

The Metaphor of Alchemy and the Alchemy of Metaphor: Working in the Space between Presence and Absence

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Introduction:

Jung's seminal essay, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, marks a radical shift between his earlier and his later work. In that essay he says, "psychology is doomed to cancel itself out as a science and therein precisely it reaches its scientific goal." The context for this remarkable statement is the peculiar and unique quality of psychology in contrast to all other disciplines. "Every other science, he writes, "has so to speak an outside; not so psychology, whose object is the inside subject of all science," (Par 429) including itself. Unlike any other discipline psychology's object of study-the psyche-is also the subject that engages in the study. It is a reflexive discipline in which subject and object fold back upon each other and in so doing cancel out the separation of subject and object. Indeed, in psychology there is no inside space that is the domain of psyche and no outside space that is the domain of matter. On the contrary, the telos of Jung's essay is the claim that the inside is the outside, the outside is the inside; the claim is that psyche is matter and matter is psyche.

This claim rests upon the re-imagining of the archetype as a psychoidal reality. With this introduction of the psychoid archetype any lingering traces of Cartesianism in depth psychology are overcome and we are in a radically new paradigm that requires another way of saying what we know. The psychoid archetype is an ontological shock that requires an epistemological revolution. In this talk I want to describe this epistemological revolution by showing how a

metaphoric sensibility is an alchemical process, which lays a foundation for an ethical epistemology that mitigates the effects of epistemological violence. I realize that this sentence is a piece of plutonium, which needs to be carefully un-wrapped. The place to begin this unwrapping is with the notion of the psychoid archetype

Psychoid Archetype

In his essay Jung develops the notion of the psychoid archetype in a dialogue with quantum physics. The principle of complementarity is at work in both fields. In a long footnote Jung quotes Wolfgang Pauli's comment on his essay: "The epistemological situation with regard to the concepts 'conscious' and 'unconscious' seems to offer a pretty close analogy to the undermentioned 'complementarity' situation in physics." (Par 439, n 130) Analogy, however, seems too weak a term to describe this relation between the material world of physical matter and the psychological world of archetypes and so Jung adds these words of C.A. Meier, who says that between these two fields there is "a genuine and authentic relationship of complementarity." (par 440)

The principle of complementarity, then, operates not only in physics and psychology but also between them. It applies to psyche and matter so that whether an occurrence appears and is understood as a material event or a psychological experience depends upon the attitude of the observer. The age-old dilemma of alchemy resurfaces here. No alchemist would burn his hand if he reached into the flames to rescue the salamander. That salamander roasting in the flames is not an external material fact. In the context of Jung's time, then, it must be an internal idea of mind projected onto matter. For the most part Jung presented alchemy in this Cartesian fashion, but there are a few places where he parts ways with this either/or epistemology. In

Psychology and Alchemy, he gives perhaps his strongest statement on this issue:

“...it always remains an obscure point whether the ultimate transformations in the alchemical process ought to be sought more in the material or more in the spiritual realm. Actually, however, the question is wrongly put: there was no ‘either-or’ for that age, but there did exist an intermediate realm between mind and matter, i.e., a psychic realm of subtle bodies whose characteristic it is to manifest themselves in mental as well as material form. This is the only view that makes sense of alchemical ways of thought, which must otherwise appear non-sensical.” (Vol 12, Par 394)

The psychoid archetype is seeded in Jung’s studies of alchemy. It is the logical conclusion of the images of alchemy as a realm of subtle bodies, which requires an epistemological revolution, a way of knowing that is *neither either this nor that*. Here we enter into the issue of language and the psychologist’s relation to it. The ontological shock of the psychoid realm requires an epistemological revolution.

Language and the Unconscious

The psychoid archetype is the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world. In his essay Jung gives a long description of how the alchemists described the soul of the world as a multitude of fiery sparks and he says at one point that “The hypothesis of multiple luminosities rests partly...on the quasi-conscious state of unconscious contents...” (par 388) What is to be noted here is Jung’s claim that the psychoid archetype is itself a kind of consciousness. This claim in itself is not new for Jung always insisted that the unconscious is an objective reality. What is new, however, is that with the psychoid archetype the unconscious as an autochthonous domain is the deep wisdom of nature. Those

'fiery sparks' are what were once called the *lumen naturae*, the light of nature. With the psychoid archetype, then, the unconscious at the foundation of depth psychology turns out to be the consciousness of nature. In the psychoidal depths where psyche and nature are one, in the *unus mundus* the complex human psyche is led back to nature and as such is led back to its nature. In this regard the broken connection between mind and matter, which I describe in detail in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, is addressed. The psychoid archetype lays a foundation for an ecological therapeutics within which the suffering of the individual can no longer be divorced from the sufferings of nature. As I argued in a recent article, the melting polar ice caps, for example, enter the therapy room with the patient. (Spring, Fall 2008, pp.79-116)

The *lumen naturae* is a dark light, a luminosity in the darkness of matter. In *The Black Sun* (2005) Stanton Marlan presents a well documented critique of Jungian psychology's addiction to light, to insight, to the place that is given to the light of mind. His book addresses the need for a psychology of this darkness. But how does one speak in dark light? How does one translate the light of nature into the light of mind without eclipsing that dark light? How does Psyche illuminate the darkness that cloaks the coming of Eros without forcing Eros to flee? In dark light the psychoid archetype alludes to its presence and eludes our grasp, shows itself and hides itself, reveals and conceals itself. In her preface to *Atom and Archetype*, which chronicles the exchange of letters between Pauli and Jung, Beverley Zabriskie couples what I have called the ontological shock of the psychoid archetype with this epistemological challenge. She writes: "For Jung the common background of microphysics and depth psychology is as much physical as psychic, and so is 'neither', but rather a third thing, a neutral nature which can at most be grasped in hints since in essence its is transcendental." (2001, xli) How does one hint at meaning?

Here is the time for a confession. Since the publication of my first book in 1982 I have been obsessed with this issue of language and soul and more often than not I have despaired of the strain of 'positivism' in psychology's language games. More often than not, therefore, I have turned to the poets, to Rilke whose elegies speak in the gap between Angel and Animal, to Orpheus who is the eponymous poet of the gap, to Eliot who tells us that every attempt to say "Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure," to Wallace Stevens who tells us what the motive for metaphor is and that there are thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, and to Brendan Kennelly who asks "What is a vision?" and who answers, "It is completely normal when you're going through it, odd or tricky when you try to speak of it afterwards" and who adds, "The challenge of 'afterwards' is connected with 'afterwords', how to preserve the normality of the visionary moment without being distorted or even drowned in the familiar sea of Dayenglish." (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 28) I have over the years even defended the idea that the psychologist of the depths is a 'failed poet', and in the 'afterword' to that opening chapter in *The Wounded Researcher*, which is a detailed reading of Jung's essay on the psychoid archetype, I spoke about the end of the age of psychology and the need for a psychology that has no name, for a shift from psychology as a noun to psychological as an adjective. But a key dream, which sent me back into analysis six years ago, and which leaves me on a threshold between the figures of the psychologist and the poet, persuade me that my attempts to locate myself within this issue are rooted more in my own complex and ambivalent relation to psychology and do not take into account that the psychologist of the depths has a different vocation than the poet.

So, I stay in this tension of opposites where I find, for example, someone like Susan Rowland, who in her book *Jung as a Writer*, says such things as "Language is an intervention into psychology, not a neutral medium for it"

(2005, p.79), and Greg Mogensson. In his book, *The Dove in the Consulting Room*, he writes with regard to the language used by the early founders of depth psychology to describe hysteria, "Coming from the fields of medicine and science, they developed a rather loveless language for the love with which they worked," and warming to this point he adds, "analytic writing can suffer from a lack of liberal flourish, imaginative execution, and narrative richness." And, in order not to miss this point, he asks, "Is the borderline patient, so ubiquitous in the literature today, an artifact of the analysts' own dull prose—a jilted form of hysteria, a disintegrated form of the muse?" (2003, p. 192) I am not questioning here the validity of psychology's language. Rather, I am questioning its appropriateness. Do we recognize our suffering and ourselves in the cadences of such language? As I noted in the chapter on writing in *The Wounded Researcher*, "Historically psychological writing has had philosophical and scientific cadences to it, and has too often lacked the cadence and rhythms of the poetic." (2007, 328) In the Essex conference several years ago I took up Mogensson's point and asked if, having laid the hysteric on the couch, we have laid the hysteric on the couch, penetrated her suffering and inseminated it with our heroic loveless words.

But, perhaps more importantly than this issue of the rhythm and cadence that is most suited to soul, my concern with the language of psychology is and has always been its strain of positivism, its tendency to identify its language with its object of study, its tendency toward a literal minded sensibility. In this regard, the wound in *The Wounded Researcher* is the complex that psychology has about soul, its own unconscious attitude toward its own language. Psychology itself is its own problem, or in Wolfgang Geigrich's terms it has its own neurosis.

What I find ironic in all this is that depth psychology begins with the understanding that language itself is the

problem, and yet it seems to exempt itself from this condition. Susan Rowland is again right on target when she notes that Jung's writing "is an attempt to evoke in writing what cannot be entirely grasped: the fleeting momentary presence of something that forever mutates and reaches beyond the ego's inadequate understanding." (ibid, p.3) But how much of Jungian psychology is at home in this ambience of what is always mutating, dissolving, disappearing in the very moment of its appearance? Using the language of psychology for these fleeting epiphanies of soul is like trying to hold water in the palm of one's hand as it inevitably slips from our grasp. Or it is like trying to secure a mist or a fog in our grasp. Or, in an image that came to me in a reverie while walking on a beach, it is like writing at the edge where sand and water meet. Inevitably, the marks one makes in the sand will always be erased by the incoming tides.

And yet the price that psychology pays to stay on the high ground, beyond the incoming tides, is that it falls into becoming a creed, a shelter for true believers. Over and over again Jung warned against this danger. Concerning the practice of psychotherapy, for example, he wrote, "Although we are specialists par excellence, our specialized field, oddly enough, drives us...to the complete overcoming of the specialist attitude, if the totality of body and soul is not to be just a matter of words." The danger of this specialist attitude is its tendency toward dogmatism, and to counteract this drift toward dogmatism he affirms that the hypothesis of the unconscious forces us to acknowledge that "our view of the world can be but a provisional one." (1946, Par 369-370) Without this awareness, dogmatism means "the utter identification of the individual with a necessary one-sided 'truth.'" And, "even if it were a question of some great truth," he adds, "identification with it would still be a catastrophe." (Ibid, Par 425)

Despite his own words was Jung himself guilty of this dogmatism? Probably. Is a dogmatic consciousness inevitable? I have no dogmatic answer to my own question. Recently, however, there has been a lively discussion on the IAJS list about James Hillman unraveling his own project, and, having known James, for nearly thirty years now I suspect that he is and would be very comfortable with this position.

What came as a surprise to me as I was finishing *The Wounded Researcher* was the realization of the connection between this issue of soul and the language of psychology and the issue of ethics. What surprised me was the realization that all the time I was writing a book about ethics, about an ethics that takes the unconscious seriously. In this context, the question about the language of psychology becomes a question about what kind of language is at home with a provisional way of knowing and thus makes a place for the destabilizing effects of the unconscious? What kind of language is at home on the edge between fixing meaning and dissolving it? What kind of language can take hold of meaning and let go of it? What kind of language is at home in alluding to meaning that always eludes us? What kind of language conceals meaning even as it reveals it? My reply to these questions is a way of speaking that is rooted in a metaphoric sensibility, in a sensibility that acknowledges how the metaphor of alchemy teaches us about the alchemy of metaphor.

Alchemy and Metaphor

In *Anatomy of the Psyche* Edward Edinger says of alchemy, "the whole opus is summarized by the phrase "Dissolve and coagulate." (1985, p.47) These two terms refer to the alchemical operations of *solutio* and *coagulatio*. As a formula it is not only pithy, but also profound because it suggests that the movement of the alchemical opus is a circular process—not unlike perhaps the hermeneutic circle?-

-, which holds a tension between fixing and loosening. What in one moment is coagulated is in the next to be dissolved and what is dissolved is to be at some point coagulated again.

In his long description of *solutio*, which refers to the element of water, I want to focus for this talk on three issues. First, Edinger notes "the prospect of *solutio* will generate great anxiety because the hard-won state of ego autonomy is being threatened with dissolution." (49) This anxiety, moreover, is more intense, he says, for a more developed ego than it is for an immature one, an experience that is not unfamiliar to any writer who has slaved over a manuscript only to realize that he or she has to begin again. Second, Edinger singles out love and/or lust as agents of *solutio*. Third, he points out that the operation of *solutio* leads to a new creation. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which is central to *The Wounded Researcher*, so beautifully illustrates these points. Their tale is a story of love, loss, descent, failure to restore what has been lost, dismemberment, and transformation.

Regarding *coagulatio*, which refers to the element of earth, there are two aspects to note with respect to this talk. First, Edinger says, "for a psychic content to become earth means that it has been concretized in a particular localized form: that is, *it has become attached to an ego.*" (83, his italics) Second, he notes, "the striving for power and pleasure (leads to) the conclusion that *desire coagulates.*" (87, his italics). To this striving I would also add the desire for meaning.

These brief remarks already suggest that a fundamental characteristic about the metaphor of alchemy is the way it understands the relation between ego and the contents of psyche. In this relation, what the ego mind coagulates psyche dissolves, as anyone who pays attention to his/her dreams can testify to. Whatever a dream means,

and however it might be interpreted, every dream is a nightly alchemical operation that dissolves the fixed ideas of the ego mind. In this place between ego and psyche, between consciousness and the unconscious where the alchemist works, one is forced to learn the difficult task that what attaches itself to one's ego, and what one's ego attaches itself to, has to be lost. In his reflections on alchemy in relation to the black sun, Stanton Marlan notes that this issue of loss "emphasizes the death aspect of the opus and the powerful reduction of narcissism." (2005, p188), and in his reflections on the mourning process, which, in *The Soul in Grief* (1999) I described as a work of alchemy, Mogenson says, "Losing an object is the psyche's way of finding it" (1992, p 18)

So, in the metaphor of alchemy what is lost is found again and lost again and found, and in that cycle of losing and finding new creations are born. In 'East Coker', one of his Four Quartets, T.S. Eliot applies this alchemical cycle to language:

"There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again: and now under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business."
(1943/1971, p.31)

But perhaps it is our business, at least to endure the experience of loss that nestles within each trying. Dissolve and coagulate! In this work of dissolution and coagulation, which is a wound to the ego's narcissism, to its desire to possess what has first claimed it, the metaphor of alchemy requires an ego consciousness that is able to endure the fact that one can hold onto something only by letting go of it.

The philosopher's stone is the goal of the alchemical opus. But what is that stone? In his meditation on this question David Miller titled his article "The 'Stone' Which Is

Not a Stone.”(1989) This formulation, I would suggest, marries the ontological shock of the subtle world of alchemical images and the epistemological revolution it requires. The Aristotelian principle of identity gives way to difference. Whatever the stone is it is not. The stone that is fixed is dissolved. In the image of the stone that is not a stone the metaphor of alchemy meets the alchemy of metaphor.

The alchemy of metaphor rests within its logic of neither/nor, within the is/is not tension of a metaphor. In this neither/nor space a metaphor, according to the poet and literary critic Howard Nemerov, “ stands somewhat as a mediating term between a thing and a thought.” An example from him vividly illustrates this point:

While I am thinking about metaphor, a flock of purple finches arrives on the lawn. Since I haven't seen these birds for some years, I am only fairly sure of their being in fact purple finches, so I get down Peterson's *Field Guide* and read his description: 'Male: About size of House Sparrow, rosy-red, brightest on head and rump.' That checks quite well, but his next remark—'a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice'—is decisive: it fits. I look out the window again, and now I *know* that I am seeing purple finches.

That's very simple So simple, indeed, that I hesitate to look any further into the matter, for as soon as I do I shall see that its simplicity is not altogether canny. Why should I be made certain of what a purple finch is by being led to contemplate a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice? Have I ever dipped a sparrow in raspberry juice? Has anyone? And yet there it is, quite certain and quite right. Peterson and I and the finches are in agreement. (1972 p.33, his italics)

Reflecting on metaphor in my first book, I said, "A metaphor is no more a question of perception than it is a question of conception." (1982,2001, p.173) In this regard, Nemerov sees the purple finch not with but through the eye. That difference comes from William Blake who said you are led "to believe a lie when you see with, not through the eye." (The Everlasting Gospel, c1818, sec. 5, l. 101). The lie here refers to the move that would reduce perception to the anatomical eye. Such an account would amount to an explanation in terms of literal facts and would miss the point that the vision/image that a metaphor opens up does indicate that there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball, to borrow a felicitous phrase from the philosopher of science Norwood Hansen.(1972) For Hansen even the facts of empirical science rest upon a way of seeing, upon a shared, collective, root metaphor.

So, the purple finch is not a fact in the same way that the stones in Nemerov's garden are, for should he in some fit of empirical frenzy rush into the garden and take hold of the bird his hand would not drip with juice. Moreover, Nemerov sees the purple finch over there in the garden. He directs his gaze outward toward the world, or perhaps it is closer to the phenomenology of the experience to say that his gaze is drawn into the garden. But however we say it, the point is that he does not divert his gaze and turn inward toward mind. The purple finch is not an idea. He is thinking about metaphor and the purple finches draw him out of himself toward them and pose a question.

We have here, as Nemerov says, an experience that is not quite canny because it takes us beyond the usual dichotomies of things and thoughts, facts and ideas. Indeed, the purple finch is quite uncanny because it undoes the familiar logic of either/or. Like the alchemists of old, Nemerov is not thinking in terms of either/or. He is in the intermediate realm between mind and matter, the realm of

the image, the realm of the subtle body of metaphor.
(Romanyshyn, 2002, pp 89-108)

Nemerov sees the purple finch through the image of 'a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice.' Through the image, which is a way of seeing and not something to be seen, a metaphor opens an intermediate world. This intermediate world of the metaphor, which is more subtle in its texture than a fact and less 'airy' in its presence than an idea, is as subtle as the imaginal world described by Henry Corbin. The imaginal world, he says, is "the intermediate world...between the intellectual and the sensible, in which the Active Imagination as *imaginatio vera* is an organ of understanding mediating between intellect and sense." (1997, p.xvi) In this intermediate space the image quality of a metaphor aligns with the metaphoric quality of the alchemical image and in this respect a metaphor, like alchemy itself, works in the space between the empirical sensibility of the sciences and the logical sensibilities of philosophy. It works in the domain of psychological life on its terms: figurative, symbolic, metaphoric.

A purple finch is a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice. But that is neither a fact nor an idea and in this logic of neither/nor the 'is' of the claim made by the metaphor is always dissolved by the 'is not.' The subtle world of the metaphor is, we could say, a presence haunted by absence. But that absence is not without its own power. In its alchemical power to dissolve what is affirmed and thereby open the imagination to further possibilities, we might say it is a pregnant void. This poem by Lao Tse makes this point:

We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is only on the space where there is nothing
That the utility of the wheel depends.
We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is only on the space where there is nothing
That the utility of the vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
And it is on those spaces where there is nothing
That the utility of the house depends.
Therefore just as we take advantage of what is,
we should recognize the utility of what is not."
(In The WR, 318-19)

Like Lao Tse's wheel, clay vessel and house, we put words together and know that what we see is a purple finch, but it is only in that space where there are no words, the space carved open by the absent 'is not' that the utility of the metaphor depends. A purple finch *is* a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice because it *is not* a sparrow dipped in raspberry juice. What 'is not' gives presence to what 'is.' What is absent makes manifest what is present.

This power of the metaphor to open the imagination to those possibilities that are present in what is absent, its power to liberate consciousness from its addictions to fixed, coagulated systems of thought has clinical implications. In my own clinical work, for example, I regard the symptom as a presence haunted by absence. The symptomatic body is a gestural field and in that field between patient and therapist the patient's symptoms embody a figure whose gestures are an appeal to some other who no longer reflects them. They present the figure who is haunted by an absence and who through those gestures asks the therapist to be that absent other. The gestures are an enacted but unspoken metaphor: 'You are, they repeat, the dead mother, or you are the hated tyrant.'

As a presence haunted by absence, then, the symptom is an unconscious metaphor, and the task of the therapist, who must work on the knife-edge of disappointment between the person who comes to therapy and the figures who come for it, is to help the patient create a new body of understanding. In doing so, the therapist must make who is absent present by refusing to be that absent other. In doing so, the issue is not just a question of 'why' the patient has

this or that symptom, which often leads only to a regressive move in search of causes. The question is also 'who' is haunting the symptomatic display of the gesture, who is present as an absence. This is, of course, a tricky business, which requires the therapist to be able to help the patient endure the grief of loss, and which makes all therapy grief work. (RR-Psychotherapy as Grief Work in Ways of the Heart; The Body in Psychotherapy: Contributions of Merleau-Ponty, in press) Moreover what is true of the symptom for the individual also is true for collective, cultural symptoms. They too function as unconscious metaphors, metaphors we live by. They function as collective projections.

In the alchemical structure of the 'is/is not' a metaphor is a form of 'liberating negation.' It is also a form of subtle speech, which in alluding to what is always elusive invites one to play with the possibilities in the 'is not'. A metaphoric sensibility nourishes the play of imagination, the true organ of access to the imaginal world as Corbin says, the landscape of the soul. In the realm of psyche, then, one has to learn how to play by developing this other sensibility and one has to learn its language. One also has to learn to be comfortable with the fact that in the domain of the psyche language succeeds because it fails and that in this acceptance its failure is its success. (Romanyshyn, 2002, pp. 72-88)

To close these remarks on metaphor I want to call upon Wallace Stevens and cite two of his poems. The first is "The Motive for Metaphor." It offers, I believe, a fine example of how the motive for metaphor is rooted in the alchemy of metaphor. The second poem is "Thirteen ways of Looking at a Blackbird." It points to the potential ethical dimension of a metaphoric sensibility.

The Motive for Metaphor

You like it under the trees in autumn

Because everything is half-dead.
The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves
And repeats words without meaning.

In the same way, you were happy in spring,
With the half color of quarter-things,
The slightly brighter sky, the melting clouds,
The single bird, the obscure moon---

The obscure moon lighting an obscure world
Of things that would never be quite expressed,
Where you yourself were not quite yourself
And did not want or have to be,

Desiring the exhilaration of changes:
The motive for metaphor, shrinking from
The weight of primary noon,
The ABC of being,

The ruddy temper, the hammer
Of red and blue, the hard sound—
Steel against intimation—the sharp flash,
The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X.

The motive for metaphor touches two seasons of the soul, autumn and spring, pivotal moments when summer is dissolving into winter and then winter into summer, seasons of transformation. In these pivotal moments how does one give words to a world that is neither alive nor dead and to the wind, limping like a cripple, which sings songs that have lost their meaning? Or how does one find the words for quarter-things, for the display of things that are not quite themselves, where the sky is neither bright nor dark but qualified in comparison with some other sky that is alluded to, a sky that is present in its absence, a slightly brighter sky that haunts the presence of the sky that appears? Or how does one speak to the clouds that melting are already disappearing even as they appear? And what about speaking

in a light that is obscure, in the dark light of the moon that lights a world that is itself obscure, where things never quite express or show themselves? And how do you do this when you are not quite yourself? These seasons of the world, which are landscapes of the soul, are the soil of a language that dissolves words spoken by a mind, which in its bright splendor is like the world at noon when the sun at its zenith casts no shadows. From this soil are born words that intimate meaning, suggest something, hint at it and in doing so flee from the hammer blows that shape being/soul into coagulated and definite forms and fix their place with a fatal, dominant X. From this soil is born the motive for metaphor.

The second poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, I used in the final chapter of *The Wounded Researcher* to create a fable. In this fable I asked the reader to imagine a conference of experts called together to define what a blackbird is. Each stanza, then, are their respective statements. Although none of the thirteen statements are couched in the is/is not form of a metaphor, each crafts an image that invites a way of seeing a blackbird. Each of the thirteen stanzas alludes to what a blackbird is and taken together each stanza keeps the meaning of the blackbird elusive. In this respect we could say that the poem is an alchemical vessel in which each ingredient/stanza dissolves the previous ones as it coagulates its own meaning.

But, in addition to the above, this poem taken as a fable about metaphor shows us that each statement is a perspective and as such each reflects who is speaking. Each image that is offered is a way of inhabiting a point of view, a way of taking up residence in one's image of the blackbird. Indeed, that is what a metaphor is and what it does. It is a perspective that mirrors the one who makes the metaphor. Every metaphor implicates the knower in the known. Every metaphor is a confession of sorts and as such every metaphor tells us as much about the 'metaphorician' as it does as about what is 'metaphored.' As a riff on Stevens's

poem we might ask, "how many ways are there of looking at Jung?" and in each confession discover as much about the Jungian who makes it as about Jung.

The point of this fable, however, is the question that it poses: "Which perspective on the blackbird is true, correct, the best, the one that is right?" Is the blackbird the eye that is the only thing that moves among twenty snowy mountains? Is the blackbird the one that sits in the cedar-limbs when it is evening all afternoon and when it was snowing and was going to snow? What is at stake here is whether one is conscious that one is always within some perspective, myth, dream, fantasy or complex about the other or unconscious about it. If the latter is the case, then the metaphor functions as a complex projection, and one identifies one's unconscious perspective with reality. Nothing is dissolved and one stays fixed within one's position. But if the former is the case and one knows that one is always in some perspective, myth, dream, fantasy, complex about the other, even if one does not know what that is, then the possibility of and necessity for dialogue arises. The other then becomes the alchemical agent who dissolves one's coagulated point of view. In this alchemy of metaphor one's consciousness is transformed from bloody literal mindedness to a metaphoric sensibility. Is not this development of a metaphoric sensibility that always knows it is in some perspective, myth, dream fantasy complex, even if it does not know what that is, the alchemy of psychotherapy? Is not this transformation the very process of psychotherapy where the therapist is the other as witness who, through skill and luck, makes a place for the patient to dialogue his/her own fixed perspectives, with the others within and without?

Above I spoke of bloody literal mindedness and I did so with intention. Violence is the failure of imagination and in the bodies of knowledge we create we commit epistemological violence to the degree that we forget the perspectives within which those bodies of knowledge are

made and apply. In *The Wounded Researcher* I proposed that the development of a metaphoric sensibility is a matrix for the development of an ethical epistemology, because it opens the play of imagination to the 'is not' that haunts what 'is' and in so doing requires that one always takes into account the unconscious dynamic that informs one's complex perspectives. Eric Neumann makes this point in the following way:

"The old ethic is a partial ethic...it fails to take into consideration or to evaluate the tendencies and effects of the unconscious...Within the life of the community, this takes the shape of the psychology of the scapegoat; in international relations it appears in the form of those epidemic outbreaks of atavistic mass reactions known as war." (1973, p.74)

That the development of this kind of sensibility is difficult is, however, without question. In his essay *On the Nature of the Psyche*, which has been the foundation for my remarks in this paper, Jung stated that the hypothesis of the unconscious "is of absolutely revolutionary significance in that it could radically alter our view of the world." (1946, Par 369) The principle of complementarity in quantum physics has certainly altered our view of the world. It has been an ontological revolution that ties the nature of reality to the perspective of the knower. A metaphoric sensibility is the psychological counterpart of this principle, its epistemological expression. It is that provisional way of knowing that Jung spoke of in relation to the psychoid archetype. Moreover, it adds depth to the principle of complementarity. It brings the unconscious as a dynamic factor into the relation between consciousness and nature. It says, in effect, that the bodies of knowledge we create always cast a shadow. But has depth psychology been equal to this task?

I will not attempt to answer my own question. What I will do, however, is quote this passage from Jung written in 1916 and I will leave it to others to judge if we have made any progress since that time. He writes:

“The present day shows with appalling clarity how little able people are to let the other man’s argument count, although this capacity is a fundamental and indispensable condition for any human community. Everyone who proposes to come to terms with himself must reckon with this basic problem. For, to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the ‘other’ within himself then right to exist—and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity.” (1916/1960, P 187)

If there are thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird how many ways are there for looking at soul?

Afterword

Psychology has a special obligation to develop and to cultivate a metaphoric sensibility, a gnosis that is rooted in the metaphor of alchemy, which holds the tension between the coagulation and dissolution of meaning. This is where we are to be specialists par excellence. We have, as I argued in the final chapter of *The Wounded Researcher*, an ethical obligation to make continuous efforts toward recognizing psychology’s complex relation to its own language and its drifts into dogmatism. This ethical stance is something to be expected from psychology, particularly from a psychology that works in the depths, because all bodies of knowledge are constructed by psychologically complex beings who cast a shadow. If psychology remains indifferent to this complexity in its own discipline, then how can one expect

the philosopher, or the physicist, or the teacher, or the historian, or the literary critic to take up this obligation.

In the depths one has to learn to see with different eyes, with eyes that are accustomed to the dark light of the underworld, with eyes that are able to see the absence that always haunts presence, the invisible in the visible as the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty would say it, the rose that in its blooming is already beginning to fade. It is a matter of education, of being led out of ourselves and into those subtle realms of the psyche, a matter of the heart, which is the organ of the imagination, an education, then, in the humanities and the liberal arts, in history and mythology, in philosophy and literature, in art and music, as well as the sciences.

But no one can become a specialist in all these disciplines. Indeed, the psychologist cannot become even the equal of one who is a specialist in one of them. That, however, is not our task. Our task is to cultivate that way in which we are specialists par excellence, that way of thinking and being that cultivates the liberating negative of the 'is not' in the 'is', that gnosis that dissolves the fixed meanings of any dogmatism. So we are condemned to be generalists, which is particularly difficult in our age of specialization, boundary violators, which is particularly difficult in our age of compartmentalization, thieves and tricksters, which is perhaps not so difficult in our age today, wanderers, drifters, vagabonds, nomads who rent and for a while take up residence in the houses of the philosopher and the poet, the historian and the literary critic, the artist and the scientist, and who in our speech disturb for a while those who live there. No less a philosopher than Paul Ricoeur has acknowledged the disturbing presence of those who live in the abyss and who from time to time make their appearance. He has written:

“For someone trained in phenomenology, existential philosophy, linguist or semiological methods, and the revival of Hegel studies, the encounter with psychoanalysis constitutes a considerable shock, for the discipline affects and questions anew not simply some particular theme within philosophical reflection but the philosophical project as a whole.” (1974, p. 99)

So the psychologist is an irritant, perhaps like the grain of sand in the oyster, an agent of transformation, and as such maybe the unwelcome guest in the homes of others, who borrows their speech and like the old alchemist tortures its meanings into other forms. But we too often forget to torture our own language, to dissolve what we have made. We build our own house from the materials we have taken from others, a flimsy construction. We do psychology but forget to be psychological and then we fall into the same literalist attitude, which Jung described as ‘nothing but’ thinking, that kind of thinking “about something whose nature is unknowable as if it could be known...a thinking or speaking about something in a one-sided or definite manner when a humble reticence or generous agnosticism would (be) more appropriate.” (Miller, p112) Gathering the many adjectives that Jung used to describe thinking about his own thinking in this ‘nothing but’ fashion, David Miller lists the following terms: “repressive, not healthy, neurotic, one-sided, soulless, banal, Mephistophelean, obsessive, infantile, hysterical, destructive, sterile, reductionist, and cheap.” (ibid.)

I would suggest that a metaphoric sensibility is a generous agnosticism. In the ‘is not’ of the ‘is’, in the dissolution of what is affirmed, a metaphoric sensibility situates the psychologist on the side of not knowing. “When Heinrich Zimmer dedicated a book to Jung with the words ‘master of those who know,’ Jung wrote Zimmer, chiding him by saying that ‘your gladdening dedication...however,

keeps it a secret that everything I know comes from my mastery of not-knowing." (Miller, p.113)

I began my talk with Jung's comment that psychology is doomed to cancel itself out and thereby reach its goal. We have no home of our own. Wanderers, wayfarers, vagabonds, nomads, I said above--yes all that and more--homeless orphans too! We have no discipline. The cultivation of a metaphoric sensibility makes us un-disciplined. But that is not an excuse for 'anything goes' kind of thinking. Rather it makes us at our best inspired amateurs, perpetual beginners, which is the way of phenomenology, the style of thinking in which I was first trained, a way of thinking that is always on the way, open to surprise, and, as John Sallis (1973) has noted, the work of imagination.

Now at the end of my talk I am torn between a poem and a dream. Each in its own way offers an image of what has been said. I am inclined toward the poem. It is by Rainer Maria Rilke. It is called 'The Way In' and it is the way out of this talk.

"Whoever you are: some evening take a step
out of your house, which you know so well.
Enormous space is near, your house lies where it
begins,
whoever you are.
Your eyes find it hard to tear themselves
from the sloping threshold, but with your eyes
slowly, slowly, lift one black tree
up, so it stands against the sky: skinny, alone.
With that you have made the world. The world is
immense
and like a word that is still growing in the silence.
In the same moment that your will grasps it,
your eyes, feeling its subtlety, will leave it... (Bly, p.71)

