

THE SACRED MARRIAGE

Module 5

ALCHEMY

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OVERVIEW

Jung wrote extensively on the role of the Anima and Animus in Alchemy. In this module we will explore his ideas and the practical implications of this work.

THE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

Lü Yán, also known as Lü Dongbin (796 CE-1016 CE) was a Tang Dynasty Chinese scholar and poet who has been elevated to the status of an immortal in the Chinese cultural sphere, worshiped especially by the Taoists. Lü is one of the most widely known of the group of deities known as the Eight Immortals and considered by some to be the de facto leader. The legendary Taoist Master taught the Golden Elixir of Life in the ninth century CE—this alchemical formula is amongst the most intriguing and mysterious texts in the whole of Eastern Mysticism. Lü Yán himself attributes it to Kuan Yin-his, who may also have been the original inspiration for the Tao Te Ching the bible of Taoism.

More than a thousand years later, in the early 1920's, a thousand copies of this alchemical text were printed and distributed in Peking, under the name The Secret of the Golden Flower. A copy of this book fell into the hands of Richard Wilhelm, and that is where our story truly begins.

Richard Wilhelm the German sinologist and theologian spent twenty- five years in China making an in-depth study of Oriental culture. He translated the text (as well as the I Ching) and being a personal friend of Carl Gustav Jung, asked him to write a psychological commentary to be included in the published versions in German and English.

In his practice, Jung noticed that the images and themes of the impersonal layer of the unconscious from his patients mirrored fairy tales, myths and religion. He was always looking for comparative material to amplify the experience of his patients. He looked at the Gnostics initially, but what he had at his disposal was too ancient and fragmentary. He found it to be more metaphysical and philosophical and lacking personal experiential data. When Richard Wilhelm sent him the Alchemical text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (TSOTGF), this seemed to be the missing link between Gnosis and modern depth psychology.

All three of these disciplines are based on the collective unconscious. Jung recognized that psychology was a type of container for receiving, containing and transforming unconscious material and this process was reflected in Alchemy. Where Alchemy was an external process, psychology was the internal process of transformation.

THE PARALLELS BETWEEN TSOTGF AND PSYCHOLOGY

A few key concepts from TSOTGF allowed Jung to draw parallels with his system of psychology.

- Most patients brought to therapy an insoluble conflict that could not be resolved through imposing external factors. What Jung noticed is that the psyche of the individual would produce a spontaneous symbol from the unconscious which created a new thing and allowed the patient to adopt a higher and more developed attitude. This symbol would be produced by fate or time, and not from imposing external factors or the will. For Jung, this approach of allowing things to happen, is called in the Chinese text Wu-Wei. Something happens that relativizes it and a consequent change of perspective and a different attitude emerge.
- The Tao is a method of reuniting that which has been separated, which in psychological terms is the unconscious and consciousness, the above and below, the yin and the yang, light and dark. The attainment of conscious life was the union of the two systems. A position, a point that unites the two. A view of both.

- The circular movement, circumambulation of certain objects is the attempt to unite consciousness (ego) and life (the unconscious, nature). The goal is the recovery of a unity that was experienced in the womb, but at a higher consciousness. When this unity is achieved you are in the Tao. TSOTGF speaks of balancing the Intensity Yang (ego) and Extensity Yin (life). William James explains it through the relationship of I and me. I is the point that selects from the stream and me is the stream of consciousness.
- The light mentioned in TSOTGF is acute states of consciousness that uncover areas of the unconscious that are usually covered. It can be compared to the observing ego, reflective and self-observing.
- Symbols are necessary to communicate with the unconscious. When a symbol engages you and you engage a symbol, you become emotionally invested and it brings about feeling. Alchemists engage with alchemy as symbols. They are lured into what is happening in the vessel and this reflects what happens internally in the Alchemist.

Jung spent the rest of his life, until his death at 85, researching Alchemical texts. His personal Alchemical library is

one of the rarest in the world. Much of his research on Alchemy is captured in his book Aion, and other writings on the nature of the Self and the Collective Unconscious.

THE SYZYG

The syzygy is a term Jung used to describe the integrated Anima and Animus. It is bringing into balance these archetypal energies, so that the individual is relating to both the collective unconscious and the collective consciousness.

Wholeness, symbolized by the Mandala, for example, is superior in value to the syzygy. When Anima and Animus are balanced, they form two halves of the totality and create a tension of opposites. This tension gives birth to a third, the divine child, which is the symbol of unity.

PEAK AND VALE

James Hillman, in chapter two of Puer/Senex describes the difference between the Anima and Animus archetypes brilliantly. He uses the symbols of the peak and the vale. The peak is the spiritual pursuit, clarifying, denouncing the ego, leaving the world behind—you can imagine going up the mountain in pursuit of enlightenment. The vale is the valley. The vale is the soul journey, filled with bogs, swamps, rivers, creatures, soil, elements. The vale is the domain of the Anima and the peak is the

domain of the Animus. The peak is about letting go, clarification, a single pursuit; whereas the vale, in contrast, is about the multiple emotions, struggling, grappling and living and loving. The balance between the two is essential. You can see that getting lost in either the vale or the peak is dysfunctional. The path to individuation is to bring about a balance between and integration of the two.

CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS

Rudolf Steiner had a different approach and philosophy, but it adds value to this concept. For him man as Christ consciousness needs to bring balance between two forces, Ahriman and Lucifer. Lucifer is the bringer of light, the pursuit of knowledge and abstraction, whereas Ahriman is the materialistic aspect of human nature. Steiner created a statue where Christ is in the middle and holding tension between Lucifer at the top and Ahriman at the bottom. This visual image also reflects the tension between Anima and Animus.

MYSTERIUM CONIUNCTIONIS

Jung wrote *Mysterium Coniunctionis* in the last years of his life and it is a culmination of his thoughts and research into Alchemy. He started writing it in 1941 and completed it when he was 80 years old in 1955.

Mysterium Coniunctionis is the exploration of the alchemical process reflecting Jung's ideas on individuation. The focus is the process of separation and synthesis of psychic opposites in Alchemy, integrating unconscious into consciousness which is symbolically represented by the masculine and feminine. The goal is to unite the masculine and feminine.

The process involves the de-integration, dissolving and fragmenting of psychic content and then re-integration into the Self, moving the individual gradually towards consciousness. This unity can also be viewed through the image of body and instinct on one hand (Anima) and the archetype on the other (Animus).

THREE STAGES

Murray Stein explains that this process consists of three stages. The initial stage involves the separation of the soul from the body, separating consciousness to allow for reflection on feelings and thoughts, not just the experience of feelings and thoughts. The Anima and Animus create illusions through

thoughts and feelings and extracting this consciousness allows for clarity on the psyche's processes and the nature of your reality.

Stage 1 is the process of self-reflection and working with projection, achieving the Unio Mentalis. The result of this stage is an archetypal inspiration/spiritual position/vision.

Stage 2 is the adaptation of the new attitude and its reintegration into the psyche. Allowing the archetypal ideals to be lived through you brings meaning. Your life becomes art and is lived in the service of the Self. This stage is the Tao as discussed in the Chinese text, The Secret of the Golden Flower.

This is a difficult step, as it is easy to regress back to the original stage. For this stage to work, a symbol is needed to convince the body/instincts to submit to the new spiritual position/archetypal inspiration/vision. To achieve this, it needs an active imagination, engaging in the unconscious fantasies from the perspective of the Unio Mentalis. This is the beginning of the individuation process, where the Self is expressed in time and space.

Stage 3 is the integration of personal and impersonal, the synthesis between the conscious and unconscious. Stage 3 is the union of the personal Tao with the Unus Mundus (universal Tao), the ground of being, the underlying spiritual essence of everything.

QUOTES from Collected Works of Carl Jung

Translated into the language of psychology, the mythologem runs as follows: the union of the conscious mind or ego personality with the unconscious personified as anima produces a new personality compounded of both “ut duo qui fuerant, unum quasi corpore fiant.” Not that the new personality is a third thing midway between conscious and unconscious, it is both together. Since it transcends consciousness it can no longer be called “ego” but must be given the name of “self.” Reference must be made here to the Indian idea of the atman, whose personal and cosmic modes of being form an exact parallel to the psychological idea of the self and the filius philosophorum. The self too is both ego and non-ego, subjective and objective, individual and collective. It is the “uniting symbol” which epitomizes the total union of opposites. As such and in accordance with its paradoxical nature, it can only be expressed by means of symbols. (C. G. Jung Vol 16 par 474)

Our text promises to “reveal the secret of the Golden Flower of the great One.” The golden flower is the light, and the light of heaven is the Tao. The golden flower is a mandala symbol I have often met with in the material brought me by my patients. It is drawn either seen from above as a regular geometric pattern, or in profile as a blossom growing from a plant. The plant is frequently a structure in brilliant fiery colors growing out of a bed of darkness, and carrying the blossom of light at the top, a symbol recalling the Christmas tree. Such drawings also suggest the origin of the golden flower, for according to the Hui Ming Ching the “germinal vesicle” is the “dragon castle at the bottom of the sea.”¹² Other synonyms are the

“yellow castle,” the “heavenly heart,” the “terrace of living,” the “square inch field of the square foot house,” the “purple hall of the city of jade,” the “dark pass,” the “space of former heaven.” It is also called the “boundary region of the snow mountains,” the “primordial pass,” the “kingdom of greatest joy,” the “boundless country,” the “altar upon which consciousness and life are made.” “If a dying man does not know this germinal vesicle,” says the Hui Ming Ching, “he will not find the unity of consciousness and life in a thousand births, nor in ten thousand aeons.” (Vol 13 par 33)

When projected, the anima always has a feminine form with definite characteristics. This empirical finding does not mean that the archetype is constituted like that in itself. The male-female syzygy is only one among the possible pairs of opposites, albeit the most important one in practice and the commonest. It has numerous connections with other pairs which do not display any sex differences at all and can therefore be put into the sexual category only by main force. These connections, with their manifold shades of meaning, are found more particularly in Kundalini yoga, 28 in Gnosticism, 29 and above all in alchemical philosophy, 30 quite apart from the spontaneous fantasy-products in neurotic and psychotic case material. When one carefully considers this accumulation of data, it begins to seem probable that an archetype in its quiescent, unprojected state has no exactly

determinable form but is in itself an indefinite structure which can assume definite forms only in projection. (Vol 9i, par 142)

CONCLUSION

Thank you for participating in our Sacred Marriage course.
We hope you found it enlightening and helpful.

To recap the process of integrating Anima and Animus, it is important to emphasise that this is a lifelong pursuit and not necessarily linear.

This great work starts with working with your projections, separating the personal Anima and Animus imagoes from the archetypal. This is akin to shadow work in that you work within your relationships to identify the illusions that you carry with regards the other and yourself. This process of disillusionment is often painful. Most people start this journey when the external world presents a crisis that confronts them with their beliefs about reality and themselves.

The objective for this process is to separate the individual from the collective by balancing the demands of the external world with the demands of the internal world. This in itself is wrought with tension. Holding this tension of opposites results in the transcendent function manifesting, bringing in a spiritual inspiration or vision. The task then is to start to live this inspiration or vision in your life, filling it with meaning and self-actualising who you are meant to be. This is the individuation journey.

APPLICATIONS

Capture in your journal:

1. Your understanding of the individuation journey.
2. Your personal individuation journey to date.
3. What aspects on integration of Anima and Animus, respectively, you need to focus on to facilitate your continued individuation.
4. Capture your intention for your individuation journey going forward.

REFERENCES

BOOKS

The Mystery of The Coniunctio, by Edward F. Edinger

The Secret of the Golden Flower, translated by Richard Wilhelm, commentary by C.G. Jung

LECTURE SERIES

Understanding the Meaning of Alchemy (Murray Stein lecture podcast series) <https://jungchicago.org/blog/product/stein-alchemy-496-mp3/>

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoMF5zOsbec&t=1207s> (The Syzygy: Anima and Animus, by Carl Jung)

<https://youtu.be/lYF7et3SJQQ> (Marie Louise Von Franz - How Women Can Feel Their Animus)