

# SPIRIT and SOUL

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Some years ago I made the considered decision to retire from the writing and public speaking arena. In agreeing to deliver this talk I was making the first exception and I did so because I use the terms spirit and soul daily and I had felt for a long time that I should be better informed about their meaning and definition. So I forced myself to do the work by contracting to perform in public.

Well, I have done the work; that is to say I have done a lot of work. Enough for me. I have read up at least something of how spirit and soul (or rather the words that have been translated as spirit and soul) have been understood in the Bibles, the Koran, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Kabala, The Golden Bough, Socrates (or his daemon), Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus, Homer, Chaucer, Averroes (or Abdul Ahmed Ibn Roshd), Dante, Goethe, Milton, Shakespeare, Galen, Paracelcus, the Rosicrucians, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and numerous others.

I hope you are appalled at such a reading. However I must tell you that it has not been scholarly at all. I have browsed, skipped, read digests, abstracts, quotations, and would be quite unable to represent all the ideas I have come across. And I have realized it is impossible to capture objective definitions of soul or spirit. These two words, and their equivalents in countless different living and dead languages, swarm everywhere in the oceans of human cultural history; their contextual meanings are protean – the more one grasps at them the more they slip through one's fingers.

**Such difficulties are immediately apparent from recourse to the Oxford English Dictionary, which informs me that 'Soul' is a Teutonic word with no known Indo-Graeco-Latin roots, and means -**

- The principle of life in man or animals; animate existence.
- The principle of thought and action in man, commonly regarded as an entity distinct from the body; the spiritual part of man in contrast to the purely physical. Also occas., the corresponding or analogous principle in animals. Freq. in connexion with, or in contrast to, *body*.
- The seat of the emotions, feelings, or sentiments; the emotional part of man's nature.
- Intellectual or spiritual power; high development of the mental faculties. Also in somewhat weakened use, deep feeling, sensitivity.
- The emotional or spiritual quality of Black American life and culture, manifested esp. in music

- The essential, fundamental, or animating part, element, or feature of something, which has often been termed '**the soul of the world**' [after L. *anima mundi*, Gr.  $\omega\tau\upsilon\text{---}\sigma\omicron\upsilon\lambda\eta$ ], the animating principle of the world, according to early philosophers.
- The spiritual part of man considered in its moral aspect or in relation to God and His precepts.
- The spiritual part of man regarded as surviving after death and as susceptible of happiness or misery in a future state.
- The disembodied spirit of a (deceased) person, regarded as a separate entity, and as invested with some amount of form and personality:

**Clearly 'soul' means something which is almost life itself, that is to say the quality of livingness as opposed to deadness, and which is regarded as having little or no material substance. It is also obvious that the words spirit and soul overlap so much that they seem almost interchangeable.**

**And I learn from the OED that 'Spirit', which is from L. *spiritus* - breathing, breath, air, etc., related to *spirare* to breathe. The earlier English uses of the word are mainly derived from passages in the Vulgate, in which *spiritus* is employed to render Gr. *pneuma* and Heb. *ruah*. The translation of these words by *spirit* (or one of its variant forms) is common to all versions of the Bible from Wyclif onwards.**

It is -

- The animating or vital principle in man (and animals); that which gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements; the breath of life.
- Incorporeal or immaterial being, as opposed to *body* or *matter*; being or intelligence conceived as distinct from, or independent of, anything physical or material.
- The disembodied soul of a (deceased) person, regarded as a separate entity;
- A supernatural, incorporeal, rational being or personality, usually regarded as imperceptible at ordinary times to the human senses, but capable of becoming visible at pleasure, and freq. conceived as troublesome, terrifying, or hostile to mankind.
- **the Spirit of God (or the Lord)**, the active essence or essential power of the Deity, conceived as a creative, animating, or inspiring influence.
- The immaterial intelligent or sentient element or part of a person, freq. in implied or expressed contrast to the body.
- The emotional part of man as the seat of hostile or angry feeling.
- The mind or faculties as the seat of action and feeling, esp. as liable to be depressed or exalted by events or circumstances.
- The faculties of perception or reflection; the senses or intellect; mental

powers.

**Once again it is clear that customary usage distinguishes not very much between spirit and soul. And what about psyche, I wondered?**

- **psyche** [a. Gr. *wÚv*– breath, f. *wÊveim* to breathe, to blow, (later) to cool; hence, life (identified with or indicated by the breath); means the animating principle in man and other living beings, the source of all vital activities, rational or irrational, the soul or spirit, in distinction from its material vehicle, the *rèla* or body; sometimes considered as capable of persisting in a disembodied state after separation from the body at death.

Plato and other philosophers personified psyche and extended it to the *anima mundi*, conceived to animate the general system of the universe, as the soul animates the individual organism. St. Paul (developing a current Jewish distinction between *ruav*, *pmeÕla*, spirit or breath, and *nephesh*, *wtv*–, soul) used psyche to mean the lower or merely natural life of man, shared with other animals, in contrast with the *pmeÕla* or spirit, conceived as a higher element due to divine influence supervening upon the original constitution of unregenerate human nature.

Soul, spirit, and psyche cannot be disentangled from each other. There is, perhaps, a discernible bias towards soul's link with blood, feelings, and emotions; and spirit's link with breath, thought, intellect.

The brain, the heart, and liver are physical organs, and their objective materiality has led to a high degree of extraverted agreement about what they are and how they work.

By contrast, spirit, soul, and psyche are non-material. They may indeed be regarded as objective, in the sense that they may be objects of ego attention, or in their acting upon and influencing the ego. But this is a limited objectivity within the context of extroverted modern science.

What this means is that the understanding of these immaterial entities takes place primarily at the individual level. It is an understanding mainly arrived at from within, although the inner understanding is of course developed and refined by acquaintance with the history of earlier understandings, by participation in the cultural inheritance.

Thus the history of the understanding of soul and spirit is really the history of a number of remarkable individuals. Plato, Aristotle, St. Paul, Abdul Ibn Roshd – taken one by one – are each quite clear in their understandings. But it is hopelessly beyond the scope of a paper to do justice to these individual beliefs because they are subtle and complex and do not lend themselves to summaries.

I was much interested and curious about the inter-relationship between the autonomic and central nervous systems before ever I had encountered Jung's work.

I was delighted with what I found, then, in Jung's approach. Such statements as: -

- 'The psyche reaches up into mentally and morally lucid consciousness from the depths of the sympathetic nervous system, which does not govern the environment of the organism, as does the cerebrospinal nervous system, but maintains the balance of life, gives us knowledge of the innermost life of other beings, and indeed has an effect upon them. It is essentially related, collective and experiences everything as an inside; whereas the cerebrospinal system separates off the specific qualities of the ego, apprehends everything through the medium of space and experiences everything as an outside.'

He is relating the soul to the sympathetic nervous system, with intriguing implications for the anima mundi, the soul of the world.

### **Elsewhere he writes:-**

- 'When first we look into the face of the water we see the mask of ourself. But the mirror lies behind the mask. In the world of water all life floats in suspension; the sympathetic system is the soul of everything living, where 'I' am indivisibly this and that.'

### **And:-**

- 'Ego immersed within the collective unconscious, experiencing by way of the sympathetic nervous system, is no longer subject to every object, but rather object to every subject. In truth, projection is a misleading term if one considers what one may of the history of the psyche; it is more the case that human psyche exists as it now does as a result of innumerable acts of introjection of the world-self.'

These statements really hit the nail on the head. Access to a truly worthwhile understanding of the soul comes only through this quintessentially inward experience. In some ways, but not all, this holds true for the understanding of spirit too.

All of the above underlines the role of the individual as avatar or teacher of the inner entities. Time is relevant; avatars from 2000 years ago are less relevant to us today than they were to their contemporaries. Jung has been the one to tell me about spirit and soul. He had exceptional powers to acquaint himself with the cultural inheritance allied to an equally exceptional development of inner experience and understanding. But again – summary only succeeds in objectifying, and thus losing the essence.

The best I find I can do is to quote to you some of Jung's statements concerning spirit and soul.

### **He declares that: -**

- Spirit labours through time with the eternal images and from them creates a comprehensive system of thought that ascribes order to our world.
- Spirit conveys the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of life. He is the father of the soul, and yet the soul in a miraculous way is also his virgin mother; he is also an old man and young at once.
- When spirit becomes heavy it descends from its fiery heights and turns to water; with Luciferian presumption the intellect usurps the seat where once spirit was enthroned. The spirit may legitimately claim the patria potestas over the soul, but not the earth-born intellect, which is man's sword or hammer, and not a creator of spiritual worlds and father of soul.
- Spirit is no longer, in our age, up above, but down below; no longer fire but now water.
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- Soul is no easy word. Something wonderful and immortal; something uncannily alive and active; in some

ways like the Greek meaning of psyche, cool breath.

*Soul is living being, that which lives of itself and causes life. God breathed soul into Adam that he might live.*

- With her cunning illusions soul lures into life the inertness of matter that does not want to live. She makes us believe incredible things that life may be lived; full of snares and traps so that man shall fall, should reach the earth, entangle him there and stay caught so that life shall be lived.
- To have soul is the whole venture of life, for soul is a life-giving daemon who plays his elfin game above and below human existence. Heaven and hell are the rewards and punishments meted out to the soul, not to the human.
- The soul searching for her lost father is drawn down to the water, that living symbol of the dark psyche.
- When the sad, bereft, angry, tormented soul leads a man or woman to that water it evokes the miracle of its coming to life; brought to life by the pneuma, the breath spirit, moving upon the face of the water.
- We have to go the way of the waters, downwards, if we are to raise the treasure, the precious heritage of the father. Water so often means spirit that has become unconscious; the yang embraced by the yin.
- In the much archetypally-governed fantasy experience of the human infant the mother and father provide opportunities for the experience of the syzygy, in which soul - usually mother - is married to spirit - usually father - in a way that links the inner and outer worlds for the child. (This is precisely why so much developmental work is necessary and should never be avoided.)
- The anima is not the anima rationalis but a natural archetype, a true factor, living of itself and making us live.
- Jung asked that his term 'anima' should not be confused with the dogmatic Christian conception of the soul, or with any of the previous philosophical conceptions of it. Rather he refers to the classical Chinese p'o or kuei, the feminine chthonic part of the soul.
- Because the anima wants life she wants both good and bad; she is perhaps the archetype of life itself, while the spirit is the archetype of meaning (so long as the father/king is alive we are supported by traditional symbols; only when he dies does the pre-existent thinking become activated).

What I will do now is use a stage of personal experience to exemplify my understandings of spirit and soul. The greater part of my understanding has been mediated by Jung, and so I will be referring to some of these quotes in the course of my narrative, with the intention or hope of clarifying the conjunctions between experience, or soul, and understanding, or spirit.

There is, I now know, a whole great world going on below the surface of our conscious minds, a world with drama and mystery, meaning and purpose. One of the greatest gifts I received from Jung – one of many – was the realization that the world's religions exist to represent this inner world and to give it space and shape in our conscious lives. I further understood that there have always been and always will be some who, for reasons that may not be clear, are insufficiently met in their needs by the orthodox religion of their culture, and who find themselves immersed in the spagyric process of that inner world, and need all the help they can get to survive it and benefit from it.

One needs some help because the first thing one knows is that the inner world is breaking one up, tearing one apart, cutting one to pieces. Jung was crucially useful in helping me to accept that this inner world is not actually chaotic, as it may seem

at first, but that there are dramas and players, which are all but constant and eternal. It is indeed a relief and a help to find that 2000 years ago, 1000 years ago, 500 years ago, and 50 years ago, there were people like us and they encountered the same things we encounter.

Like my predecessors over centuries I am not sure if we are the most religious of people or the misfits – or whether these two are in any way different. And although I sometimes think I would have liked a simpler life, content with the orthodox structures available in every village, I have come to accept the fate that is mine, at times gratefully at times grudgingly.

This period of my own experience immediately preceded the onset of the spagyric process within me. I have selected my own experience mainly because it frees me from all the complications concerning confidentiality and permission, but I could have described the similar experiences of others just as well as my own.

Just about 30 years ago I was working for an oil Exploration & Production Company in the delta region of Nigeria. I was 28, married, not yet with children, and I was a physician. There were about 50 drilling rigs in the area, some in the thickness of the tropical rain forest, some in the labyrinthine waters of the Niger delta, and some offshore in the Atlantic ocean. It was a part of my duty to visit 2 rigs every week to treat medical conditions and to inspect and monitor health, safety, and hygiene standards. Most of the rigs in the forest and offshore were best reached by helicopter, those in the mangrove swamps either by boat or helicopter. Twice a week, therefore, on days of my own choice, I would present myself at dawn at the helipad or dock.

The helicopters were large, Wessex I think they were called, and the pilots were patients and/or friends of mine. The doors were wide, sliding sideways into the belly of the craft. One of the delights in living in remote areas is that far more of life can be lived by common sense rather than under the dreary regulations of a civilized state. Although it was against company regulations no one ever questioned my snapping on a webbing safety strap and sitting at the open doorway with my legs hanging free. We flew just 20 feet or so above the canopy of the rain forest as the sun rose above the far horizon, the mists burned away from the tree tops and all the birds and monkeys began to call and fly and leap among the multicolored crowns of these majestic trees knitted into a seamless tapestry of textured foliage hundreds of feet above the sandy tracks below. The spirit expanded within me, filling me, overflowing into tears for the beauty of creation, for the love of God, for the manifest order and goodness of a world neither yet fallen nor soiled. These were states of holy rapture and insights, understandings, buds of love would swell within me, opening through one realm of being after another, like chakras illumined in swift succession. I flew above a new-made world

and I saw that it was good.

At the dock I would meet up with a Nigerian driver. The waterways of the Niger delta are of unbelievable complexity. There are broad rivers, hundreds of yards across, sometimes so wide that one cannot see the banks to either side, and there are channels the width of a bath that coil between weird mangrove roots in a gloomy darkness where snakes hang and alligators float; and there are all shapes and sizes in between, as well as lakes and tidal estuaries. Only people born and bred in this vast area where water and earth mingle into one another have any hope of finding their way. All of it changes utterly with every turn of the tides; what was a waterway 6 hours ago is now a crab infested black slime into which one could disappear within seconds but forever. The boats were quite fast, made of metal, with a flat open rear area for carrying bulky materials.

I used to share a coffee with the driver as we set off, then leave him to his business of getting me to wherever we were going, and sit or lie in the open stern area. It was hypnotic, trance-inducing, never-changing and ever-changing; I can still vividly see it all in my mind's eye, the vee of the boats passage, the sky reflected in the heavy waters, the waters and the sky merging far ahead and far behind; the alligators lying like crusty logs on the mud banks, the little villages with their stilts suddenly appearing round a bend in the river, always the sense of the almost unbelievable improbability of living here, wondering what my life would have been like had I been born in this village. The monkeys with the bulbous noses, proboscis monkeys, which seemed to have a special affinity for the endless upon endless mangrove trees that fringed the water, like vegetative spiders.

It was, is, a quiet somnolent world; the waters never seemed to hurry, in fact they barely seemed to flow at all. The tide happened, as it does; clouds sometimes came, and went. The sun glowered and throbbed, everything smelled of swampy mysteries; time just about ceased. I lay and my mind slipped into thoughts and fantasies that wandered their way for hour upon hour. It might not sound like it, but this too was the spirit moving within me. Not the radiant joy of the flights that I took, but a lower realm where the spirit was heavier, less joyous, but still bringing understanding and meaning, an inflowing and outflowing of order between me and my world. These boat journeys were deeply restoring, nourishing; I would arrive at the rig, or back at the dock, with a feeling much like that of waking from a long deep good sleep. Calm. Liquidly present in my matter.

At this point in my personal narrative I want to interject a quotation from Augustine's epistles:

*'For man's soul, when it turns away from the sun of righteousness, that is, from inward contemplation of the unchangeable truth, turns all its strength to earthly things, and thereby is darkened more and more in its inward and higher parts; but*

*when it begins to return to that unchangeable wisdom, the more it draws nigh thereto in loving affection, the more is the outward man corrupted, but the inward man is renewed from day to day; and all that light of natural disposition, which was turned towards lower things, is directed to the higher, and in a certain wise is taken away from things of earth, that it might die more and more to this world and its life be hid with Christ in God.'*

Augustine is here using the metaphor of man's soul as the moon, poised between earth and sun. This metaphor itself also bound up with Luna as the Church that must eventually die - Ecclesia Luna. The idea is that when we see the full moon, the image is that of the soul is turned fully to the earthly world, but when we see the dark moon, then the moon-soul is turned towards the sun. He wrote this in a context of the hierogamos, the sacred marriage, but it is a fairly characteristic statement coming from the perspective of the orthodox Christian ascetic drive. Sol is only above in heaven, i.e. in Christ, while the spirits in the earth-matter are evil and corrupting; therefore the moon, the soul, can only corrupt the inner spiritual man when she attends to the world below. Conversely, it is held as good for the outer man, i.e. the body, its instincts, needs, desires, to be corrupted and destroyed by the moon-soul's contemplation of Sol-Christ's unchanging truth.

Back to my own narrative. You will recall that the purpose of these journeys for which I was being paid was the medical visit to the rigs. A few of these rigs were in production; that is to say they had established wells into fields of gas and/or oil which was flowing away through pipelines to collecting stations. These rigs were of course fixed in location and quite large and life at them was fairly settled. Most of the rigs, however, were drilling test wells, staying in one location only for 6 weeks or so, then moving somewhere new. If they had struck oil it would then be assessed by geologists and seismologists for volume, quality etc. Now some of you may not be well acquainted with such rigs, so I will briefly describe the set-up.

A smallish area of jungle or swamp, just a 100 yards or so in diameter has been cleared, with some kind of access track for equipment. About half a dozen largish American built Portacabins, air-conditioned, are arranged in a rough circle inside which the ground is trampled flat so that it is easier to see the Russell's vipers, Green mambas, and other serpents flourish in these parts. Flocks of parrots swoop over the clearing imitating the human voices, monkeys jeer and screech from the trees at the perimeter. At night the drums from nearby villages go on from sunset until long after midnight. In the centre of the clearing is installed the well-head through which thick rods pass, ending in the bitt, which is rotated at great speed, cooled constantly with water, as it bites down into the earth's substance with its menacing metal mesh teeth. Forming part of the circle with the portacabins are huge generators which never stop their clattering roar, adding to the general

cacophony.

The boss of all this is known as the 'toolpusher'; he is responsible for all aspects of pushing this tool down into the earth to find the black gold. I do not know how it is nowadays, but this used to be a male world. I never saw a woman at any rig. The work is physically demanding, often dangerous, and any man's life might momentarily depend upon the physical strength of a colleague. One portacabin would be the toolpusher's office and small laboratory and workshop; another was the kitchen, mess and recreation cabin, and the others were bedrooms. The men, large, tough and taciturn most often, from every country you can think of, did rotas of two weeks on two weeks off, being transported in and out just as I was.

Now there is something I have not mentioned in my description of my journeys to these rigs. While it is true that the spiritual exaltation filled my mind; that, in Augustine's metaphor, my moon was turned towards the sun, there was, I must admit, a little sliver, a crescent moon of my soul, that had something else in mind. It was present but not present, in rather the same way as when one has an exam coming up one may not be conscious of it at all, and yet the knowledge of it at some level does not go away and there's that slight arousal of the autonomic nervous system reaching up from below. As Jung said –

*'The psyche reaches up into mentally and morally lucid consciousness from the depths of the sympathetic nervous system.'*

You see, at that time, aged 28, I was been deeply enchanted by the feminine, by woman, most especially by the body of woman; fascinated, under a spell, unquenchably desirous.

The toolpusher would meet me on arrival and take me to the mess cabin for a coffee and biscuit and to tell me of any problems he was aware of. Up two or three wire mesh steps – to discourage the snakes – and through the door, and I was inside....woman.

Every inch of the ceiling, every inch of the walls - there were no windows - was covered with pages from erotic and pornographic magazines. Unless I narrowed my gaze to my feet unswervingly, breasts and nipples, bottoms, thighs, vulvas, eyes, mouths, bellies, hair, diaphanous panties, peignoirs, nun's habits, leather girdles, gleaming dildos, fingers caressing clitorises, rosebud anuses..... would leap and swarm in through my eyes, the windows of my soul.

I was unaccustomed to such images. While 5% of me listened to an account of the depredations of rats in the storeroom and the Halliburton man's broken finger, the rest of me almost swooned with sensual and sexual excitement, tight in the belly, dizzy in the mind, and before long the semen would spurt unbidden. And usually again, after lunch when I was left alone for a while to write my report.

Towards evening, when the sun had sunk below the treetops, but still well above

the earth's rim, the helicopter would return to collect me, or I would walk along the rickety planks over the water to where the boat was moored. And I was torn, a torn, troubled soul on my return journey. Dimly, I sensed that the effusions were not unrelated to the preceding worship of creation; but even so, I could not understand how I could be so high and so low.

The setting sun turned bloody in the purple haze of the gathering dusk as we flew back over the rain forest. Monkeys masturbated in trees, and did not become dejected. Fruit bats, tens of thousands of them, flew across the face of the moon. Through the loud engines of my transport I could faintly hear the drums beginning, rhythms I knew but did not understand. Later that night I would make love with my wife, a healing for my wounded soul, a returning of my lust to within the holy campsite of marriage.... honour her with thy body.

Ruska wrote the following, which one may understand as the experience of the son/husband/ego dying in the sex-embrace of the moon/earth/Isis/mother/prima materia.

*'Nevertheless the philosophers have put to death the woman who slays her husbands, for the body of that woman is full of weapons and poison. Let a grave be dug for that dragon and let the woman be buried with him, he being chained fast to that woman; and the more he winds and coils himself about her, the more will he be cut to pieces by the female weapons which are fashioned in the body of the woman. And when he sees that he is mingled with the limbs of the woman, he will be certain of death, and will be changed wholly into blood. But when the philosophers see him changed into blood, they leave him for a few days in the sun, until his softness is consumed, and the blood dries, and they find that poison. What then appears is the hidden wind.'*

The more times that this whole cycle was repeated the more I had to face my lack of unity. I was, you see, being cut to pieces. I began to wonder about 'the whole man'. If I remember right this was when I first read Jung. I do remember that the first thing I read was 'Marriage as a psychological relationship'.

*Jung remarked, with splendid simplicity, that 'dissociation of the personality is brought about by the conflict of incompatible tendencies, resulting as a rule from an inharmonious disposition. The repression of one of the opposites leads only to prolongation and extension of the conflict, in other words to a neurosis. The therapist therefore confronts the opposites with one another and aims at uniting them permanently.'*

What I have described of myself at that time is, I believe, an example, and I believe it is a very common example, of a conflict between incompatible tendencies. Very shortly thereafter my psyche erupted, as it were. In fact there were a number of dreams of being close to erupting volcanoes, and I remember a dream in which I

stood in a great desert looking up at the sun when abruptly it burst into smithereens revealing that behind it, and formerly hidden by its brightness, were seven planets which now shone brightly. The spagyric work had begun in earnest, and there was no turning back. I requote Jung: - the spirit is the archetype of meaning (so long as the father/king is alive we are supported by traditional symbols; only when he dies does the pre-existent thinking become activated).

I came to understand the sun that shattered as the traditional view of the spirit that I had received, largely without knowing that I had. I had not thought that the ascetic, anti-matter, almost anti-life, attitude of my Christian ancestors had been so domineeringly present within me. But it was, and I reflected that there were numbers of churchmen in my father's family. At the same time there was something else in me, a pagan perhaps describes it, or a nature mysticism that could not, absolutely could not accept that my love of manifest life, of nature, of bodies, sensuality, pleasure, desire, mortality, food, sex, power, cruelty, violence, were necessarily corrupting to the inner spiritual man who must turn only to the unchanging truth of Christ and God's word, the Bible. I requote Jung:

· With her cunning illusions soul lures into life the inertness of matter that does not want to live. She makes us believe incredible things that life may be lived; full of snares and traps so that man shall fall, should reach the earth, entangle him there and stay caught so that life shall be lived.

My conflict had come into the open. When the sun shattered, and the planets were revealed, I began the long circulation, getting to know those potencies of the human psyche, which are so often, both in cultural history and in dreams, represented by the planet divinities of old. I began to recognize their influences in relation to me.

*I have taken knowledge (saith the soul) of myself, and have gathered myself together out of every quarter.*

*'I am thou, and thou art I, and wherever thou art, there I am, and I am scattered in all things, and from wherever thou wilt thou canst gather me, but in gathering me thou gatherest together thyself.*

Many times in my dreams snakes bit me. The agathodaemon, the spirit from below, led me inch by inch towards consciousness, thus lessening the former sway of Heimarmene.

The alchemists, experienced in these matters, declared that Mercurius is a spirit of truth, a sapientia dei, but one who presses downward into the depths of matter, and whose acquisition is a donum Spiritus Sancti. He is the spirit who knows the secrets of matter and to possess him brings illumination.

They wrote also of the Niketikon Stella, the crown of victory, the crown of stars, planets, which the soul brings with it when it returns to the body. The more that one possesses the crown of stars around the head the more one is free from

Heimarmene. The ancient divinities, recognized and sublimed, act no longer as compulsions but in participation.

For a long time, for years, there were two moons in my dreams, one good, one evil, a good soul and a bad soul, the good soul turning its face to the spirit that is light without darkness (the Christ Sol), the bad soul bringing me to orgies, drugs, violence, horror (the Sol Niger). Many times in my dreams I flew above nunneries built high in the mountains and while I exulted in my unaided flight I also spied out the oh so desirable genitals under the religious garments.

Slowly the moons came together, such that I knew there were two, but they were one. Years later, the sun and the moon married, mingling their gold and silver rays onto the earth where I stood.

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There is a process immanent within the psyche, which for the sake of a single word I have referred to as the 'spagyric' process; this word is a Paracelcian neologism for a coincidentia oppositorum derived from the Greek spaero to tear or draw apart, and agyros to unite, bring together.

I believe it of the utmost importance to be clear in one's mind that there is not a concept or theory that the process manifests. Rather there are innumerable individuals experiencing a process that appears to them mainly located within themselves, and from which one may derive, infer, certain concepts or theories. In a phrase, the horse must come before the cart.

I am a Westerner, and virtually all of my analytic experience has been with Westerners. Things may be very different in other parts of the world, but I believe that the kind of conflict that existed in myself, as I have tried to convey by example, is the most prevalent, the commonest conflict for Westerners. It is impossible for me fully to allow for my own bias, and the mysterious factors concerned in why certain patients end up with certain analysts. All therapists, I suppose, have a particular conflict central to their own individual experience, one that they have worked with more than any other over many many years, and to the presence of which they are very alert with their patients. Clearly it is possible that this constellation in the analyst may draw patients with similar conflicts and thus lead to an unreliable impression of true prevalence.

Be that as it may; I only know that I encounter this conflict, between nous and physis, between the aspirations of a pure spirit and the desires of earthy nature in almost every patient with whom I choose to work. This 'pure' spirit resists life, relationship, incarnation; it is probably the most powerful of the forces resisting the descent into the water, into the fluid of the instinct-driven body.

The way I attempt to formulate simply a theoretical concept of the initial situation from my experience of my own process, and my experience of others' processes, drawing wholly from Jung and especially his researches in alchemy, is as follows: The spirit is initially manifest as the dominant of consciousness; it determines the attitudes, beliefs, fears and aspirations and ego ideal. The extent to which this is so has arisen both by nature and nurture and is largely unconscious to the individual. This spirit is strongly coloured by the historical stream of Christian anti-materialist asceticism. It demands that the soul turn only towards its noble ideals. It criticizes, rebukes, attacks, and scourges the soul and body for any lapses from the perfect ideal. And because it possesses the ego it has the executive power to implement not only mental but also physical attacks.

There is indeed a part of the soul that loves this high austere perfection and can imagine and long for a state of grace untroubled by desire. But what is collectively conscious has moved on since the Middle Ages. The Western soul has intimations, once again one might say, but now with better known influx from the Eastern religions/psychologies, of the existence of another spirit, one immanent within matter, no longer as easy to be characterized as the devil as it was in the Middle Ages. What was once the minority movement of the alchemists is now grown so much in strength that the balance in the contemporary Western psyche between the spirit above and the spirit below is approaching equality.

That part of the soul which animates matter and draws us into life is no longer so cowed by the condemnation of the spirit above; she turns more boldly to the spirit below, within, encouraged by the East, by much that we have learned through science, and by the evident attenuation of the old dominant.

This is an unstable time for the Western psyche; the conflicts are real and deeply rooted. As Jung said, if one or other tendency is repressed, shut out, neurosis will follow. If an individual person can more or less become aware of the conflicting tendencies, the irreconcilable tension of opposites will spark off the spagyric process. The ensuing evolutions of the two spirits and two souls are a wondrous if often terrifying journey that I have no time to say anything about today. And anyway, Jung has written of it far better than I ever could.