real and "imaginary," or rational and irrational, data, thus bridging the yawning gulf between conscious and unconscious. It is a natural process, a manifestation of the energy that springs from the tension of opposites.<sup>47</sup>

In this description Jung uses the word transcendent not in the metaphysical sense, but to denote the union of conscious and unconscious contents.

The conscious mind is on top, the shadow underneath, and just as high always longs for low and hot for cold, so all consciousness, perhaps without being aware of it, seeks its unconscious opposite, lacking which it is doomed to stagnation, congestion, and ossification. Life is born only of the spark of opposites.<sup>48</sup>

This "spark of opposites" is a tension that is produced as the contents of the unconscious rise to consciousness in the form of symbols which are the language of the unconscious. The symbols are both the means by which the contents of the unconscious can enter the conscious mind, and they are the active expression of those contents. They enter consciousness by two means: involuntarily through dreams or fantasies or voluntarily through analysis, creative expression or active imagination. Experiencing and understanding these symbols, when they arise, leads to the reconciliation, the integration and unification of the unconscious and the conscious aspects of the psyche.

With the union of the conscious and the unconscious, the individual experiences the paradoxical nature of the Self-archetype which "represents in every respect thesis and antithesis, and at the same time synthesis. ... [It] includes the qualities of definiteness and even of uniqueness. [It is] a union of opposites *par excellence*".<sup>49</sup> The revelation of the Self-archetype confronts the individual with "the abysmal contradictions of human nature, and this confrontation in turn leads to the possibility of a direct experience of light and darkness, of Christ and the devil."<sup>50</sup> In this experience of the paradoxical is totality, unity and wholeness.

"[The Self archetype] is strange to us and yet so near, wholly ourselves and yet unknowable ... I have called this center the self ... It might equally well be called the 'God within us.' The beginnings of our whole psychic life seem to be inextricably rooted in this point, and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving toward it."<sup>51</sup>

For this reason Jung calls it the *imago Dei*, the God-image archetype, the conscious experience of which is wholeness. This experience of wholeness is the goal of individuation. "It is equivalent to a renewal of life."<sup>52</sup>

### The Alchemical Process - Symbol of Individuation

Jung regarded the work of the medieval alchemists as symbolic representations of individuation. His primary writing on the alchemical process as a symbol of individuation is contained in *The Practice of Psychotherapy* and in his last theoretical writing *Mysterium Coniunctionis*.

For Jung, to understand the symbology of the activities of the alchemist is to understand the process of individuation.

Alchemy with its wealth of symbols, gives us insight into an endeavor of the human mind which could be compared with a religious rite, an *opus divinum*. The difference between them is that the alchemical *opus* was not a collective activity ... but rather ... an individual undertaking on which the adept staked his whole soul for the transcendental purpose of producing a unity.<sup>53</sup>

On a physical level the alchemists attempted to produce gold by combining the conflicting elements of earth, fire, water and air found in the *prima materia*—matter. The alchemists called the point of the unity of these elements *coniunct*, the point at which gold would be produced. Jung believed that these alchemical practices were projections of the unconscious processes that were occurring within the alchemist.

What he sees in matter, or thinks he can see, is chiefly the data of his own unconscious which he is projecting into it. In other words, he encounters in matter, as apparently belonging to it, certain qualities and potential meanings of whose psychic nature he is entirely unconscious.<sup>54</sup>

As the unconscious material of the alchemist rose to consciousness, it was expressed in the activities combining the elements of matter to produce gold. The meanings that the alchemist made of the chemical processes that were carried out in this attempt, were in fact projections of unconscious information. By carrying out these processes, the alchemist was symbolizing the process of individuation that was occurring within the psyche. Jung suggests that in the psyche, *coniunctio* symbolizes the realization of the Self or "God-image" archetype. He describes the components of *coniunctio* as

pairs of chemical opposites, which correspond to the pairs of opposites that "constitute the phenomenology of the paradoxical *self*, man's totality."<sup>55</sup>

In the paper "The Psychology of the Transference,"<sup>56</sup> Jung analyses the symbolism of a series of images in a sixteenth-century alchemical text, the *Rosarium Philosophorum*<sup>57</sup>. He translates these into the phases of individuation. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis* Jung describes three types of alchemical union explained by Gerald Dorn a sixteenth-century alchemist. Jung suggests that these correspond to the unions that occur in the individuation process. Although not specifically referenced in his commentary on the *Rosarium Philosophorum* alchemical images in his article "The Psychology of Transference,"<sup>58</sup> the information relating to the three types of alchemical union provides additional insight into this complex process.



## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Although Jung uses the word 'soul' in a variety of ways in his writings it is most commonly used interchangeably with the word psyche or self and expresses the totality of the personality.
- <sup>2</sup> Jung, Carl G. The Collected Works of C.G. Jung. Vol.12. Princeton University Press. 1973. par.14  
All references from Jung's Collected Works (CW) will be documented in a consistent manner. The first number indicates the volume of the Collected Works the information is found in and the second number indicates the paragraph of that volume in which the information appears. By referencing the paragraph rather than the page the information can be located regardless of the edition of the Collected Work referenced.
- <sup>3</sup> Jung uses the word 'self' to describe two aspects of the psyche. The first is the totality of the psyche or the soul, the second the Self-archetype. Throughout this paper self meaning the psyche will appear with a lower case s - *self*. When it is being used in relation to the Self-archetype it will appear with a capital s - *Self*.
- <sup>4</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.12. par.14.
- <sup>5</sup> Jung's 1921 book *Psychological Types* was the first writing in which the term individuation process appears. Although this was the first time Jung addressed it specifically, he alluded to it in his doctoral dissertation "On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena" which he defended in 1902 (Jacobi 1965). Smith (1990) in *Jung's Quest For Wholeness* describes individuation as Jung's 'ultimate concern', a concern that became the theme of Jung's last major work *Mysterium Conjunctionis* (1955-1956).
- <sup>6</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.490.
- <sup>7</sup> Aziz, Robert. C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion and Synchronicity. State University of New York Press. 1990. p.
- <sup>8</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9. par.524.
- <sup>9</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.13. par.67.

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<sup>10</sup> Storr,1983:p.19

<sup>11</sup> Hopcke, Robert H. A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of Jung. Shambhala. Boston. p.36

<sup>12</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.618.

<sup>13</sup> Aziz. p.xxi

<sup>14</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.158.

<sup>15</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9ii. par.1.

<sup>16</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.610.

<sup>17</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9ii. par.1.

<sup>18</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.611.

<sup>19</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9ii. par.5.

<sup>20</sup> Although the persona is included as part of the conscious aspect of the psyche because it develops with the ego, it is largely unconscious. For the purpose of explanation, the conscious and the unconscious are presented as separate aspects of the psyche when in fact there is no fixed division between them. Rather, a constant interchange occurs between the conscious and unconscious aspects.

<sup>21</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.221.

<sup>22</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.114.

<sup>23</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.382.

<sup>24</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.118.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. par.321.

<sup>26</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.513.

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- 27 Jacobi, Jolande. The Way of Individuation. New American Library. New York. 1967. p.38.
- 28 Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.44.
- 29 Ibid. par.513.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Jung. CW. Vol.9ii. par.16.
- 32 Ibid. par.17.
- 33 Jung. CW. Vol.6. par.842.
- 34 Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.389.
- 35 Jung. CW. Vol.6. par.842.
- 36 Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.111.
- 37 Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.702.
- 38 Jung. CW. Vol.10. par.847.
- 39 Jung, Carl G. Psyche and Symbol. Princeton University Press. 1991. p.xiii.
- 40 Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.109.
- 41 Jung. CW. Vol.18. par.589.
- 42 Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.437.
- 43 Aziz, p.57
- 44 Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.418.
- 45 Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.474.

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<sup>46</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.634.

<sup>47</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.121.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. par.78.

<sup>49</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.12. par.22.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. par.23.

<sup>51</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.398.

<sup>52</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.6. par.828.

<sup>53</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.790.

<sup>54</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.12. par.332.

<sup>55</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.4.

<sup>56</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16.

<sup>57</sup> The analysis of these images appears in Collected Works volume 16. These images and the writings of Gerald Dorn that are analyzed in *Mysterium Conjunctionis* (CW Vol.14), form the basis of the comparison of individuation with Underhill's criteria of mysticism in Chapters IV to VIII.

The images contained in the *Rosarium Philosophorum* series are rich with symbols. It is not my intention to do a detailed analysis of each of these symbols but to focus primarily on Jung's interpretation of these as they relate to individuation.

## Chapter IV

### The Awakening to A New Reality

*"It was as if I had worked for years on the wrong side of a tapestry, learning accurately all its lines and figures, yet always missing its color and sheen."*

*Anna Louise Strong*

In both Jung's theory of individuation and Underhill's Mystic Way a critical point is reached in which the individual awakens to a new reality. While Underhill describes this awakening in *The Awakening of The Self*, Jung discusses it in his analysis of the first alchemical image *The Mercurial Fountain*. This chapter contains a summary of and a comparison of these.

### The Mystic Way

#### The Awakening of The Self

The first phase of the Mystic Way described by Underhill is called *The Awakening of The Self* which she describes as an intense form of conversion. "It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the center of interest from the subject to an object now brought into view."<sup>1</sup> Underhill's description of consciousness shifting from lower to higher levels indicates an hierarchical organization of consciousness. She suggests that outside the individual's ordinary consciousness is a "larger world-consciousness" or mystical consciousness. The awakening of the

individual to this consciousness is the beginning of the "remaking of the field of consciousness, an alteration in the self's attitude to the world"<sup>2</sup> and the first emergence of a deep passion for the Absolute.

Underhill cautions against confusing this shift of consciousness with religious conversion in the usual sense in which there is a sudden and emotional acceptance of theological beliefs. To elucidate her thinking about mystical conversion, Underhill uses an explanation of conversion presented by E. T. Starbuck, in The Psychology of Religion:

Conversion ... is primarily an unselfing. The first birth of the individual is into his own little world. He is controlled by the deep-seated instincts of self-preservation and self-enlargement. ... The universe is organized around his own personality as a center. ... [It is] the larger world-consciousness now pressing in on the individual consciousness. ... [T]he person emerges from a smaller limited world of existence into a larger world of being. His life becomes swallowed up in a larger whole.<sup>3</sup>

The awakening of the self, then, involves a shift away from the self as the center of reality and the serving of self as the primary motivation. Instead, the individual is conscious of the larger reality, the reality that contains the self. Underhill describes this consciousness as "a sudden, intense, and joyous perception of God immanent in the universe"<sup>4</sup> which occurs through the "emergence of intuitions from below the threshold, the consequent remaking of the field of consciousness, [and] an alteration in the self's attitude to the world."<sup>5</sup>

Underhill labels the intuitions that arise from below the threshold spiritual consciousness. This stands in contrast to superficial consciousness, the

primary consciousness that is the ordinary reality of the individual. In the awakening, the spiritual consciousness invades the superficial. The "eruptions of intuitions" result in a new experience of the universe. St. Catherine of Genoa, a fifteenth-century mystic, describes one of these eruptions when she writes that she "knew in an instant that which words cannot express."<sup>6</sup> This experience was the starting point of a new life for her. St. Francis of Assisi describes this same alteration in consciousness as an experience of having awakened from sleep and finding himself another person. "He is as one who has slept and now awakes. ... In a moment of time, Francis's whole universe has suffered complete rearrangement."<sup>7</sup>

From her study of the experiences of mystics, Underhill notes that the sudden eruptions of spiritual consciousness are a part of a larger process which begins long before the eruptions occur.

In most cases, the onset of this new consciousness seems to the self so sudden, so clearly imposed from without rather than developed from within, as to have a supernatural character ... the apparently abrupt conversion is really, as a rule, the sequel and the result of a long period of restlessness, uncertainty, and mental stress. The deeper mind stirs uneasily in its prison, and its emergence is but the last of many efforts to escape. The temperament of the subject, his surroundings, the vague but persistent apprehensions of a supersensual reality which he could not find yet could not forget; all these have prepared him for it.<sup>8</sup>

In the awareness of this supersensual reality, the individual experiences a dual reality. Expressions of this include: "the eternal and the temporal, transcendent and immanent, absolute and dynamic aspects of Truth. They comprise the twofold knowledge of a God Who is both Being and Becoming,

near and far: pairs of opposites which the developed mystical experience will carry up into a higher synthesis."<sup>9</sup>

In this, the initial stage of the mystical process, one element of the dual reality predominates. This results in a tendency toward one of two distinctive types of mystical awakening. In one, the mystic interprets the reality experienced as external; in the other it is presumed to be an internal reality. Underhill suggests that these types coincide with the temperamental inclination of the mystic to objectivize the reality as a person, a place, or a state. Incorporating doctrinal assumptions into the interpretation of these types, Underhill describes the first as:

the apprehension of a splendor without: an expansive, formless, ineffable vision, a snatching up of the self, as it were, from knowledge of this world to some vague yet veritable knowledge of the next. The veil parts, and the Godhead is perceived as transcendent to, yet immanent in, the created universe. Not the personal touch of love transfiguring the soul, but the impersonal glory of a transfigured world, is the dominant note of this experience: and the reaction of the self takes the form of awe and rapture rather than of intimate affection.<sup>10</sup>

This is an experience of expansion beyond the confines of what is experienced as ordinary reality. It is the "revelation of Divine Beauty."

In the second type of mystical awakening, "the self awakes to that which is within, rather than to that which is without: to the immanent not the transcendent God, to the personal not the cosmic relation."<sup>11</sup> Underhill describes this experience as looking in and receiving the "wound of Divine Love." The central awareness of this inward look is the poverty of the finite



self and the disintegration of "I-hood" resulting in the total self-surrender to the Absolute.

The characteristic reaction to this experience is passionate and consuming love. Richard Rolle of Hampole, a fourteenth-century mystic, describes this experience as "the fire of love." He writes: "As it were if the finger were put in fire, it should be clad with feeling of burning: so the soul with love ... set afire, truly feels most very heat."<sup>12</sup>

Underhill summarizes the implications of the awakening when she writes: "[t]he awakening of the self is to a new and more active plane of being, new and more personal relations with Reality; hence to a new and more real work which it must do."<sup>13</sup> The awakening is the step that propels the individual into an expanded awareness of self and the worlds in which the self lives. This awareness carries with it a change in the outward expression of living which represents the beginning of a life-process of self-surrender to the Absolute. "Divine love ... draws those whom it seizes beyond themselves: and this so greatly that they belong no longer to themselves but wholly to the Object loved."<sup>14</sup>

## Individuation

### The Mercurial Fountain

The first stage of individuation occurs in the first half of an individual's life. In this stage, ego consciousness and the persona develop and the ego becomes

the center of the psyche. The individual's reality is formed by ego consciousness, the persona and shadow projections. While the unconscious is unknown to the individual, it is highly influential in the individual's experience of life. With the ego as the center of reality, projections as the substance of reality, and the unconscious unknown, the individual's experience is characterized by psychological fragmentation and agony. Jung describes this state as "the pluralistic state of the man who has not yet attained inner unity, hence that state of bondage and disunion, of disintegration, and of being torn in different directions — an agonizing unredeemed state which longs for union, reconciliation, redemption, healing and wholeness."<sup>15</sup> In this state, the psyche is ready for an awakening to the unconscious which although unknown, acts intelligently and purposefully to correct the imbalance that exists in the psyche at this point. This point of readiness is symbolized by the first alchemical image *The Mercurial Fountain*.

The awakening to the unconscious occurs as a result of the unconscious processes that "compensate the conscious ego [and] contain all those elements that are necessary for the self-regulation of the psyche as a whole."<sup>16</sup> This self-regulation results in the disruption of ego consciousness by the unconscious. "[O]ut of the unconscious rise contents and images, and they show themselves to the conscious mind as though secretly asking to be grasped and understood, so that 'birth' may be accomplished and 'being' created."<sup>17</sup>

This rise of unconscious contents into consciousness propels the individual into the realization of the purpose of human existence—"to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being"<sup>18</sup> by creating more and more consciousness.

With the realization of this purpose, comes a glimpse of what is to come. This premonition may be shattering for the ego as described by Smith. "Previous to the ego's descent into the unconscious,<sup>19</sup> and the activation of the unconscious, the ego assumed itself to be the sole ruler of the psyche, whereas now it realizes this is not the case."<sup>20</sup> While this awareness may be shattering, the premonition is linked to a greater awareness of what lies hidden beyond the consciousness of the ego and this awareness brings a new focus.

For Jung this awareness came at an early age when he experienced himself as two distinct people; the schoolboy and the grown-up who was remote from the world but close to "nature, the earth, the sun, the moon, the weather, all living creatures, and above all close to the night, to dreams, and to whatever 'God' worked directly in him."<sup>21</sup> For this boy-man the everyday world was the least influential.

[T]here existed another realm, like a temple in which anyone who entered was transformed and suddenly overpowered by a vision of the whole cosmos, so that he could only marvel and admire, forgetful of himself. Here lived the "Other," who knew God as a hidden, personal, and at the same time suprapersonal secret. Here nothing separated man from God; indeed it was as though the human mind looked down upon creation simultaneously with God.<sup>22</sup>

Jung's awareness of this other reality, although at the time experienced as an "overpowering premonition and intensity of feeling," became the reference point from which he began his exploration of the unconscious.

### Comparison

A comparison of the first phase of the Mystic Way—*The Awakening of The Self* and the awakening that occurs as the unconscious begins the process of the self-regulation of the psyche as depicted by the first alchemical image, *The Mercurial Fountain*, reveals a number of striking similarities. The awakenings that are described by Underhill and Jung occur in a similar psychological condition. Underhill describes this as a time when the individual is in a prolonged state of mental and psychological restlessness, uncertainty and stress. Jung uses much stronger words to describe this state: bondage, disunion and disintegration. Jung suggests that this state results from the individual's lack of conscious awareness of the presence and influence of the unconscious. Caught in this state of psychological stress and disunion, the mystic and the Jung's individual alike experience an awakening. The stimulus of the awakening that occurs in this phase of mysticism and individuation is expressed in similar terms. Underhill describes it as "emergence of intuitions from below the threshold,"<sup>23</sup> a description that readily corresponds to Jung's description of the stimulus as eruptions of the unconscious which confront the ego.

Both Underhill and Jung describe the result of these eruptions as a shift in consciousness. For Underhill it is a move from superficial consciousness or ordinary reality to spiritual consciousness, "[t]o a new and more active plane of being, [and] new and more personal relations with Reality."<sup>24</sup> For Jung the shift involves a move from a lack of knowledge of the unconscious to an awareness that something exists beyond the conscious everyday reality. The shift in consciousness results in a multifaceted experience, a call from the unconscious, which when understood opens the individual to the birth of "being." Jung expresses this as the "recognition of a supreme goal."<sup>25</sup> Underhill describes the outcome of the shift described in the awakening as "an alteration in the self's attitude to the world,"<sup>26</sup> and an awareness of "a new and more real work which [the self] must do."<sup>27</sup>

The "new" reality brought into consciousness by the awakening is described by Underhill as dual and supersensual. She calls it "Truth," "the eternal and the temporal, transcendent and immanent"<sup>28</sup> and equates it with "God immanent in the universe."<sup>29</sup> Jung's conceptualization of the Self-archetype as the central, structural element of the unconscious, corresponds to Underhill's supersensual reality. His formulation of the Self-archetype as "absolutely paradoxical ... thesis and antithesis, and at the same time synthesis, ... a union of opposites par excellence"<sup>30</sup> parallels the dual characteristics of Underhill's "Truth".

In both systems, this phase of awakening and shifting consciousness is charged with intense emotion. For Jung, it is a time in which the individual

"longs for union, reconciliation, redemption, healing and wholeness."<sup>31</sup> For the mystic, it is characterized by passionate and consuming love. The intensity of these emotions carries the individual and the mystic into the stage which follows: for Underhill, the purification of the self, and for Jung the exploration of the unconscious contents.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Underhill. p.176.
  - <sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.177.
  - <sup>3</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.176-177.
  - <sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.179.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>6</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.181.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp.178-179.
  - <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.195.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.196.
  - <sup>12</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.197.
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.197.
  - <sup>14</sup> Dionysius as quoted in Underhill, p.197.
  - <sup>15</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.405.
  - <sup>16</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.275.
  - <sup>17</sup> Jaffe as quoted in Jacobi, .p.44.
  - <sup>18</sup> Jung. Memories. p.326.

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<sup>19</sup>Smith's use of the phrase "ego's descent into the unconscious" is equivalent to what Jung describes as the meeting of the conscious and the unconscious.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, Curtis D. Jung's Quest for Wholeness. State University of New York. 1990. p.112.

<sup>21</sup> Jung. Memories. pp.44-45.

<sup>22</sup> Jung. Memories. pp.45.

<sup>23</sup> Underhill, p.177

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.197.

<sup>25</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.498.

<sup>26</sup> Underhill, p.177.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.197.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.195.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.179.

<sup>30</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.12. par.22.

<sup>31</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.405.



## Chapter V

### Preparation For Union

*"It is only that my illusion is more real to me than reality. And so do we often build our world on an error, and cry out that the universe is falling to pieces, if anyone but lift a finger to replace the error by truth." Mary Antin*

### The Mystic Way

#### The Purification of The Self

This second phase of the Mystic Way begins at the moment of awakening. In that instant, the mystic faces the pain of the contrast between the finiteness of the self and the infiniteness of the Absolute. At that moment a realization occurs: the former reality of the self is an evil and imperfect illusion, a "mollusk shell" that separates the "natural self" from the "Eternal Sea" in which it bathes. "[The natural self] knows itself as finite. It now aspires to the infinite. It is encased in the hard crust of individuality: it aspires to union with a larger self. It is fettered: it longs for freedom. Its every sense is attuned to illusion: it craves for harmony with the Absolute Truth."<sup>1</sup>

The harmony that Underhill writes about in this passage is achieved through purification which functions to eliminate all the parts of the individual's former, limited view of reality that are not in harmony with expanded consciousness. Purification breaks down the "one-sided secretion of the surface-consciousness" that forms the shell that encases the Natural Self. When this occurs, the self lets go of "the character of illusion or sin" and

takes on "the character of reality," a process that Underhill calls "self-simplification." "[T]he involved interests and tangled motives of the self are simplified, and the false complications of temporal life are recognized and cast away."<sup>2</sup>

The instrument of purification is self-knowledge. St. Catherine of Siena writes: "If thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the Eternal Truth, thou shouldst never go outside the knowledge of thyself; and by humbling thyself in the valley of humility thou wilt draw all that is necessary. ... In self-knowledge, then thou wilt humble thyself; seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist."<sup>3</sup>

What does exist is revealed by the transcendental consciousness, which, in Underhill's words, "forces on the unwilling surface mind a sharp vision of its own disabilities, its ugly and imperfect life."<sup>4</sup> This awareness of the imperfection of self plunges the mystic into a state of darkness, a state that is periodically overcome by the experience of the light of the spiritual reality to which the mystic has awakened. Oscillation between the rapture of the Absolute and the darkness of the finite characterizes the process of purification. Underhill writes: "There are moments of high rapture when he knows only that the banner over him is Love: but there are others in which he remains bitterly conscious that in spite of his uttermost surrender there is within him an ineradicable residuum of selfhood, which stains the white radiance of eternity."<sup>5</sup>

Pain and suffering are associated with the realization and purging of the illusions that make up the self, with the "breakup of his old universe."<sup>6</sup> To undergo purification the mystic submits to "a life of discomfort and conflict, often to intense poverty and pain, as the only way of replacing false experience by true."<sup>7</sup> Regardless, the mystic undertakes these tasks of purification as acts of will and loving desire. St. Teresa cries: "Let me suffer or die!"<sup>8</sup>

Underhill outlines two elements of purification: negative purification or self-stripping, which leads to detachment; and positive purification or character-adjustment, which she calls "mortification". Negative purification involves the discovery and extirpation of "all those interests which nourish selfhood, however innocent or even useful these interests may seem in the eyes of the world."<sup>9</sup> It results in a state of "detachment." As St. John of the Cross says: "In detachment the spirit finds quiet and repose, for coveting nothing, nothing wearies it by elation, and nothing oppresses it by dejection, because it stands in the center of its own humility."<sup>10</sup>

Detachment is traditionally expressed by the three virtues of the cloistered life which are poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poverty is detachment from all finite things, immaterial and material. The second virtue, chastity, is poverty of the senses that involves the cleansing of the self of all personal desires and the opening to none but God. Obedience, the third virtue, is poverty of the will which the mystic demonstrates through the abnegation of selfhood and complete self-abandonment. It is an expression of a "holy indifference" to the

events of life. For St. John of the Cross, anything that enslaves the spirit and stands in the way of its union with God must be abandoned and the soul freed. "The soul is not empty, so long as the desire for sensible things remains. But the absence of this desire for things produces emptiness and liberty of soul; even when there is an abundance of possessions."<sup>11</sup>

The second element of the purification of the self, is positive purification or "mortification." This is "the remaking in relation to reality of the permanent elements of character. ... Now they must be adjusted to the needs of the new self and to the transcendent world in which it moves."<sup>12</sup> Mortification is a process of the "sublimation of the personality," so that the life lived is in harmony with the reality of the Universal life. Underhill describes this as "a period of actual battle between the inharmonious elements of the self, its lower and higher springs of action: of toil, fatigue, bitter suffering, and many disappointments."<sup>13</sup> Suso describes this battle as the law of love. "Suffering is the ancient law of love, there is no quest without pain, there is no lover who is not also a martyr. Hence it is inevitable that he who would love so high a thing as Wisdom should sometimes suffer hindrances and griefs."<sup>14</sup>

The outcome of the suffering incurred with purification is the death of the self-regarding instincts that are part of normal consciousness. This involves freeing the self "from the fetters of the senses, the 'remora of desire,' from the results of environment and worldly education, from pride and prejudice, preferences and distaste: from selfhood in every form."<sup>15</sup> It is a process of self-surrender leading to the point at which "the changes and chances of

mortal life are accepted with a true indifference and do not trouble the life of the soul."<sup>16</sup> In this state of surrender the mystic stands ready for illumination.

Experiencing the process of purification, the mystic discovers and extirpates all the personality characteristics and interests that support selfhood and the illusion of the temporal reality in which life is lived. This process is explored by the alchemists in the images entitled *The King and Queen*, *The Naked Truth* and *Immersion In The Bath* and by the writings of Gerald Dorn who calls the first stage of the alchemical process *unio mentalis*.<sup>17</sup>

### Individuation

#### Unio Mentalis

In the first of the three stages of the alchemical process described by Dorn, the challenge is to separate the mind and the soul, that aspect that animates the body from the body's affectivity and instinctuality, in order for the spirit, a "spiracle of eternal life, [a] window into eternity,"<sup>18</sup> to unite with the soul. The soul, which favors the body and the sensuous and emotional aspects of it, must be "called back by the 'council of the spirit' from her lostness in matter and the world [where she] lies caught in 'the chains' of Physis, and she desires 'beyond physical necessity'."<sup>19</sup> This separation of the soul from the body is described by Jung as "a turning away from sensuous reality, a withdrawal of the fantasy-projections that give 'the ten thousand things' their attractive and deceptive glamour."<sup>20</sup> This separation is begun with the awareness of the

persona depicted in the alchemical image *The King and Queen*, and is realized in the symbology of the sixth alchemical image called *Death*.<sup>21</sup>

### The King and Queen

The second images of the alchemical text *Rosarium Philosophorum*, depicts the meeting of the conscious and the unconscious that occurs with the awakening of the individual to the existence of unconscious reality. In the picture the King and Queen stand, left hands touching and right hands holding branches which are crossed and intersected by a branch held in the beak of a dove which descends from a star. The king stands on the sun, the queen on the moon, symbolizing the masculine and feminine archetypal opposites that exist in the pool of archetypes within the collective unconscious. In his discussion of this image, Jung postulates that the touching of the left hands is particularly noteworthy, since it is contrary to custom. He notes that symbolically the left-hand side is the dark, the unconscious side. It is also the side of the heart "from which comes not only love but all the evil thoughts connected with it."<sup>22</sup>

Jung interprets the relationship of the King and Queen as being of a "dubious" nature, a mixture of heavenly and earthly love, an incestuous relationship. "Incest symbolizes union with one's own being, it means individuation or becoming a self."<sup>23</sup> He explains the presence of the dove in the picture as a representation of the Holy Ghost which reveals the hidden meaning of the symbology of incest—*unio mystica*. and the triple-nature of humans as masculine, feminine and divine.

In the picture, the king and queen wear conventional dress which symbolizes the persona, the individual's concession to the collective and the influence of the individual's relationship to the collective. "Convention still separates them and hides their natural reality."<sup>24</sup> In the individuation process, this separation is overcome when the individual becomes conscious of the persona. This frees the ego from its identification with the collectivity and the psychic energy that was previously used to maintain this identity is released. This release of energy brings with it other aspects of the unconscious contents resulting in the domination of the ego by the unconscious. As a result, the individual is thrown into an interior crisis characterized by confusion and disorientation. "Thus without noticing it, the conscious personality is pushed about like a figure on a chess-board by an invisible player."<sup>25</sup> With consciousness of the persona, the personality collapses and the individual experiences "a condition of panic, a letting go in the face of apparently hopeless complications."<sup>26</sup>

Jung describes his personal experience of this domination of the ego by the unconscious in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

I stood helpless before an alien world; everything in it seemed difficult and incomprehensible. I was living in a constant state of tension; often I felt as if gigantic blocks of stone were tumbling down upon me. One thunderstorm followed another. My enduring these storms was a question of brute strength. ... When I endured these assaults of the unconscious I had an unswerving conviction that I was obeying a higher will, and that feeling continued to uphold me until I had mastered the task."<sup>27</sup>

### The Naked Truth

The second image that corresponds to Underhill's *Purification of the Self* is entitled *The Naked Truth*. In it, the King and Queen appear naked, stripped of the clothing of the collective—the persona. The dove that was present in the previous picture is also present here, descending between the king and queen with a branch in its mouth.

Psychologically we can say that the situation has thrown off the conventional husk and developed into a stark encounter with reality, with no false veils or adornments of any kind. Man stands forth as he really is and shows what was hidden under the mask of conventional adaptation: the shadow.<sup>28</sup>

The revelation of the shadow occurs through self-knowledge in which the ego personality becomes aware of "what a problem he really is."<sup>29</sup> "[T]he disciple will have every opportunity to discover the dark side of his personality, his inferior wishes and motives, childish fantasies and resentments, etc.; in short, all those traits he habitually hides from himself."<sup>30</sup> The goal of this process is "the attainment of the full knowledge of the heights and depths of one's own character,"<sup>31</sup> which becomes motivation for great humility, for "genuine fear of the abysmal depths in man."<sup>32</sup> For the alchemists, this was a process of healing "not only the disharmonies of the physical world but the inner psychic conflict as well, the 'affliction of the soul' ... of loosen[ing] the age-old attachment of the soul to the body and thus mak[ing] conscious the conflict between the purely natural and spiritual man."<sup>33</sup>



The aim of this healing is not to get rid of the "problem"—the shadow—for it is part of completeness, but to "live with [the] shadow without its precipitating a succession of disasters."<sup>34</sup> The integration of the shadow with the ego occurs when the shadow is made conscious through the transcendent function of the Self-archetype. In Jungian terms this is a process of "introversion, introspection, meditation, and the careful investigation of desires and their motives,"<sup>35</sup> the end goal of which is to objectify these desires and motives, the affects and instincts, and in doing so, make the shadow conscious. "[T]he individual will learn to know his soul,"<sup>36</sup> the preparation necessary for the collapse of ego-personality with which comes the freeing of the mind and the soul from "the influences of the 'bodily appetites and the heart's affections' ... [and the establishment of] a spiritual position which is supra-ordinate to the turbulent sphere of the body."<sup>37</sup>

Becoming conscious of the shadow has serious consequences for the individual. Because, previous to this point, the reality of the individual is largely defined by projections of the unconscious shadow contents, the assimilation of the shadow results in the disintegration of that reality. The result is chaos. All that has served as the basis of meaning and identity crumbles and the individual's world view collapses.

A collapse of the conscious attitude is no small matter. It always feels like the end of the world, as though everything had tumbled back into original chaos. One feels delivered up, disoriented, like a rudderless ship that is abandoned to the moods of the elements. In reality, however, one has fallen back upon the collective unconscious, which now takes over the leadership.<sup>38</sup>

The presence of the dove in the image *The Naked Truth* is noteworthy. It is seen with a branch in its mouth, descending from above. Jung interprets its presence as an indication of "a union in the spirit."<sup>39</sup> The dove represents "an attribute of the goddess of love, ... a symbol of *amor coniugalis* in ancient times."<sup>40</sup> The text that accompanies the image reveals the nature of the union symbolized by the dove as a surrender in love. "O Luna, let me be thy husband, ... O Sol, I must submit to thee."<sup>41</sup> As the ego surrenders to the unconscious, the psyche moves toward union and wholeness.

#### Immersion In The Bath

This image depicts the leadership by the collective unconscious. In it, the King and Queen sit in a bath of Mercurius, "of the 'thousand' names," which is representative of the unconscious, "the mysterious psychic substance."<sup>42</sup> This image symbolizes "the *olutio*—'dissolution' in the physical sense and at the same time, ... the solution of a problem. It is a return to the dark initial state, to the amniotic fluid of the gravid uterus"<sup>43</sup>—a process Jung calls "a night sea journey." "The night sea journey is a kind of *descensus ad inferos*—a descent into Hades and a journey to the land of ghosts somewhere beyond this world, beyond consciousness, hence an immersion in the unconscious."<sup>44</sup>

Jung's discussion of this image includes a further analysis of the symbolism of the king and queen. He interprets the queen as a symbol of the body, the king as a symbol of the spirit. The presence of the dove and the water in which they sit is representative of the soul that holds them together. The

presence of the soul is dependent on the existence of a bond of love. "If no bond of love exists, they have no soul."<sup>45</sup> Thus the psyche is described as "a half bodily, half spiritual substance ... capable of uniting the opposites."<sup>46</sup>

Jung goes on to explain that this union occurs only in relationship to a "You." "The unrelated human being lacks wholeness, for he can achieve wholeness only through the soul, and the soul cannot exist without its otherside, 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."<sup>47</sup> This combination is not about "the synthesis or identification of two individuals, but the conscious union of the ego with everything that has been projected into the "You." Hence wholeness is the product of an intrapsychic process which depends essentially on the relation of one individual to another."<sup>48</sup>

### Comparison

The purification of the self as presented by Underhill, and the integration of the persona and the shadow into consciousness described by Jung, are similar courses of events that are realized by the same process, require similar attitudes and result in similar outcomes. With the awakening of the self and the eruptions of the unconscious into consciousness, the mystic and the Jungian individual alike experience a longing for what until now has been unknown. For the mystic this longing focuses on the realization of the infiniteness of the supersensual reality that has been glimpsed. It is a longing "for harmony with the Absolute Truth."<sup>49</sup> For the individual on the journey

to wholeness, the longing relates to the desire for the "union, reconciliation, redemption, healing and wholeness"<sup>50</sup> which has been revealed with the rise of the unconscious contents. The stage is set for the fulfillment of the longing through the exploration of the self—the psyche.

Both in the Mystic Way and in individuation, self-knowledge is the key to fulfillment. "If thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the Eternal Truth, thou shouldst never go outside the knowledge of thyself"<sup>51</sup> writes St. Catherine of Siena. In self-knowledge "the involved interests and tangled motives of the self are simplified, and the false complications of temporal life are recognized and cast away."<sup>52</sup>

A similar view is held by Jung who relates self-knowledge to wholeness. "[T]he structure of wholeness was always present but was buried in profound unconsciousness, where it can always be found again if one is willing to risk one's skin to attain the greatest possible range of consciousness through the greatest possible self-knowledge—a 'harsh and bitter drink' usually reserved for hell."<sup>53</sup>

In this part of the individuation process self-knowledge reveals the persona and the shadow. With the integration of the persona in individuation, the ego is freed from its identification with the values and beliefs of the collectivity; and with the integration of the shadow, the individual realizes the extent of "the abysmal depths"<sup>54</sup> that are part of the human condition. Mortification or positive purification and negative purification which are

described by Underhill as the two primary processes of purification, accomplish similar results. Mortification or positive purification, is described as a process of the "sublimation of the personality." This is not an easy task but rather a battle against a well established way of being and seeing. Winning the battle means the freeing of the self "from the fetters of the senses ... from the results of environment and worldly education, from pride and prejudice, preferences and distaste: from selfhood in every form."<sup>55</sup> These characteristics against which "the battle is fought" are comparable to the persona and the shadow contents that are confronted in individuation.

The process of negative purification that Underhill describes is closely aligned with what Dorn asserts is the primary goal of *unio mentalis*, "the transcendence of the body's affectivity and instinctuality."<sup>56</sup> Negative stripping involves the discovery and extirpation of "all those interests which nourish selfhood."<sup>57</sup> It is a process that St. John of the Cross describes as the liberation of the soul which results in detachment from all finite things, immaterial and material; the cleansing of the self of all personal desires; and obedience, the poverty of will. "The soul is not empty, so long as the desire for sensible things remains. But the absence of this desire for things produces emptiness and liberty of soul: even when there is an abundance of possessions."<sup>58</sup> This process, described in the theological language of the mystics, is the liberation of the soul from all that enslaves the spirit and stands in the way of its union with God. For Dorn there occurs a similar freeing of the mind and the soul from "the influences of the 'bodily appetites and the heart's affections'."<sup>59</sup> With this freedom comes the establishment of

a spiritual position that is outside of the influence of the "turbulent sphere of the body."<sup>60</sup> With purification comes the adjustment of the elements of character to the needs of the new self and to the transcendent world in which it moves.<sup>61</sup>

Whether one calls it purification of the self or the integration of the persona and the shadow with the ego, coming to self-knowledge or the consciousness of self is a process fraught with emotional and psychological upheaval, or in Underhill's terms, pain and suffering. Self-knowledge, the tool of purification and integration of the persona and shadow, reveals what Underhill describes as "a sharp vision of its [the surface mind's] own disabilities, its ugly and imperfect life."<sup>62</sup> This revelation is echoed in the description of the "abysmal depths" that are revealed with the exploration of the shadow.

In both mysticism and individuation, the awareness of what Underhill calls the imperfection of the self, and what Jung calls the assimilation of the persona and shadow into consciousness, plunges the mystic and Jung's individual into a state of humility and darkness. With the degeneration of the persona and the shadow, all that served as the basis of meaning, identity, and the individual's world view collapses and the individual faces the chaos of disintegration. "A collapse of the conscious attitude is no small matter. It always feels like the end of the world, as though everything had tumbled back into original chaos."<sup>63</sup> For the mystic purification means embracing "intense

poverty and pain" as the ordinary consciousness, the old universe is broken down to make way for true experience.

An important difference is to be noted in Underhill's description of purification and Jung's discussion of the integration of the shadow. For Underhill, purification is "a getting rid of all those elements of normal experience which are not in harmony with reality: of illusion, evil, imperfection of every kind."<sup>64</sup> In this statement she refers to two aspects of purification that stand in contrast to what occurs in individuation: "getting rid of" and "imperfections." Purification is a process of "purging" oneself of all the "disabilities" that stand between [the self] and what Underhill calls goodness, it is a process of making oneself perfect. This process stands in contrast to the one suggested by Jung. "[The shadow] is raised to consciousness and integrated with the ego, which means a move in the direction of wholeness."<sup>65</sup> He goes on to point out that "[w]holeness is not so much perfection as completeness."<sup>66</sup> While purification involves eliminating the "darkness" from the self, individuation is about integrating it into consciousness, and thus moving toward completeness.

Throughout Underhill's presentation of the process of purification references are made to its meaning - "the bringing of the self into harmony with the Universal Life", "the Eternal Sea", "the knowledge and enjoyment of the Eternal Truth". Jung concludes his discussion of the *Immersion in The Bath* with an explanation of the symbology of the postures of the King, the Queen

and the dove; and thus reveals the meaning of their relationship as this part of individuation - "man's longing for transcendent wholeness."<sup>67</sup>



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Underhill, p.199.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.204.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.200.

<sup>4</sup> Underhill, p.201.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.204.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.201.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.200.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.201

<sup>9</sup> Underhill, p.212

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.206

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.211.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.217.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.222.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.224.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.226.

<sup>17</sup>The summary chart Appendix I, shows the correspondences between Dorn's writings, Underhill's "Mystic Way" and the alchemical symbols of *Rosarium Philosophorum*.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.670.

<sup>19</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.673.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter VI

<sup>22</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.410.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. par.218.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. par.419.

<sup>25</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.251.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. par.252.

<sup>27</sup> Jung. Memories. p.176.

<sup>28</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.452.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.673.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. par.674.

<sup>32</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.452.

<sup>33</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.674.

<sup>34</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.452.

<sup>35</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.673.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. par.671.

<sup>38</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.254.

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<sup>39</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.451.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.238. ff.7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. par.451.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. par.453.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. par.455.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. par.454.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p.245. ff.16.

<sup>49</sup> Underhill, p.199.

<sup>50</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.405.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.200.

<sup>52</sup> Underhill, p.204

<sup>53</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.283.

<sup>54</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.452.

<sup>55</sup> Underhill, p.224

<sup>56</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.673.

<sup>57</sup> Underhill, p.212

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.211.

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<sup>59</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.671.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Underhill, p.217.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p.210.

<sup>63</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.254.

<sup>64</sup> Underhill, p.198

<sup>65</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.452.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.456.

## Chapter VI

### Initial Union

*"It is when all the careless power of the universe tempts us to despair that we touch the vernal impulse at the heart of Being that opens our hearts and minds to possibilities that transcend our immediate experience of the possible." Sam Keen*

Vacillating between the pain of purification and the ecstatic vision of the "New Reality," the mystic moves with unsteady feet in the ordinary world, ready for *The Illumination of The Self*. This phase of the Mystic Way parallels the aspect of individuation that is depicted in the alchemical image *The Conjunction*<sup>1</sup>

### The Mystic Way

#### The Illumination of The Self

Underhill describes the illumination of the self as a kind of perception radically different from that of "normal" people. She calls it "that instinct for transcendental reality, of which all seers and creators have some trace."<sup>2</sup> She suggests that this perception of transcendent reality is the same mystical genius that certain prophets, poets, artists, and dreamers possess. In theological terms, the self has "achieved consciousness of a world that was always there, and wherein its substantial being—that Ground which is of God—has always stood. Such a consciousness is 'Transcendental Feeling: *in excelsis*': a deep, intuitional knowledge of the 'secret plan'."<sup>3</sup> The mystic's

former attachment to the instinctive life has been broken and has been replaced with "a real vision and knowledge, a conscious harmony with the divine World of Becoming: not yet self-loss in the Principle of Life, but rather a willing and harmonious revolution about Him."<sup>4</sup>

Underhill is careful to note that what is achieved in this phase of illumination is not the final union, "not yet self-loss in the Principle of Life." The illumination characteristic of this phase is experienced from a sense of "I-hood" in which the self is subject and the Absolute is object. Underhill describes a variety of illumination experiences that may occur, the simplest and most common of these being "nature-mysticism" in which the individual "sees God in nature, attain[s] a radiant consciousness of the 'otherness' of natural things."<sup>5</sup> The height of illumination is expressed as an "indescribable inebriation of Reality."<sup>6</sup>

This reality is experienced and expressed through symbols which "play a major part, not only in the description, but also in the machinery of illumination: the intuitions of many mystics presenting themselves directly to the surface-mind in a symbolic form."<sup>7</sup> These symbolic representations are the heart of the lyrical passages of mystical literature and other artistic forms, in which the mystic expresses the joy and wonder of illumination.

Underhill distinguishes three characteristics of illumination, the first of which is consciousness of the absolute or a "sense of the presence of God", a consciousness that is as clear as the consciousness of colour or sound that is

part of everyday reality. Often, with this sense comes the experience of ecstasy that is commonly associated with mysticism. The mystic describes it as "communion with the Divine" or in more pantheistic language, "harmony with the Infinite."<sup>8</sup>

O my heart, whence comes this love and grace, whence comes this gentleness and beauty, this joy and sweetness of the heart? Does not all this follow forth from the Godhead, as from its origin? Come! let my heart, my senses and my soul immerse themselves in the deep Abyss whence come these adorable things.<sup>9</sup>

The second characteristic of this phase of illumination is an expanded vision of the world or "an added significance and reality in the phenomenal world."<sup>10</sup> Underhill calls this type of illumination "cosmic consciousness"

A harmony is thus set up between the mystic and Life in all its forms. Undistracted by appearances, he sees, feels, and knows it in one piercing act of loving comprehension. ... The heart outstrips the clumsy senses, and sees ... an undistorted and more veritable world. All things are perceived in the light of charity, and hence under the aspect of beauty: for beauty is simply Reality seen with the eyes of love.<sup>11</sup>

Underhill provides examples of this type of illumination experience taken from the writings of Christian mystics and from the pens of Blake, Tennyson, and Boehme whose poetic consciousness allowed them to sense "unity in separateness, a mighty and actual Life beyond that which eye can see, a glorious reality shining through the phenomenal veil."<sup>12</sup> The common element that she identifies in their experiences is a deep sympathy with natural things, a knowledge of the secrets of the universe. "[T]he deep and primal life which he shares with all creation has been roused from its sleep. Hence the barrier between human and non-human life, which makes the

human a stranger on earth as well as in heaven, is done away. Life now whispers to his life: all things are his intimates, and respond to his sympathy."<sup>13</sup>

The *Illumination of The Self* is an illumination of the relation of things inward and outward, the expression of the Absolute in time and space, in which "the mystic achieves a level of perception in which the whole world is seen and known in God, and God is seen and known in the whole world."<sup>14</sup> It is not about acquiring knowledge but experiencing reality from a different level of consciousness "where the self turns and sees all about it a transfigured universe, radiant with that same Light Divine which nests in its own heart and leads it on."<sup>15</sup>

With the expansion of consciousness that occurs in this phase of the Mystic Way, "the energy of the intuitional or transcendental self may be enormously increased."<sup>16</sup> This increase in energy is the third characteristic of illumination and is expressed in a variety of abnormal psychic phenomena including visions, auditions, automatic script, and dramatic dialogues, common in the writings of the mystic. Underhill considers these "the artistic expressions and creative results (a) of thought, (b) of intuition, (c) of direct perception."<sup>17</sup> They are "[t]he messengers of the invisible world knock[ing] persistently at the doors of the senses, ... supersensual intuitions—the contact between man's finite being and the Infinite Being in which it is immersed."<sup>18</sup> Underhill suggests that the phenomena experienced with illumination could be one of two things: representations of thoughts and dreams from within the



personality or symbolic representations of information received from some source outside the individual. The "test" to distinguish the whether the psychic phenomena experienced is an indication of real transcendental activity or of extraordinary imagination, is their life-enhancing quality. The former is indicated if they are "found by [the 'seeing self'] to be sources of helpful energy, charity, and, courage. [If t]hey infuse something new in the way of strength, knowledge, direction; and leave it—physically, mentally, or spiritually—better than they found it."<sup>19</sup>

The visions, auditions, etc. that accomplish this represent the expansion of the consciousness of the self to the reality of the "Ground of God," the external sacred reality of which human reality is a part.

They indicate the continuous intervention of a being at once wiser and more powerful than the ordinary character and reason; they are the realization, in visual and auditory images, of a secret and permanent personality of a superior type to the conscious personality. They are its voice, the exterior projection of its life. They translate to the conscious personality the suggestions of the subconscious: and they permit the continuous penetration of the conscious personality by these deeper activities. They establish a communication between these two planes of existence, and, by their imperative nature, they tend to make the inferior subordinate to the superior.<sup>20</sup>

For Underhill, these psychic phenomena are "instances of the adaptation of those means by which we obtain consciousness of the phenomenal world, to an apprehension of that other world whose attainment is humanity's sublimest end."<sup>21</sup>

## Individuation

### The Conjunction

The aspect of individuation that corresponds to *The Illumination of The Self* is the fourth alchemical image. In it the King and Queen are depicted in the *massa confusa*—the chaotic beginnings, the unconscious, symbolized by the body of water in which they are immersed. Here they are seen in a passionate sexual embrace. The picture is entitled *The Conjunction*. In the activity of coitus, instinctive energy transforms into the symbolic activity of the union of opposites at its highest level—*unio oppositorum*. "Then Beya [the maternal sea] rose up over Gabricus with so much love that she absorbed him completely into her own nature, and dissolved him into atoms."<sup>22</sup> The picture depicts the merging of heterogeneous masculine and feminine factors. Through this union the dissociated portions of the psyche are bridged by the "creation of a *tertium*, a 'third' thing, supraordinate to both sides."<sup>23</sup> Jung writes: "in the hour of conjunction the greatest marvels appear, ... [there is brought] to birth something that is one and united."<sup>24</sup> This "something" is described by the alchemist Alfidius as "[t]he new light begotten by them."<sup>25</sup> Jung equates this "new light" with an image familiar to Western minds. "It [the *coniunctio*] restores the vanished 'man of light' who is identical with the Logos in Gnostic and Christian symbolism and who was there before the creation; we also meet him at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John."<sup>26</sup> This restoration is symbolized by the absence of the dove that was present in the previous pictures. Jung equates this absence with the fulfillment of the meaning of the symbol: "the partners have themselves become symbolic, [they become] a whole, ... [they become] spirit."<sup>27</sup>

### Comparison

For Underhill, the *Illumination of The Self* is a perception of transcendental reality in which the mystic achieves "a real vision and knowledge, a conscious harmony with the divine World of Becoming."<sup>28</sup> The intuitions about this World are experienced and expressed in symbolic form in the literature and artistic works of mystics, visions, auditions, automatic script and dramatic dialogues described in the writings of mystics. Underhill describes them as symbolic expressions of the unconscious activity of the spiritual self which "knock persistently at the doors of the senses."<sup>29</sup> and which represent the expansion of the consciousness of the self.

The symbolic manifestations presented by Underhill are similar to Jung's references to the symbolic expressions of the events of individuation. These symbolic representations are archetypal images that arise from the unconscious carrying with them a "depth and fullness of meaning that was unthinkable before."<sup>30</sup> Jung describes the characteristic quality of archetypal contents as a numinous charge. An archetype coming into consciousness has "a mystical aura about its numinosity, and it has a corresponding effect upon the emotion. It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions."<sup>31</sup>

The archetypal images are expressed in dreams, visions, and artistic expressions as particularly exemplified in the creation of mandalas. For Jung the mandala is the symbol of the reality of the Self-archetype: "Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation. And that is the [S]elf, the wholeness of the personality."<sup>32</sup> The experience of transcendence, of

numinosity occurs with dreams and visions that are symbols of the Self, the archetype of unity. This numinosity is "their constant characteristic, for they represent a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a union of opposites, ... and thus transcend rational understanding."<sup>33</sup> Jung describes these dreams as

little hidden door[s] in the innermost and most secret recesses of the psyche, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego-consciousness, and which will remain psyche no matter how far our ego-consciousness may extend ... All consciousness separates; but in dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. There he is still the whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all.<sup>34</sup>

This phase of the Mystic Way brings a more profound consciousness of the absolute or "sense of the presence of God" to the mystic. *The Conjunction* brings to consciousness the vanished "man of light" whose reality is cosmic and is experienced as one and united.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix I

<sup>2</sup> Underhill, p.233.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.234.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.235.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.239.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.241.

<sup>9</sup> Suso as quoted in Underhill, p.253.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.254.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.258.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.260.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.264.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.240.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.272.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.268.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.270.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.273

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.297.

<sup>22</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.457.

<sup>23</sup> Jacobi, p.59

<sup>24</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.458.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. par.462.

<sup>28</sup> Underhill, p.234.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.268.

<sup>30</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.405.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.405.

<sup>32</sup> *Faust* as quoted in Jung. Memories. p.196

<sup>33</sup> Jacobi, p.59.

<sup>34</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.10. par.304.

## Chapter VII

### The Final Purification

*"If a man wishes to be sure of the road he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark." St. John of The Cross*

The sixth phase of the Mystic Way is a continuation of the purification process begun with the *Purification of The Self*. In that phase, the finiteness of the self is realized through self-knowledge, the illusions that formed reality are stripped away and the personality is adjusted to live in harmony with the transcendent reality that is becoming the primary reality. As the stripping and adjustment occurs and the mystic abandons the attachments to the self and surrenders to the transcendent, the reality of that transcendent becomes the consciousness of the mystic.

In individuation a similar process has occurred. As the individual becomes conscious of the persona and the shadow aspects of the unconscious and constructs a reality free of superficialities, consciousness descends into the collective unconscious where the opposites are reconciled. With this reconciliation, the old psychic structures become obsolete and the projected contents of the personal and collective unconscious are integrated resulting in the expansion of consciousness to the cosmic dimension of the Self-archetype.

At this point Jung's individual and the mystic stand on the threshold of unity with the transcendent and cosmic reality of which they are now aware. Both stand in a state of potentiality but for both a final purification must be endured. Underhill calls this *The Dark Night of The Soul*. In Jung's writings this final purification is symbolized in three alchemical images *Death, The Ascent of The Soul, Purification* and *The Return of The Soul*.<sup>1</sup>

### The Mystic Way

#### The Dark Night of The Soul.

Underhill describes *The Dark Night of The Soul* or the *nigredo* as a continuation of the process of purification needed to realize union with God. Having known the bliss of illumination, this purification is experienced as an overwhelming sense of darkness and deprivation.

It is the last painful break with the life of illusion, the tearing away of the self from that World of Becoming in which all its natural affections and desires are rooted, to which its intellect and senses correspond; and the thrusting of it into that World of Being where at first, weak and blinded, it can but find wilderness, a "dark." No transmutation without fire, say the alchemists: No cross, no crown, says the Christian.<sup>2</sup>

In bearing the cross of the dark night, the mystic experiences both psychological and transcendental manifestations. Underhill asserts that psychologically, the dark night is a period of exhaustion of the nervous system that has been over-stretched by its "new consciousness." To recuperate the nervous system, the individual reverts to the former level of functioning and in doing so, loses the "apprehensions of the transcendental



world." While this may seem like regression, the dark night represents progress. It is a period of the oscillation of consciousness characterized by the psychological disequilibrium, typical of the transition into each phase in the process of mysticism. In this period of the process, the mystic experiences the pinnacle of this disequilibrium as isolation and annihilation. Psychologically speaking, the dark night is partly a condition of fatigue and partly a state of transition: an exhaustion of an old state, and the growth toward a new state of consciousness.

While the psychological aspect relates to fatigue and growth, Underhill describes the transcendental aspect as the remaking of the individual.

The Dark Night, then, is really a deeply human process, in which the self which thought itself so spiritual, firmly established upon the supersensual plane, is forced to turn back, to leave the Light, and pick up those qualities which it had left behind. Only this, by the transmutation of the *whole person*, not by a careful and departmental cultivation of that which we like to call his "spiritual" side, can Divine Humanity be formed: and the formation of Divine Humanity ... is the mystic's only certain ladder to the Real.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Underhill depicts the passage through the dark night as the further grappling of the self with its human characteristics and qualities. The goal is "total self-abandonment," detachment and transmutation. In this phase of mysticism, self-abandonment and detachment expand to include those characteristics that were not purified in the first purification, those characteristics that were "left as it were in a corner when the consciousness moved to the level of the illuminated life—are here roused from their sleep, purged of illusion, and forced to join the growing stream."<sup>4</sup> Included are those qualities that the individual considers spiritually virtuous—"the very

shrine of the self: that 'heart' which is the seat of personality, the source of its love and will."<sup>5</sup> The struggle to free oneself from attachment to these remaining individual and human characteristics and qualities and to "*be* reality"<sup>6</sup> is experienced as "bitter suffering."<sup>7</sup>

In her discussion of this suffering, Underhill describes several characteristic forms that it takes. One such form is the experience of total abandonment. This experience is common to those whose experience of the reality of the Absolute is a sense of divine companionship. For these individuals "it seems as though God, having shown Himself, has now deliberately withdrawn His Presence, never perhaps to manifest Himself again."<sup>8</sup> The experience is one of total privation or "mystic death." With the withdrawal of God from the consciousness of the individual, the transcendent "Ground" or "Spark" of the soul seems to be extinguished. St. John of the Cross writes: "[t]hat which this anguished soul feels most deeply is the conviction that God has abandoned it, *of which it has no doubt*; that He has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing. ... [T]he shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt."<sup>9</sup>

For individuals who have interpreted the experience of expanded consciousness as knowledge of "Absolute Perfection," the experience of the dark night brings something different. Knowing perfection, these individuals become painfully aware of their limitations. The dark night brings to them an exaggerated sense of their finiteness and imperfection, "an abrupt sense of

[the self's] own hopeless and helpless imperfection: a black 'conviction of sin,' ... which swamps everything else."<sup>10</sup>

A third experience of the dark night is complete emotional lethargy: a callousness and boredom that overwhelms the life of the mystic. "It seems incredible that the eager love of a Divine Companion, so long the focus of the self's whole being, should have vanished: that not only the transcendent vision should be withdrawn but [the self's] very desire for, and interest in, that vision should grow cold."<sup>11</sup>

This stagnation of the emotions often coincides with a stagnation of will and intelligence. At times, the individual experiences a complete loss of control of inclinations and thoughts. From a Christian theological perspective, this is interpreted as moral dereliction: the eruptions of the lower impulses and base ideas. "Every vice was re-awakened within me."<sup>12</sup> Accompanying this loss of control is a dullness that pervades ordinary mental activity. The mystic often experiences an inability to concentrate, remember, or understand what previously was easily understood. Underhill calls this the "confusion and ignorance of the 'Dark'."<sup>13</sup>

The soul laid in fetters, loses all control over itself, and all power of thinking of anything but the absurdities [the Devil] puts before it, which, ... serve only to stifle the soul, so that it has no power over itself; ... the devils make a football of it, and the soul is unable to escape out of their hands.<sup>14</sup>

For some the dark night comes with "the abrupt invasion of a wild and unendurable desire to 'see God,' apprehend the Transcendent in Its fullness:

which can only, they think, be satisfied by death."<sup>15</sup> This longing for ultimate reality is so intense that at times, it rises to what Underhill terms an "ecstasy of deprivation" or a "dark rapture." She quotes St. Teresa who describes the soul's experience in this state. "She is like a person suspended in mid-air, who can neither touch the earth, nor mount to heaven. She burns with a consuming thirst, and cannot reach the water. And this is a thirst which cannot be borne, but one which nothing will quench."<sup>16</sup>

However the mystic experiences the dark night, it is a period of disharmony, of anguish, tribulation, and loneliness as the self undergoes the final purification.

The function of this episode of the Mystic Way is to cure the soul of the innate tendency to seek and rest in spiritual joys; to confuse Reality with the joy given by the contemplation of Reality. It is the completion of that ordering of disordered loves, that transvaluation of values, which the Way of Purgation began.<sup>17</sup>

The dark night calls the mystic to surrender completely to the process of transformation. In that surrender, the "Transcendent Self has invaded more and more of the seat of personality,"<sup>18</sup> and the self has ceased to be its "own center and circumference."<sup>19</sup> For some the surrender is a "passive purification" during which the self does nothing, but let life have its way. For others it is a time of strenuous activity and moral conflict both of which are directed to the goal of "self-abandonment." Either way, the result is the same: "the self which comes forth from the night is no separated self, conscious of

the illumination of the Uncreated Light, but the New Human, the transmuted humanity, whose life is *one* with the Absolute Life of God."<sup>20</sup>

The "mystic death" or Dark Night is therefore an aspect or incident of the transition from multiplicity to Unity; of that mergence and union of the soul with the Absolute which is the whole object of the mystical evolution of man. It is the last painful break with the life of illusion, the tearing away of the self from that World of Becoming in which all its natural affections and desires are rooted, to which its intellect and senses correspond; and the thrusting of it into that World of Being.<sup>21</sup>

The *Dark Night of The Soul* is the experience of the final purification, of rooting out and letting go of the last remnants of selfhood and illusions. For Jung this final purification is a process of the renewal of the psyche, the construction of a new orientation free from the projections of the personal and collective unconscious, and based on the balancing of the functions. This renewal is symbolized in the alchemical images *Death, The Ascent of The Soul, Purification, and The Return of The Soul*.

## Individuation

### Death

The sixth image depicts the death of the King and Queen who lie in a coffin, their two bodies melted into a single body with two heads. The marriage bath of the fourth picture has turned into a funeral. "Here the King and Queen are lying dead / In great distress the soul is sped."<sup>22</sup> The flow of energy that previously occurred within each, and between them in the *coniunctio*, has ceased. "[T]he pair who together represent body and spirit are dead, the soul [has parted] from them 'in great distress'."<sup>23</sup> With the absence of "the soul"

comes blackness and death, "the dark abyss yawns". This death symbolizes "the total extinction of consciousness and the complete stagnation of psychic life, so far as this is capable of consciousness."<sup>24</sup> This extinction occurs because with the integration of projections, "the personality becomes so vastly enlarged that the normal ego-personality is almost extinguished."<sup>25</sup>

But this extinction does not mean that life has ceased, rather it signals " '[c]orruptio unius generatio est alterius'—the corruption of one is the generation of the other."<sup>26</sup> This "other" is a new psychic orientation, symbolized by the single body that is the outcome of the merging of the king and queen, the conscious and the unconscious, and the opposites within the unconscious. A new personality begins to evolve, a composite of the conscious mind or ego-personality and the unconscious. "Since [this new personality] transcends consciousness it can no longer be called 'ego' but must be given the name of '[S]elf' ... [which] is both ego and nonego, subjective and objective, individual and collective, ... the 'uniting symbol' which epitomizes the total union of opposites."<sup>27</sup>

### The Ascent of The Soul

In the seventh image *The Ascent of The Soul*, a single soul ascends heavenward from the King-Queen body. This is a picture of the "decomposition of the elements ... and the collapse of the existing ego-consciousness"<sup>28</sup> brought about by the reclamation of the remaining projected contents of the unconscious and by the revelation of the darkest of the personal and collective shadow. With the collapse, there comes a dark

state of extreme disorientation; "in the truest sense of the word, [it is] an utterly soulless condition."<sup>29</sup> Jung suggests that this condition parallels the *nigredo* described by the mystic St. John of the Cross and the medieval alchemists.

Self-knowledge is an adventure that carries us unexpectedly far and deep. Even a moderately comprehensive knowledge of the shadow can cause a good deal of confusion and mental darkness. ... For this reason alone we can understand why the alchemists called their *nigredo* melancholia, 'a black blacker than black', night, an affliction of the soul, confusion, etc., or, more pointedly, the 'black raven.' For us the raven seems only a funny allegory, but for the medieval adept it was, as we have said, a well-known allegory of the devil.<sup>30</sup>

This aspect of individuation also parallels the experience of the alchemists and of St. John of the Cross in its positive aspect. St. John experienced this "spiritual night of the soul as a supremely positive state, in which the invisible—and therefore dark—radiance of God comes to pierce and purify the soul."<sup>31</sup> In individuation, a similar experience occurs. As the individual examines and reclaims the contents of the unconscious, in the midst of "the dark of the night," "at the critical moment, a 'saving' thought, a vision, an 'inner voice', [comes] with an irresistible power of conviction and [gives] life a new direction."<sup>32</sup> For Jung these are archetypal experiences. They represent "the birth of the 'divine child' or—in the language of the mystics—the inner man."<sup>33</sup>

### Purification

As the personal and collective shadow become conscious, the knowledge of "higher things" contained in the archetypes is acquired. This is symbolized in the eighth image by dew falling from a cloud onto the King-Queen body. This is "the dew falling from heaven, the divine gift of illumination and wisdom."<sup>34</sup> With this gift comes the final removal of the "black darkness" brought about by the collapse of the ego-consciousness. The title of the picture is *Purification*, it depicts the process that readies the body for governance by "the spirit of truth."

In his commentary on *Purification* Jung discusses the basis of this governance: the balancing of the functions<sup>35</sup>. First he cautions against an unbalanced intellectual approach to the task of integrating the conscious and the unconscious. He writes: "the books must therefore be "destroyed" lest thinking impair feeling and thus hinder the return of the soul."<sup>36</sup> In *Memories, Dreams Reflection* Jung specifies the limitations of reason. "Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known ... The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes. (MDR 302) For Jung it is feeling that "always binds one to the reality and meaning of symbolic contents,"<sup>37</sup> and that "imparts an abiding value to anything we have understood."<sup>38</sup>

Jung describes the relationship between thinking, intuition, feeling, and sensation.

Hence an attitude that seeks to do justice to the unconscious as well as to one's fellow human beings cannot possibly rest 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 *fontion du reel*, i.e., sensation, the sensible perception of reality.<sup>39</sup>

Jung explains another role of affect in the activities of the alchemists: the alchemists thought that their work "demanded not only laboratory work, the reading of books, meditation, and patience, but also love."<sup>40</sup>

The fourth function, intuition, Jung describes as imaginative activity. "Intuition gives outlook and insight; it reveals in the garden of magical possibilities as if they were real."<sup>41</sup> For Jung the process of individuation continues past this point only if the individual reclaims and integrates each function of the personality. With thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting as part of the individual's approach to this task, the "ever deeper descent into the unconscious suddenly becomes illumination from above."<sup>42</sup> This is the purification of the divine influx, symbol of the "eternal" truths of the archetypes coming to consciousness.

With this consciousness, the over-valuation of the ego that existed before the individual integrated the contents of the unconscious has been checked. This does not mean that the ego no longer exists for "[t]he unconscious can be integrated only if the ego holds its ground."<sup>43</sup> The ego is absolutely necessary because it is the condition and the content of consciousness. What has occurred is a reconstruction of the psyche which marks the completion of *unio mentalis*, the first of the three stages of the *coniunctio*, and signals the entrance into the second stage in which the spirit is reunited with the body.<sup>44</sup>

The reuniting of the spiritual position with the body obviously means that the insights gained should be made real. ... The second stage of conjunction therefore consists in making a reality of the man who has acquired some knowledge of his paradoxical wholeness.<sup>45</sup>

This second stage described by Dorn corresponds to the ninth alchemical image of the *Rosarium Philosophorum*.

### The Return of The Soul

In the ninth image, the soul is seen diving from heaven to breathe life into the dead body of the King-Queen. "[T]he body has taken on 'quintessential' or spiritual form and consequently, as a *corpus mundum* (pure substance), is not so very different from spirit. It may shelter spirit or even draw it down to itself."<sup>46</sup>

This process of the reanimation of the body is, for Jung, a transcendental process that occurs in the psychic non-ego. With it archetypal events are projected in the form of fantasies, dreams, hallucinations, and some kinds of religious ecstasy. These projections are often "immemorially strange and unknown, and yet we seem to have known them from everlasting; they are also the source of a remarkable fascination that dazzles and illuminates at once. They draw us like a magnet and at the same time frighten us."<sup>47</sup> One of the archetypes that is projected is the Self-archetype about which Jung writes: "The absorptive power of the archetype explains not only the widespread incidence of this motif [*coniunctio*] but also the passionate

intensity with which it seizes upon the individual, often in defiance of all reason and understanding."<sup>48</sup>

While the experience of the Self-archetype may be one of illumination and ecstasy, there is a potential danger which is experienced as a fear of being overwhelmed or poisoned by the spontaneous projection of archetypal events. This fear is not unfounded, for in this process, there exists the possibility of the complete identification of the ego with the unconscious. The alchemists called this experience *immunditia*, or pollution. If this occurs, a state resembling death ensues in which the ego is overpowered by the archetypal truths that it has become conscious of, the unique ego of the individual is suppressed and the individuation process is arrested.

The ego lives in space and time and must adapt itself to their laws if it is to exist at all. If it 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.<sup>49</sup>

While describing the power of the unconscious as often being feared as some kind of sinister force, Jung also writes about the "gifts of the unconscious". Dorn, whose alchemical writings he uses to substantiate this, symbolizes this process as a mixing of a variety of ingredients with the individual's chemical *caelum*. *Caelum* was the term used to describe "the heavenly substance in the body, the truth."<sup>50</sup> Jung interprets this as the projection of the Self-archetype from the unconscious of the alchemist. The ingredients mixed

with the *caelum*, are symbols of the gifts of the unconscious. One of these ingredients is honey.

In the honey, the sweetness of the earth, we can easily recognize the balsam of life that permeates all living, budding and growing things. It expresses, psychologically, the joy of life and the life urge which overcomes and eliminates everything dark and inhibiting. Where spring-like joy and expectation reign, spirit can embrace nature and nature spirit.<sup>51</sup>

Jung describes the process of the separation of the empirical ego from the "eternal and universal man"<sup>52</sup> as a painstaking self-education and self-evaluation. He writes: "The process of psychological differentiation is no light work; it needs the tenacity and patience of the alchemist, who must purify the body from all superfluities in the fiercest heat of the furnace, and pursue Mercurius 'from one bride chamber to the next'."<sup>53</sup> The end result of the process is the establishment of the universal Self as the center of the psyche.

[T]he whole of the conscious man is surrendered to the [S]elf, to the new center of personality which replaces the former ego. Just as, for the mystic, Christ takes over the leadership of consciousness and puts an end to a merely ego-bound existence, so the *filius macrocosmi*, the son of the great luminaries and of the dark womb of the earth, enters the realm of the psyche and seizes the human personality.<sup>54</sup>

### Comparison

In both the *Dark Night of The Soul* and the psychological process portrayed by the sixth alchemical image *Death*, a transition stage is symbolized. In the Mystic Way the dark night represents a transition from the self as "center and circumference" to the Transcendent Self as the "seat of the personality."<sup>55</sup>

This implies a remaking of the individual which occurs through the "transmutation of the *whole person*"<sup>56</sup> a process begun with the *Purification of the Self*. Underhill stresses a significant difference between the initial stage of purification and the final purification of the dark night. In the former the individual "transcended the normal perceptive power of 'natural' man, immersed in [the reality of] the illusions of sense" (Ibid). In this final purification the self must "*be reality*."<sup>57</sup>

The alchemical image *Death* depicts a similar state of transition from the ego as the center of consciousness to the Self as the center of consciousness. The process by which this occurs is apparent in *The Ascent of The Soul* which portrays "the collapse of the existing ego-consciousness"<sup>58</sup> brought about as the darkest of the personal and collective shadow are brought into consciousness.

The experience associated with Jung's collapse of ego-consciousness and with Underhill's transmutation of the self is expressed in the same terms - the *nigredo*, which Jung calls "an utterly soulless condition"<sup>59</sup> and describes as bringing "decay, suffering, death, and the torments of hell visibly before the eyes of the alchemist [and casting] the shadow of its melancholy over his own solitary soul."<sup>60</sup> Underhill describes the *nigredo* as "bitter suffering."<sup>61</sup> This "bitter suffering" takes several characteristic forms: a sense of total abandonment or privation - the withdrawal of God from consciousness; the "black conviction of sin" - the painful awareness of the imperfection and hopelessness of the self; emotional and intellectual lethargy and the loss of

control in inclinations and thoughts which Underhill calls the "confusion and ignorance of the Dark;" and the unendurable desire for union with ultimate reality - the "ecstasy of deprivation" of the "dark rapture".

Both Underhill and Jung cite St. John of the Cross to explain the experience of this phase: Underhill to describe the negative aspect - "the shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt;"<sup>62</sup> and Jung to describe the positive aspect - "the invisible—and therefore dark—radiance of God comes to pierce and purify the soul."<sup>63</sup>

For Underhill the primary focus of the dark night is "a total abandonment of the individualistic standpoint, of that trivial and egotistic quest of personal satisfaction which thwarts the great movement of the Flowing Light"<sup>64</sup> In the *Illumination of The Self* the consciousness of the transcendent was experienced primarily as an increased in personal vision and joy. In this phase a spiritualized "I" existed which was the subject of that vision and joy. The journey through the dark night sees the transmutation of that "I" with its dependence on personal joys. St. Catherine of Genoa describes this as knowing no selfhood except in God. "My *me* is God."<sup>65</sup> "The self which comes forth from the night is no separated self, conscious of the illumination of the Uncreated Light, but the New Man, the transmuted humanity, whose life is *one* with the Absolute Life of God."<sup>66</sup> The *Dark Night of The Soul* is a transition from "multiplicity to Unity."<sup>67</sup>

For Jung, the focus is not abandonment or dissolution, but integration. This integration occurs in relation to two aspects: the remaining projections of the personal and collective shadow and archetypal contents of the unconscious; and the integration of the four psychological functions - thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. With this integration the intellect, the emotions which "impart an abiding value to anything we have understood,"<sup>68</sup> sensations which perceive values, and intuition which "reveals the Magical possibilities as if they were real"<sup>69</sup> become the mechanisms of experience. The individual who emerges from the "dark" in Jung's system has integrated thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. With the integration of the functions the self is experienced as one, a prerequisite condition for the final phase of individuation. "[Y]ou will never make the One unless you become one yourself."<sup>70</sup> This integrated oneness represents a new "spiritual position" into which the knowledge of the archetypes arise. One aspect of this archetypal knowledge is what Jung calls "the spirit of truth,"<sup>71</sup> the "divine gift of illumination and wisdom,"<sup>72</sup> the Self-archetype of unity and wholeness.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.
  - <sup>2</sup> Underhill. p.401.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.388.
  - <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.388.
  - <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.389.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>9</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.389.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.390.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.391.
  - <sup>12</sup> Angela of Foligno as quoted in Underhill, p.392
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.393.
  - <sup>14</sup> St.Teresa as quoted in Underhill, p.392-393.
  - <sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.394.
  - <sup>16</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.395.
  - <sup>17</sup> Underhill, p.395.
  - <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.402.
  - <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.397.
  - <sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.402.



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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.401.

<sup>22</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.467.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. par.468.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. par.469.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. par.472.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. par.467.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. par.474.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. par.476.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.741.

<sup>31</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.479.

<sup>32</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.254.

<sup>33</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.482.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. par.484.

<sup>35</sup> Jung identifies four basic psychological functions: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. He maintains that in most personalities one of these functions predominates. The remaining functions are developed to varying degrees. The dominant function or functions determine the individual's orientation to the world.

<sup>36</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.488.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. par.489.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. par.488.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. par.486.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. par.490.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. par.492.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. par.493.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. par.503.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>45</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.679.

<sup>46</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.499.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. par.501.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. par.502.

<sup>50</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.697.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. par.698.

<sup>52</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.502.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. par.503.

<sup>54</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.704.

<sup>55</sup> Underhill, p.397.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.388.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>58</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.476.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. par.476.

<sup>60</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.493.

<sup>61</sup> Underhill, p.389.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.389

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.479.

<sup>64</sup> Underhill, p.395.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.396.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.402.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.401.

<sup>68</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.488.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. par.492.

<sup>70</sup> Dorn as quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.753.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. par.742.

<sup>72</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.484.

## Chapter VIII

## Unification

*"Without going out of his door one can know the universe. Without looking out his window, a man can perceive the heavenly Tao."*

*Lao-tzu*

## The Mystic Way

The Unitive Life.

The fifth and final phase of the Mystic Way is *The Unitive Life*. Underhill describes this from two points of view: from a psychological one and from a transcendent one. From a psychological perspective, this phase represents the final establishment of a higher form of consciousness. "The deepest, richest levels of human personality have now attained to light and freedom. The self is remade, transformed, has at last unified itself; and with the cessation of stress, power has been liberated for new purposes."<sup>1</sup>

Underhill quotes H. Delacroix, an early twentieth-century writer on mysticism who describes this state of union as the suppression of the ordinary self and the establishment of a superior personality. He says that this process is the abolition and replacement of the "primitive consciousness of selfhood" by a wider consciousness which involves "the total disappearance of selfhood in the divine, the substitution of a Divine Self for the primitive self."<sup>2</sup>

Using the language of psychologists, Underhill explains this formation of a new perspective and personality as the resolution of the dualistic perspectives of the human experience. She ascribes this resolution to the uniting of the transcendental self and the surface self. When this occurs the individual is truly *one*, manifesting what Underhill describes as the hallmarks of the union: inner strength, immovable peace, and the ability to deal with the circumstances of life.

For the mystic the unitive life is experienced from a reality formed by a specific set of beliefs. It is translated into becoming *one* with the transcendent reality, with God. "[U]nion with God, has now been finally established: [the] self, though intact, is wholly penetrated—as a sponge by the sea—by the Ocean of Life and Love to which [the mystic] has attained."<sup>3</sup>

Underhill notes two particular articulations of the mystic's experience of union. In the first, it is described as a *deification*—to "partake directly of the Divine Nature."<sup>4</sup> This expression is used primarily by the mystic who apprehends divine reality as a state or place rather than a person. In the writings of these mystics, the symbols of rebirth and transformation are used to describe this experience. The result of deification is the birth of a deified person. Simeon Metaphrastes writes: "The Body of God deifies me and feeds me, it deifies my spirit and it feeds my soul in an incomprehensible manner."<sup>5</sup>

Underhill discusses the use of the term "deified." She quotes Eckhart whom she suggests assumes the language of deification in its most extreme form: "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I: so that this He and this I become and are one I."<sup>6</sup> This may be misinterpreted as a claim of identification with God but this is not the intention. Underhill suggests that the use of the term deification describes "a transfusion of [the self] by His Self: an entrance upon a new order of life, so high and so harmonious with Reality that it can only be called Divine."<sup>7</sup> "When I shall cleave to Thee with all my being, then shall I in nothing have pain and labour; and *my life shall be a real life*, being wholly full of Thee."<sup>8</sup>

A second symbol of the mystical experience of union is "the perfect union of Lover and Beloved"<sup>9</sup>—a "Spiritual Marriage." This image is most commonly used by individuals who regard divine reality as a person. Descriptions of this union contain personal and intimate expressions that speak not of "self-loss in an Essence, but self-fulfilment in the union of heart and will."<sup>10</sup> While the deification images express a transformation and participation in the life of the divine reality, the marriage images express the "conscious sharing of an inflowing *personal life*"<sup>11</sup> that is greater than the mystic's own life. It symbolizes "Perfect Love"—"a life-long bond ... a close personal union of will and of heart between the free self and that 'Fairest in Beauty'."<sup>12</sup>

With the mystical experience of union comes creative vitality, "an amazing, a superabundant vitality: ... a 'triumphing force' over which circumstance has no power."<sup>13</sup> Underhill's study of the lives of the mystics reveals two

primary expressions of this creative vitality: the production of good works and the founding of spiritual families. Underhill writes: "Our souls are the *media* through which that Triumphant Spiritual Life, which is the essence of reality, forces an entrance into the temporal order and begets children: heirs of the superabundant vitality of the transcendental universe."<sup>14</sup>

## Individuation

### The New Birth

The last representation of individuation contained in the *Rosarium Philosophorum* is *The New Birth*. It depicts the final stage of union—*Unio Mystica*. In this stage the individual realizes the true nature of humanness—that it is a microcosm of the "firmament"; and comes to know "that unknown quantity in man which is as universal and wide as the world itself, which is in him by nature and cannot be acquired."<sup>15</sup> Jung equates this unknown universal quantity with the collective unconscious. Morienus uses the symbol of the arcanum<sup>16</sup> to describe it.

For this substance [i.e., the arcanum] is extracted from you, and you are its ore; in you the philosophers find it, and ... from you they take it. And when you have experienced this, the love and desire for it will be increased in you. And you shall know that this thing subsists truly and beyond all doubt. ... For in this stone the four elements are bound together, and men liken it to the world and the composition of the world.<sup>17</sup>

To experience oneself as the arcanum is to experience oneself as a separate being and at the same time the totality of all things. This is the experience of

the Self, a paradox that defies rational analysis, and where rational analysis fails, an intuitive and emotional experience occurs.

Our paradox, however, offers the possibility of an intuitive and emotional experience, because the unity of the [S]elf, unknowable and incomprehensible, irradiates even the sphere of our discriminating, and hence divided, consciousness, and, like all unconscious contents, does so with very powerful effects.<sup>18</sup>

This unity which is the consummation of the *mysterium coniunctionis*, is the *unio mystica* with the potential world. Jung suggests that it is the same experience that is expressed in the idea of the *unio mystica* of the Western mystics, as well as in the philosophies and religions of India, in the Taoism of China and in Japanese Zen Buddhism. It is an experience of the *unus mundus*, the indivisible totality of the world; "not with the world of multiplicity as we see it but with a potential world, the eternal Ground of all empirical being."<sup>19</sup> From the vantage point of the wholeness of the Self that has been realized through individuation, the individual experiences this universal "Ground". "[I]t is the relation or identity of the personal with the suprapersonal atman, and of the individual tao with the universal tao."<sup>20</sup>

Jung's theory of synchronicity is central to the understanding of his reference to the universal Ground of all empirical being—*unus mundus*. He describes *unus mundus* as the unified reality that is outside of the concept of time and space as conceived by human beings, a reality beyond our cognitive understanding, but within our scope of experience. The idea of *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."<sup>21</sup>

In the paper "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," Jung presents a detailed discussion of this idea. Based on a wide variety of examples of synchronistic events, he isolates two factors present in all occurrences of synchronicity. "a) An unconscious image comes into consciousness either directly (i.e. literally) or indirectly (symbolized or suggested) in the form of a dream, idea, or premonition. b) An objective situation coincides with this content."<sup>22</sup> The objective event named in the second factor, can occur in one of three ways. It may be immediately known to the individual, the psychic state in the observer corresponding to an objective external event. The second way the objective event may occur is at a distance from the observer, outside of the individual's field of perception. In this event, it becomes known at a later time. The third scenario occurs when the external event corresponds to a not yet existent future event that is verified after its occurrence. In each of these situations, no direct causal relationship can be conceived of or found between the unconscious psychic event and the objective occurrence. Synchronistic events occur, in effect, outside time and space as understood by the rational mind. They demonstrate an "acausal orderedness."<sup>23</sup>

This relationship of the events to one another is but one of the key elements of the events. The "meaningfulness" of these events is equally important. In

order for events to be considered synchronistic, they must contain "meaningful parallels."<sup>24</sup> This means that although in isolation they would not necessarily appear related, they are meaningfully related for the individual experiencing them. This may not be understood at a rational level, but the equivalency may instead be experienced. In some situations the external event may be a mirroring of an aspect of the internal psychic content of which the observer is conscious. When the external event is recognized, a sense of equivalency is experienced. In other situations the external event may be recognized as equivalent without a consciousness of a corresponding intrapsychic state. In these situations, the hypothesis that is being employed is "that one and the same (transcendental) meaning might manifest itself simultaneously in the human psyche and in the arrangement of an external and independent event."<sup>25</sup>

With the experience of archetypal contents comes a sense of "depth and fullness of meaning that was unthinkable before."<sup>26</sup> In synchronicity this sense is magnified for two reasons; because archetypal contents have been manifested into consciousness and because a corresponding meaningful objective event has occurred with the realization of the archetypal knowledge. It is an irrational experience of transcendental meaning and wonder.

In addition to a sense of meaningfulness of events, Jung suggests that synchronistic experiences have a numinous charge associated with them. This numinous charge can be linked to the characteristic quality of archetypal

contents. In the paper "On the Nature of The Psyche," Jung explains that with the archetypal content that is part of the synchronistic events, there is a "a mystical aura about its numinosity, and it has a corresponding effect upon the emotions. It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions in the very people who deemed themselves miles above any such fits of weakness."<sup>27</sup>

In a discussion about numbers as external events corresponding to psychic states, he describes this charge in another sense. He writes "[Numbers] are based not on any psychic conditions but on the quality of being themselves, on a 'so-ness' that cannot be expressed by an intellectual concept."<sup>28</sup> He describes numbers as possessing a "relative autonomy" which he parallels to that of archetypes. "They would then have, in common with the latter, the quality of being pre-existent to consciousness, and hence, on occasion, of conditioning it rather than being conditioned by it."<sup>29</sup> This does not mean that the external events that are part of synchronicity are produced by the unconscious archetypes, but that they are on the same continuum that reaches across matter and psyche.

In another discussion Jung describes this numinous quality as being related to a sense of "absolute knowledge." He describes it as a "foreknowledge of some kind." "It is certainly not a knowledge that could be connected with the ego and hence not a conscious knowledge as we know it, but rather a self-subsistent 'unconscious' knowledge which I would prefer to call 'absolute knowledge'."<sup>30</sup> He uses the term "World Soul," as employed by the sixteen-

century philosopher Agrippa, to expand on this concept. "The soul of the world therefore is a certain only thing, filling all things, bestowing all things, binding and knotting together all things, that it might make one frame of the world."<sup>31</sup> With the experience of synchronistic events comes the experience of this "World Soul."

For Jung, the "World Soul" is an *a priori* knowledge, "a causally inexplicable knowledge of a situation which at the time is unknowable."<sup>32</sup> Jung uses the term 'inexplicable' in a unique way. He is not saying that the cause is unknown, but that the cause is not even thinkable in intellectual terms. The knowledge in question rises from the unconscious archetypes and demonstrates that the individual is part of a larger reality. It corresponds to the description of the universe as a "dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns"<sup>33</sup> proposed by modern physicists. In *The Tao of Physics* Fritj of Capra writes: "In modern physics, the universe is thus experienced as a dynamic, inseparable whole which always includes the observer in an essential way. In this experience, the traditional concepts of space and time, of isolated objects, and of cause and effect, lose their meaning."<sup>34</sup>

This loss of traditional concepts propels one into a different dimension. "For the unconscious psyche space and time seem to be relative; that is to say, knowledge finds itself in a space-time continuum in which space is no longer space, nor time time."<sup>35</sup> This is the timeless and spaceless quality of the Self archetype, the experience of which is "eternity" and "ubiquity." In synchronicity, the individual moves beyond the inward integration of the

conscious and the unconscious to a direct encounter with "the patterning of events in nature as a whole, both inwardly and outwardly"<sup>36</sup>. This is an encounter with the ultimate unity of existence—*unus mundus*. To experience synchronically is to touch eternity, an encounter that renders one's life "cosmologically meaningful."<sup>37</sup> As the inner journey of individuation opens to the experience of "God within" the individual comes to the realization that one is coextensive with the totality—"God without."

Jung summarizes the three stages of the alchemical conjunction: "first the turning away from the world of sense, then the turning towards the inner world of the mind and the hidden celestial substance, the image and truth of God, and finally the contemplation of the transcendental *unus mundus*, the potential world outside time."<sup>38</sup>

### Comparison

The final stage of the Mystic Way and Individuation has been reached. The mystic and Jung's individual alike, have journeyed through the landscape of the self and psyche, have known the joy of illumination and transcendence, and the agony of the darkest of the dark. The journey completed, the mystic rests in the union of will and heart with Divine Nature and Jung's individual rests in the wholeness of the Self and the eternal Ground of all being. *The Unitive Life* and *The New Birth* symbolize these resting places.

Underhill's description of *The Unitive Life* from a psychological point of view is, on the surface, highly congruent with Jung's *New Birth*. She describes the personality as having been remade, transformed, unified with itself. This unification represents the resolution of the dualistic perspectives of the human experience in which the surface self and the transcendental self are united. The difference between Underhill's conceptualization and that of Jung noted previously, becomes apparent in her choice of support for this description. She quotes Delacroix who describes this state of union as the abolition of the "primitive consciousness of selfhood" and replacement by a wider consciousness—the Divine Self.

For Jung *The New Birth* represents the integration of the unconscious to the point at which the reality of unity and wholeness of the Self-archetype becomes the center of consciousness. This coincides with Underhill's assertion that a new consciousness is attained. Underhill, quoting Delacroix, says that this new consciousness is the Divine Self; but if one were to adopt Jungian terms it could be called "Self-consciousness."

Underhill's description of the formulation of this new consciousness as being the resolution of the dualistic perspective of the human experience, at first glance parallels Jung's presentation of the transcendent function of the psyche which brings about the union of opposites. For Underhill the resolution of the dualistic perspective of the human experience relates to the mundane—those aspects of humanness that are associated with the physical realm, and to the transcendent—the spiritual ground which contains All. For Jung the

dualistic perspective is a function of ego-consciousness that is itself divided, being cut off from the unconscious.

Underhill's description of *The Unitive Life* from a transcendent point of view is expressed in the theological language of the mystic. The unification of the self is expressed as being penetrated by "the Ocean of Life and Love,"<sup>39</sup> as "the perfect union of Lover and Beloved,"<sup>40</sup> as unification with God. And so it is in Jung's theory of individuation. Individuation has led to unification with "something" greater than the individual. With the Self-archetype consciousness of unity and wholeness, Jung's individual knows the true nature of humanness—that aspect that is as "universal and wide as the world itself"—*unus mundus*. Like Jung, I will leave unanswered the question that asks "Is the experience of the unity and wholeness of the Self-archetype an experience of God?", or "Is the experience of *unus mundus* an experience of God?".

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Underhill, p.416.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.417.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.417.

<sup>4</sup> Underhill, p.418.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.419.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Underhill, p.420.

<sup>7</sup> Underhill, p.420.

<sup>8</sup> St. Augustine as quoted in Underhill, p.420.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.425.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.426.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.428.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.429.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.432.

<sup>15</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.530.

<sup>16</sup> The substance is a reference to the material out of which God made the world.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.529.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. par.532.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. par.534.



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<sup>20</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.762.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. par.767.

<sup>22</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.858.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. par.965.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. par.850.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. par.915.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. par.405.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. par.871.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. par.931.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.931.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. par.858.

<sup>33</sup> Capra, Fritjof. The Tao of Physics. Shambhala. Boston. p.92.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.93.

<sup>35</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.912.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.913.

<sup>37</sup> Jung. Memories. p.252.

<sup>38</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.505.

<sup>39</sup> Underhill, p.417.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.425.

## Chapter IX

## The Joining of the Ways: Comparative Summary

*"The boughs of no two trees ever have the same arrangement."  
Lydia Maria Child*

Underhill describes mysticism as an organic life-process. Her use of the term organic life-process suggests that mysticism is experienced not only by individuals with unique qualities or predispositions but is an integral part of the human life-process. "[M]ysticism may be looked upon as the final term, the active expression, of a power latent in the whole race: the power ... of perceiving transcendent reality."<sup>1</sup> This description of mysticism parallels Jung's description of individuation as "an irrational life-process"<sup>2</sup> that is inherent within each individual.

Underhill further describes mysticism as a process of the *whole* self. In her discussion of the difference between philosophy and mysticism, she describes a process that occurs in the body as well as the mind and which is rooted in the intuitive aspect of the self. The writings of the mystics that Underhill quotes are filled with passion, indicating an affective dimension of mysticism. Similarly, Jung describes individuation as a process that encompasses the totality of the psyche - thought and mind, sensation, feeling, intuition, and instinct. He expresses the limitation of reason as a block to individuation. "Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known ... The more the critical reason dominates, the more

impoverished life becomes."<sup>3</sup> The subjectivity of the experiences associated with individuation and mysticism indicate that they transcend the realm of reason and rationality.

Mysticism is a transition from sense to spirit in which intuition, or the inner experience, becomes the ground of the mystic's reality. Underhill suggests that "[t]he barrier of personality is broken, man escapes the sense-world, ascends to the apex of his spirit, and enters for a brief period into the more extended life of the All."<sup>4</sup> Individuation is also a transition. In this transition the individual moves from a lack of awareness of the influence of the unconscious to the integration of the unconscious into consciousness. Jung describes this as transition from the ego as center of consciousness to the inner experience of the archetypes of the collective unconscious of which the Self-archetype is the organizing principle.

The focus of mysticism is that which lies beyond the visible universe, the reality of the mystic being that invisible universe. Mysticism is "the art of establishing [a] conscious relation with the Absolute."<sup>5</sup> For Jung, individuation is a process of establishing a conscious relation with the personal and collective unconscious contents of the human psyche which leads to a similar end:

The nature of the psyche reaches into obscurities far beyond the scope of our understanding. It contains as many riddles as the universe with its galactic systems. ... [T]he psyche, in its deepest reaches, participates in a form of existence beyond space and time, and thus partakes of what is inadequately and symbolically described as 'eternity.'<sup>6</sup>

When Underhill uses the word love to describe the energy of mysticism, she means "the ultimate expression of the self's most vital tendencies. ... [It is] the total dedication of the will; the deep-seated desire and tendency of the soul towards its Source."<sup>7</sup> The influence of Jung's Self-archetype corresponds to Underhill's concept of love as the desire and the tendency of the soul towards its Source. Jung writes: "[t]he beginnings of our whole psychic life seem to be inextricably rooted in this point, [the Self] and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving toward it."<sup>8</sup>

Underhill describes mysticism as including a distinct psychological experience, an "inward alchemy." "It involves the organizing of the whole self, conscious and unconscious, under the spur of such a hunger; a remaking of the whole character on high levels in the interest of the transcendental life."<sup>9</sup> She calls this process the Mystic Way. This psychological experience of mysticism, has a high degree of congruence with the process of individuation. Like Underhill's inward alchemy, individuation is a process of the reorganization of the psyche. This reorganization involves the unification of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche. Jung depicts these contents as pairs of opposites that "long for unification"<sup>10</sup> Like the hunger that, noted by Underhill, precipitates the organization of the self, the "tension of opposites" results in the unification of the unconscious contents into consciousness.

The psychological process of the Mystic Way and the second stage of individuation that corresponds to it both begin with what Underhill calls the

"emergence of intuitions from below the threshold"<sup>11</sup> and what Jung calls eruptions of the unconscious which confront the ego. These eruptions result in a shift in consciousness: for Jung's individual, bringing an awareness of the unconscious and the recognition of "a supreme goal."<sup>12</sup> For the mystic the eruptions cause a shift from superficial to spiritual consciousness, "to a new and more active plane of being."<sup>13</sup>

In both the Mystic Way and individuation, self-knowledge is the means for the exploration of the self. In the Mystic Way self-knowledge results in the freeing of the self "from the fetters of the senses, from the removal of desire, from the results of environment and worldly education, from pride and prejudice, preferences and distaste."<sup>14</sup> Underhill describes these as aspects of "selfhood" from which the self is freed.<sup>15</sup> In individuation self-knowledge is the means to the integration of the persona and the shadow, to which the previous descriptions of selfhood could be applied. Dorn's description of the primary goal of *unio mentalis* as "the transcendence of the body's affectivity and instinctuality."<sup>16</sup> also accurately reflects the outcome of self-knowledge in the Mystic Way.

As the self is freed the mystic realizes "a conscious harmony with the divine world of becoming."<sup>17</sup> With the integration of the shadow and the persona and with the union of opposites that occurs with the integration of the archetypes that arise from the unconscious, Jung's individual becomes "spirit."<sup>18</sup> The individual realizes a "depth and fullness of meaning that was unthinkable before."<sup>19</sup>

The final union in both the Mystic Way and individuation, is preceded by a period of intense suffering which both the mystics and the alchemists call the "dark night of the soul," *nigredo*. Underhill depicts the dark night as the final phase of the "transmutation of the *whole person*."<sup>20</sup> It is a period of purification in which the remaining vestiges of selfhood are abandoned. For Jung the *nigredo* represents the collapse of ego-consciousness—"an utterly soulless condition."<sup>21</sup>

This final purification makes way for *The Unitive Life* and *The New Birth*. For Underhill *The Unitive Life* represents the "establishment within the field of consciousness ... of spiritual perceptions ... and the raising of the whole self to a condition in which conscious and permanent union with the Absolute takes place."<sup>22</sup> For Jung *The New Birth* represents establishment of the Self as the center of consciousness and with it the realization of the unity of the Self. Inherent within this unity is the experience of the ultimate unity of existence—*unus mundus*.

As has been shown, the primary difference between Underhill's theory of mysticism and Jung's theory of individuation is the means by which the individual is readied for unification. In mysticism, purification is synonymous with perfection. It is a process of purging oneself of imperfections and disabilities, a "getting rid of." This is necessary to be able to adjust to the "needs of the new self and to the transcendent world in which it moves."<sup>23</sup> This process of perfection stands in contrast to the means

proposed by Jung: the integration of the functions of the self and the integration of the contents of the unconscious into consciousness—wholeness.

And so the mystic's journey to the Absolute and journey of Jung's individual to wholeness are completed. The mystic began with the self as the primary informant of reality, Jung's individual began with the ego as the center of consciousness. As the initial purification and integration occurred, the awareness of another reality became apparent. Underhill describes this reality as "the Ground which is of God,"<sup>24</sup> cosmic consciousness. For Jung's individual, this reality was realized with the revelation of the numinous archetypal contents of the unconscious. At this point in both the Mystic Way and individuation, this new reality was "experienced." As the mystic moved to a place of greater perfection and Jung's individual integrated more of the contents of the unconscious, this experiencing became "being." For the mystic this state of being was the result of the reorganization of the self and the shift from "the self as center and circumference" to the Transcendent Self as the "seat of the personality."<sup>25</sup> The mystic became one with and found "being" in "the Ground of God." With the integration of the unconscious and the shift from ego-consciousness to Self-consciousness, Jung's individual found inner unity and wholeness, and "being" in the indivisible totality of the world, the "eternal Ground of all empirical being."<sup>26</sup>



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Underhill. p.73.

<sup>2</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.9i. par.524.

<sup>3</sup>Jung. Memories. p.302.

<sup>4</sup> Underhill. p.74.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.81.

<sup>6</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.414.

<sup>7</sup> Underhill. p.85.

<sup>8</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.398.

<sup>9</sup> Underhill. p.90.

<sup>10</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.7. par.78.

<sup>11</sup> Underhill. p.177.

<sup>12</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.498.

<sup>13</sup> Underhill. p.197.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.224.

<sup>15</sup> In Underhill's later writings the concepts of sin and grace became a prominent aspect of her discussions about the purification process that occurs in mysticism. These concepts are not overtly dealt with in *Mysticism* , and, although outside of the scope of this paper, are an intregal part of Underhill's writings on mysticism. The lack of emphasis placed on them is explained by Armstrong (1975) who suggests that Underhill in the writing of *Mysticism*, made a conscious effort to avoid what he calls "specifically Christian, theological and scriptural language."

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Jung. CW. Vol.14. par.673.

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- <sup>17</sup> Underhill. p.234.
- <sup>18</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.462.
- <sup>19</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.8. par.405.
- <sup>20</sup> Underhill. p.388.
- <sup>21</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.476.
- <sup>22</sup> Underhill. p.91.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.217.
- <sup>24</sup> Underhill. p.233.
- <sup>25</sup> Underhill. p.397.
- <sup>26</sup> Jung. CW. Vol.16. par.534.

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## Appendix A

The Mystic Way		Individuation
	Rosarium Philosophorum	Coniunctio (Dorn)
A. Awakening	I. Mercurial Fountain	
B. Purification of The Self	II. King/Queen III. The Naked Truth IV. Immersion in the Bath	<i>Unio Mentalis</i> (transcendence of the body's affectivity and instinctuality)
C. Illumination of The Self	V. The Conjunction	
D. Dark Night of The Soul	VI. Death VII. The Ascent of the Soul VIII. Purification	
	IX. The Return of the Soul	reunion of <i>unio mentalis</i> with the body
E. The Unitive Life	X. The New Birth	<i>Unio mystica</i>