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Symbolic Dimensions of Eros in Transference-Counter Transference: Some Clinical Uses of Jung's Alchemical Metaphor

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INTRODUCTION

In a previous paper on the theory of archetypes I sought to present Jung as more in the mainstream of analytical thinking than is usually considered to be the case (Samuels, 1983a). In fact, Jung could be seen as a pioneer in several areas. A reason for this attempt was to establish Jung's credibility as a reliable core or base for further endeavour. Thus any lingering worries that he was a 'charlatan' or 'mystical' (in a pejorative sense) could be regarded as irreducible (cf. Hudson, 1983).

This paper, though conceived as an elaboration and extension of the first, takes a different tack. My focus now is on something about Jung, and hence, by association, analytical psychology, which must seem disreputable to psychoanalytic observers: his interest in, and use of alchemy. My hope is that what I am making of this concern of Jung's will strike a chord in practitioner-readers.

Psychological life, personal relatedness and internal processes working in harness, seems to call for description and illumination by alchemical metaphor. 'Personality is a specific combination of dense depressive lead with inflammable aggressive sulphur with bitterly wise salt with volatile evasive mercury' (Hillman, 1975a, p. 186). We speak of the 'chemistry' between people, of an 'atmosphere' in a room, of dialogues being 'fluid', of the analytical 'container'. Cooking sometimes seems like alchemy, and winemaking, the supreme marriage of nature and culture.

When non-Jungians or beginning analytical psychologists dip into Jung for the purpose of finding out what he has to say about transference and countertransference, they are surprised to find that his main paper on the

subject takes the form of a discussion of a sixteenth century alchemical tract (CW 16).[1] What on earth can the *Rosarium Philosophorum* and the discredited occult art of alchemy have to do with contemporary analysis and therapy? And, as transference–countertransference interaction has by now taken its place at the heart of analytic methodology, this alchemical concern of Jung's has meant that, even after four decades of hard work by members of the Society of Analytical Psychology, a suspicion remains that analytical psychologists do not 'work' with transference phenomena. In fact, for a good proportion of the psychoanalytic community, Jung's preoccupation with alchemy may be summed up, in Glover's words, as 'absurd' (1950, p. 50) and obsessed with a religiose version of 'redemption' (p. 145).

From within analytical psychology, the apparent absurdity has been counteracted in two ways. First, by demonstrating that Jung did have an additional conception of transference, that this did involve personal factors and that he placed transference at the heart of the analytical process (e.g., CW 16, paras. 283–4). Fordham (1974) pointed out that Jung was actually writing in these terms at a time (1921) when psychoanalysis still tended to regard making the unconscious conscious as the central issue. And there may be reasons behind Jung's dismissal of transference in the Tavistock lectures in 1935—perhaps he was offended by his audience's reluctance to discuss the collective unconscious and retaliated by dismissing *their* special interest (transference)

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[1] *References to Jung are from his Collected Works.*

as a 'hindrance', 'never an advantage' and generally as an obstacle to cure (CW 18).

Another way to overcome the alchemy credibility problem is to borrow and then, hopefully, integrate concepts from contemporary psychoanalysis, particularly those which reflect an aspect of Jung's thought. As Lambert, among others, has shown, there is nowadays a far greater affinity between psychoanalysis and analytical psychology than existed previously. So any lack of a focus upon transference has been remedied (Lambert, 1981).

A third path, and the one I intend to follow, is to accept that alchemy provides metaphors for psychological activity generally and for analysis in particular—but without the qualification that it would be 'just' metaphor. The first task, then, is to praise metaphor to the point where its own centrality in psyche has to be admitted. The thesis is that alchemical imagery is very well suited indeed to capture the almost impossible essence of analysis or any other deep, human connexion: the play between interpersonal relatedness on the one hand and imaginal, intrapsychic activity on the other.

The term imaginal may be unfamiliar. It was first used by Corbin (1972) to mark out a place in psyche situated between primary sense impressions and (developed) cognition or spirituality. This realm is populated by images and, in every respect, is an in-between state: between conscious and unconscious, between mind and body and, as we shall discuss, between person and person. 'Imaginal' is used in preference to 'imaginary' to indicate a mode of being and perceiving and not an evaluation. There are broad similarities between this idea and Winnicott's 'third area', 'area of illusion', 'area of experience' (1974, p. 3). The main difference is that the imaginal world (*Mundus Imaginalis*) is conceived as a pre-existent and not as the creation or achievement which is the essence of Winnicott's formulation. (Cf. Samuels, 1985, for a fuller exposition). The *Mundus Imaginalis* is the locus of unconscious fantasy or archetypal imagery. Postulating its existence helps with the conundrum of innate imagery.

Alchemical imagery not only permits the paradoxical nature of the interpersonal/intrapsychic seesaw to be grasped but does so in a way that acknowledges simultaneity, doing away with distracting sub-structure/super-structure division. The interpersonal and the imaginal are equal partners and the technical implication is that content analysis and process analysis can, must coexist. Explorations of symbolic material and analysing within the transference-countertransference are two sides of the same coin. Alchemy helps us to bear this in mind, as we shall see.

METAPHOR

There is an overlap between what we will be calling 'metaphor' and what Jung called 'symbol'. For Jung, the crucial function of a symbol was to express in a unique way a psychological fact incapable of being grasped at once by consciousness (CW 6, paras. 814–829). Perhaps two apparently contradictory elements will be held together and this will have a meaning for a person, suggesting all sorts of possibilities. For instance, a patient dreamt of skyscrapers which, when elucidated, referred to a linkage of spiritual aspiration

(reaching for the heights) and concrete achievement (bricks and mortar, technical knowledge). Jung distinguished between his use of symbol and what he called 'signs'; these connect things that are already known. For instance, the stylized bodies on the doors of public lavatories are signs. Jung's charge against psychoanalysis was that psychoanalytic symbol interpretation made signs of symbols and hence lost the possibility of understanding their fuller meaning. My opinion is that Jung made too rigid a divide here and that the problem for both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology is to avoid interpreting symbols by use of some kind of lexicon.

But there are several differences between metaphor and symbol. Metaphor sits midway between sign and symbol for one half of metaphor is known to consciousness. One cannot *use* a symbol in the way a metaphor is used and it seems typical of metaphor that its function is communication with another whereas symbols may more easily be seen as addressed to oneself. Finally, we can use another person's metaphor (alchemy, for example); this is not the case with a symbol. Nevertheless, both metaphor and

symbol are constructed of *images* —hence the link to the *Mundus Imaginalis*.

There are two kinds of metaphor which I would differentiate (Aristotle identified four). The first we could call *direct metaphor* in which two entities or images are linked by virtue of a perceived closeness or similarity in functioning. Thus to compare the human brain to a computer is to effect a direct metaphor; both carry out complex calculations and other cognitive processes at enormous speed. Such a direct metaphor is like a simile in that the comparison is proclaimed as such. (Similes have an aesthetic function whereas metaphors have didactic or moralistic intent, according to Fowler's *Modern English Usage*.) The second kind of metaphor, which we could call *indirect metaphor*, requires reflection for its appreciation. In indirect metaphor, the image may touch one's depths before the conscious surface is affected. For instance: old age is the twilight of life. Or: love is the psychosis of the normal person. It is necessary to work harder with indirect metaphor and, in order to gain something from it at an emotional level, both elements require equal attention even though it is one that it is sought to illuminate. The alchemical metaphor for transference-countertransference is clearly of the second, indirect kind with the subsequent requirements of reflection and emotional involvement. If we are to utilize the metaphor, alchemy has to be considered *as if* it were as important as analysis.

It has been argued that metaphor is not only a way of perceiving the world but, rather, the only way we perceive. This conclusion may be seen in the writings of

physicists such as Bohm (1982) and Capra (1975). Making models is how we construct reality. Be that as it may, metaphorical perception is in tune with our psyches. For metaphorical perception implies constant change, even reversibility of emotion, fluidity of values, ambivalence and so forth. These are the characteristics of psyche even if we postulate a self to organize and contain them. Would humans need the organizing capacity of self if they were not also constantly in motion? (Cf. Lacan's ideas on metaphor and the structure of the unconscious.)

In passing, we may observe that metaphor also has an intellectual function, as philosophers of science such as Popper have noted. There is a place in science for terms whose meaning is changeable. Actually, said Popper, even definitions are relative for they exist by virtue of what is undefined. Popper's expression was that 'all definitions must ultimately go back to undefined terms' (quoted in Hillman, 1975b, p. 153). Metaphor, like analogy, is an unconscious form of *thinking*(cf. Hubback, 1973).

Metaphor is also built into our theory and practice as analysts. Consider a theoretical concept such as projective identification. Someone, not just an infant, unconsciously projects or places himself (or a part of himself) in another person. This may be to evacuate some unwelcome part of the personality or, more likely, to control the other person from within that other. This control is achieved by an unconscious identification of the other, or part of the other, with the projected content. Sometimes, the outcome is that the two persons 'change places' psychologically speaking and the one into whom there has been a projection experiences a foreign body in him, trying to take him over. Written out like this, a theoretical concept like projective identification is revealed as metaphor. Similarly, from a clinical point of view, we use metaphor all the time. For metaphors are a way of talking about experience. When a patient comes for help with his 'problems', he is also bringing with him a unique model or metaphor of the world. Our first task as analysts and therapists is to understand the metaphor. We therefore acknowledge its power and then we start to break it down into smaller and more manageable metaphors, elucidating symbols and thus facilitating development.

One additional point: metaphor is itself a metaphor of the indirect kind. Therein lies its strength and capacity to permit multiple perspectives, even contradictory trends in the psyche. Once again, there is no base: one thing is not necessarily more important than another. Psychological plurality and a tolerance of ambivalence are fostered.

JUNG'S UNDERSTANDING OF ALCHEMY

Following the remarks about metaphor, we need to explore what Jung saw in alchemy, what he thought he was doing when he devoted much of the last twenty five years of his life to its study. At

one point, it is alchemy's demonstration of 'the remarkable capacity of the human psyche for change' that appeals (CW 7, para. 360). Alchemy, according to Jung, must not be regarded as misconceived chemistry because there is also a spiritual side of great psychological value to be considered. Jung's focus in 1935 was

> *the transformation of personality through the blending and fusion of the noble with the base components, of the differentiated with the inferior functions, of the conscious with the unconscious (CW 7, para. 360).*

Therefore Jung saw in alchemy something of a precursor of his own analytical psychology and particularly his concept of the individuation process. Jung's thinking is also shown in a letter written in 1945 in which alchemy is said to be a 'grand projected image of unconscious thought-processes' (quoted in Jaffé, 1979, p. 97). In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Jung stated that alchemy possessed a concept that 'corresponded to the transference—namely the *coniunctio*' (1963, p. 239) ; we shall have to look at Jung's claim in detail in a later section. Jung felt that the alchemists had intuitively discovered and imaginatively projected what has been verified in modern times. The lively imagery of alchemy differed markedly from the stylized and sexless expressions of medieval Christianity. Jung drew the parallel with the way psychoanalysis and analytical psychology contrasted with complacent and rational Victorian views of man.

Jung was attempting to imagine or work out what the psychological experiences of the alchemists might have been like. He was able to use his own experiences in self-analysis and as an analyst to achieve this; one gets an impression of a fraternity spanning the centuries. Perhaps Isaac Newton felt the same urge, for we know now that much of his work proceeded along alchemical lines and this material has at last seen the light of day despite 'accidents' which might have prevented its publication (Dobbs, 1975).

Having touched on Jung's ideas, we also need to explore what alchemists actually did and what *they* thought they were doing. In one sense, it was all

rather simple. The alchemists were trying to produce a new substance which would have extraordinary powers; this was the elixir of life, or a universal panacea, or the 'philosopher's stone' (the *lapis*). First, the alchemist had to gather suitable raw materials and, then, work on them to achieve his goal of transforming them into the stone. Not all alchemists were trying to change base materials into gold; the emphasis in their writings is equally upon the transformation of all that is dark and evil into something spiritually enriching (Tuby, 1982, pp. 8–9). As they worked, the alchemists were deeply affected by what was happening and, in concert with their practical functioning, enjoyed deep, passionate, enlightening psychological experiences. And, like analysts, they did not attempt to split the experience of the work from the work itself. Their visions and their procedures become one. As Kugler puts it, the alchemist worked simultaneously on the soul in matter and the matters in his soul (1982, p. 108). The assumption is that the soul may be set free from the material prison in which nature has locked it; the whole procedure is subversive, a work against nature, *opus contra naturam*, a release of *meaning* from out of the material and bodily world.

Anticipating the clinical application of the metaphor, this corresponds to what an analyst or therapist does when he goes to work with the patient to discover the source and purpose of the latter's neurosis and how to release the growth or soul imprisoned therein. What the modern therapist sees in man, the alchemists saw in metallic form.

THE ALCHEMICAL METAPHOR

Let's now look in more detail at how the alchemical metaphor may be applied to therapy and analysis (*not*, it should be noted, at alchemical-type imagery in clinical material). The term *coniunctio* was mentioned just now. For the alchemists this referred to the mating and mixing in the *vas* or alchemical vessel of the various disparate elements. These elements, the *prima materia* or *massa confusa* were carefully chosen for their propensity to combine and were envisioned as opposites whose mingling would produce a third, new product (something like chemical combination): this is the *coniunctio*. These elements were often represented by male and female figures. The fact that humans are used to represent chemical elements showed Jung that, far from being a strictly chemical investigation,

alchemy was concerned with creative fantasy and thus with unconscious projection. In analysis the *coniunctio*, the union of opposites, symbolizes five themes which can be differentiated to some extent.

First, the personal interaction of the analyst and his analytical 'opposite', the patient. Next, patterns of separation and combination of conflicted and warring elements within the patient's psyche (and a similar process within the analyst). Third, the *coniunctio* of these two *coniunctios*: personal relatedness and intrapsychic processes. Fourth, *coniunctio* in analysis speaks of the ego's integration of unconscious parts of the patient's psyche (and, again, the same process will be taking place within the analyst). All this is going on within the container provided by the analytic setting and relationship; this is the *vas*. Finally there is a *coniunctio* between the sensual or material world and the spiritual dimension—Jung's psychoid unconscious (CW 8, paras. 343–442).

Another relevant term is *hierosgamos*, translated literally as 'sacred marriage'. Many forms of this motif, signifying the conjunction of opposites, may be found. For instance, in Augustinian Christianity the sacred marriage is between Christ and his church and is consummated on the marriage-bed of the cross. In alchemy the sacred marriage is often referred to as a 'chemical marriage' in which the opposite elements, having been designated male and female, unite in a kind of intercourse to produce a third, unsullied, 'incorruptible' substance. As such a substance does not seem to exist in the physical world, alchemy became less important as natural science claimed primacy of place and attention in the Renaissance. From the psychological point of view, the *hierosgamos* refers to the way in which opposing or conflicting trends in the psyche, experienced as chaos and confusion, are transformed into a relative coherence. In analysis it is also hoped that such a transformation will take place so that neurotic conflicts and splits become more manageable, perhaps useful, or, if necessary, removed.

The idea of the *transmutability of elements* is central to alchemy because it affirms that transformation can occur. Similarly, there would be little point in analysis without an image of the possibility of psychological movement. This remains true even when the goal of analysis is said to be the deepening of experience or the widening of awareness rather than the removal of symptoms. For deepening itself represents a change or translation.

The alchemical adept worked in relation to another, usually an inner figure but sometimes a real person, referred to as his *soror mystica*, mystical sister (cf. CW 14, para. 161). Again, an analyst is not an analyst without his counterpart, the patient. The part played by the Other (with a capital 'o') in psychological

processes has been noted by contemporary analysts; it is a subject to which we shall return (see below for a fuller discussion).

The various stages of the alchemical process are given their own names. *Nigredo* implies a darkening of the *prima materia* and a sign that something of significance is about to happen. *Fermentatio* suggests a brewing, a mingling of elements which will produce a new substance, different in kind to the original components. *Mortificatio* is the stage when the original elements have ceased to exist in their initial form. *Putrefactio* sees a decay of the dead or dying original elements and the giving off of a vapour which is the harbinger of transformation.

From the clinical standpoint, these terms symbolize what happens in analysis. *Nigredo* may take the form of an important dream which signals change, or an onset of the depression that often precedes movement. Sometimes, *nigredo* refers to the end of the honeymoon period of an analysis. *Fermentatio* is an apt term for the mingling of personalities that takes place in the transference–countertransference and also for events in the inner worlds of analyst and patient. *Mortificatio* and *putrefactio* describe the ways in which symptoms alter as the analytical relationship develops and intrapsychic changes come about (in object relations, for example).

Finally, hovering over all, we find the figure of Mercurius, derived from Hermes and hence the God of transformation and transition, of discovery (Eureka!), the guider of souls, the messenger of the Gods, the guardian of boundaries, the spirit of the crossroads and hence of initiation, and the arch-trickster who can appear in innumerable forms and yet still be unmistakeably himself. Mercurius speaks of renewal of old values and of revolution.

RECAPITULATION

It may help to summarize the argument so far. We began by noting that there is a power, depth and ubiquity of alchemical imagery in psychological discourse. Recognizing that inspired an attempt to understand the relevance for analysis of Jung's alchemical metaphor. We found that metaphor itself took the centre of the stage, having permeated even the most sober disciplines. Jung had a need to root his own work in history and perceived that the alchemists were concerned with psychological values and with change. Quite close correspondences can be teased out between the terminology and imagery of

alchemy and the analytical process. It is on analysis as process that I propose to focus.

ANALYSIS AS PROCESS

Jung's view of analysis, expressed in many of his writings, is that of an interactive process. Analyst and patient are equally 'in' the treatment. The analyst's personality and development are as important as theory or technique and, above all, both participants may be affected, even transformed by what happens between them:

> *For two personalities to meet is like mixing two different chemical substances: if there is any combination at all, both are transformed. In any effective psychological treatment the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor. You can exert no influence if you are not susceptible to influence. It is futile for the doctor to shield himself with a smoke-screen of fatherly and professional authority. By so doing he only denies himself the use of a highly important organ of information (CW 16, para. 163).*

This passage was written in 1929. Jung may therefore be seen as a pioneer of the use of countertransference affects by the analyst and of understanding these as unconscious communications from the patient. In fact, there has been a general revision of thinking about countertransference. Freud's negative assessment was that countertransference obscured the analyst's capacity to function effectively, to use his mind as an 'instrument' (Freud, 1913). This would be because of the analyst's 'own complexes and internal resistances' (Freud, 1910a). Without losing sight of the existence of neurotic countertransference, writers from all sections of psychoanalysis have shared in this necessary revision. We see the advocacy of an affective involvement with the patient (Heimann, 1950) ; (Little, 1957), a stress on the interaction between patient and analyst (Langs, 1978) ; (Searles, 1968), an enquiry into projective and introjective processes in analysis (Racker, 1968).

Because of Jung's prescience, there has been less of a problem in analytical psychology and Fordham's notion of syntonic countertransference fell on fertile ground (1957). The analyst functions like a radio receiver in tune with the unconscious transmitter in his patient; he can therefore receive the patient's broadcast messages. Taking all these ideas together, we may even speak of a present-day Freudian-Jungian consensus.

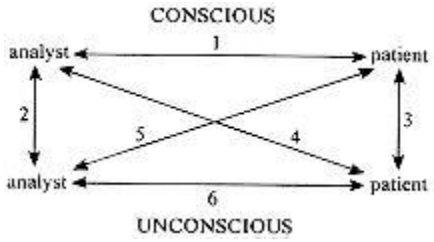

Figure 1 is based on a diagram of Jung's in 'The psychology of the transference' (CW 16, p. 221). The double headed arrows indicate two-way relatedness. (1) indicates the conscious relationship between analyst and patient, the level of their rapport and, ultimately, the therapeutic alliance. (2) indicates the analyst's connexion to his own unconscious, aided by his training analysis and, it should be added, containing whatever it is that makes him a 'wounded healer'. (3) indicates the patient's relation to his unconscious, his resistance, conflicts, compulsions, obsessions, needs, shadow, etc. (4) indicates the analyst's attempt to understand the patient's unconscious situation and also the influence of the patient on the analyst's ego—what he knows he is learning from the patient. (5) indicates the analyst's use of empathy and

intuition to deepen his relation to the patient and also what the analyst has unconsciously gained or lost from his contact with the patient. (6) indicates connexion between the two unconscious systems of patient and analyst; something to be explored more fully in a clinical illustration (see below). There are two additional relations which should not be forgotten, though they would complicate the diagram (much as they cause complications in a real analysis); the relation to the apparent outer world (family, friends, job) of each participant.

How does a relationship between two people lead to internal change in one or both? How does internal change affect relationships? To answer these questions requires a deeper understanding of Jung's alchemical metaphor. Persons who appear in analytical material have a symbolic dimension which is often the crucial factor. Therefore it is necessary to challenge our habitual distinction between the interpersonal and the intrapsychic. The interaction of patient and analyst may be understood as placed firmly within an *imaginal* realm. Our delineation of what is interpersonal may also be expanded so that internal imagery becomes the *link* between patient and analyst (two persons), *fostering their relationship and mediating their exchange*. It follows that it is short-sighted to split work on the imaginal from work on the interpersonal.

Jung would seem to agree with this proposition when he asserts that 'the living mystery of life is *always* hidden between Two' (quoted in Jaffé, 1979, p. 125) or, putting it another way, that the soul 'is the very essence of relationship' (CW 16, para. 504). When we look at the illustrations to the *Rosarium* from this viewpoint it becomes quite impossible to say with conviction that this is exclusively about an interpersonal process. Equally, what is being depicted is not just one person's individuation. The focus of enquiry includes *both* and the alchemical metaphor leads to that understanding.

If we consider (4) in Figure 1, we can see that the patient's inner world, his unconscious, will appear in projected form in the bodily person of the analyst. What is required is a relation to an exterior person to facilitate its emergence as transference. When the alchemists use personages such as the king and queen in the *Rosarium* they, too, are making use of the human body to symbolize their technical procedures and their psychological life (Figure 2). The king and queen are sexual opposites but linked by their intercourse, marriage and the court hierarchy (CW 16, p. 249). Analyst and patient are opposites within the frame of analysis; they are analytically married, whatever their anatomical sex. They may not be opposites in temperament and of course they are not actually married; that is not the point. But sexuality is vital for its symbolic aptness in suggesting at one and the same time difference (conflicting opposites) and its resolution (intercourse). This is shown in the illustrations in the form of the king and queen making love, forming into a hermaphrodite, dying and then experiencing a renaissance. The bodies engaged in intercourse do refer us to a mingling of two personalities in analysis. What is also evoked is a cross-breeding of elements within the individual psyches of both patient and analyst. It is the symbolism of the sex act that is crucial and later we will look at other aspects of sexuality in analysis. The biological outcome of sex is something new, and this, too, has a marked symbolic relevance for a 'growth process'—the baby as an image of a new beginning, a new man, a new soul.

So, in addition to using the figures to represent what is happening to the *prima materia* in the *vas*, the alchemist is also transferring his own internal processes on to the king and queen. The idea of transference in alchemy and analysis implies (a) something which may be transferred and (b) something onto or into which it can be transferred. In analysis it is the relationship with another which leads to internal movement and growth. And the influence is reciprocal—movement and growth enculture relationship.

The alchemical stress on the other, on relatedness and on relationship with the *soror*, suggests a parallel with one of the central themes of contemporary psychoanalysis: the experience of oneself in a relationship with another person.

Lacan noted this in connexion with mother and infant and referred to the mirror phase of development (1949). Winnicott also wrote of the same phenomena (1967). It is not always recognized that Neumann was on the same track with his assertion (written in 1959) that the mother 'carries' the infant's self (Neumann, 1973). There is always an other, even an Other, in the sense of a significant other. This can be the

unconscious itself, the analyst, the patient, the *soror*, the blank page for the writer, his audience for the lecturer, God for the mystic. The alchemists anticipate Lacan who writes of the Other in analysis as 'the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks with him who hears' (Lemaire, 1977, p. 157). In a sense, the analytic dialogue is itself the Other, at the point where the internal worlds of patient and analyst overlap. Or one may imagine an Other in relation to the entire analysis, a sort of guarantor of good faith; in Lemaire's phrase, a 'third-party witness' (p. 157). A subsequent illustration to the *Rosarium* leads to a similar point (Figure 3). It is called *the ascent of the soul* and shows the soul, a baby or child, rising up to heaven before returning to breathe life into the dead, two-headed body (CW 16, p. 285). The soul is the one (that is, integrated personality) born of the two (patient and analyst). Jung comments that 'only *one* soul departs from the two, for the two have indeed become one' (CW 16, para. 475). Death is not to be taken literally here, more as a symbolic precondition for new life, part of a cycle of decay and regeneration. The two-headedness indicates the thorough intermingling of the elements, for this body is both male and female. The analytical parallels are with the gradual move from neurotic symptomatology towards engagement with life and, furthermore, with the establishment at depth of the transference–countertransference relationship.

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EROS IN ANALYSIS

We have established the appropriateness of the explicitly sexual nature of the *Rosarium*. Sexuality, intercourse, anatomy are metaphors for aspects of psychological development; *heterosexuality* reminds us of the importance of the Other. The variety of human sexual experience,

which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of our species, both symbolizes and sets in motion human psychological variety. However, the proposition that sexuality has its symbolic meaning may have to be expanded: *sexuality has to be present for its symbolic meaning to be interpreted.* In order for psychological transformation to result from analytical interaction, that

interaction must acquire and radiate something of an erotic nature. The interpersonal *coniunctio* inspires and ignites the internal *coniunctio*. The term *eros* includes such states in analysis as arousal, excitement, passion, love and that most sexual of all experiences, frustration. There is always a level at which eros is a presence in analysis and psychological change in the patient implies and requires an erotic involvement on the part of the analyst though not a physical enactment of this undeniably real experience. Before discussing this claim, it might help to review the conceptual background.

The use of 'eros' is deliberate even though confusion may be engendered by the imprecise relation of eros to genital sexuality. This is an imprecision that runs through both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. In a sense, we can make a strength out of this apparent weakness. References to eros do, or do not, conjure up images of genitality depending on outlook, context, associations and ideology. We can therefore work with a spectrum of suggestive possibilities and eros stands as one of those terms without a fixed meaning whose value Popper emphasized.

For example, Freud's conception of eros underwent numerous modifications. Laplanche & Pontalis point out that the place of sexuality in Freud's thinking changed radically (1973, p. 242). First, it was seen as a subversive and problematic force. Then, when Freud developed his idea of the life and death instincts (1940), it was the death instinct that was 'the problem' and, strangely, sexuality that which helped to overcome it. In fact, Freud did not always equate sexuality and genital activity; he wrote of his concept of libido as identical to 'the Eros of the poets and philosophers which holds all living things together' (1920, p. 50). Eros is also referred to in terms of a 'more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed' (1923, p. 40). This suggests that Freud's evolving concept of eros, even prior to the dual instinct theory, was rather broad. In 1910, he stated that 'libido' not only refers to genital sexual drives but also to everything covered by *lieben* (to love) (Freud, 1910b). Could it be that, in his choice of a term with sexual connotations to encapsulate the life instincts, Freud struck essentially the same stratum of unconscious imagery as Jung and his alchemists? Jung felt that Freud took bodily sexuality too literally but Jung's Freud was often quite out of date and wide of the mark in other respects. Jung's view (CW 16, para. 533) was that, unless a certain degree of consciousness was attained, growth and change in the psyche would have to be expressed by sexual symbolism *faute de mieux* and that there was always a risk that things would get stuck there, either taken too literally (Freud) or not applied within a human frame (alchemy).

Briefly, we might add that even the so-called 'sexual revolution' has done nothing to remove the numinous aspects of sexuality nor mankind's hunger for authentic relationship.

Jung, too, used 'eros' in a variety of ways. Sometimes he equates eros with sexuality or eroticism (CW 7, paras. 16–34, written in 1943). More often, he writes of eros as an archetypal principle of psychological functioning—connectedness, relatedness, harmony, and named for Eros the lover of Psyche and son of Aphrodite. Sometimes the principle eros is referred to as a 'feminine' principle. This implies a complementary relationship with a 'masculine' principle (logos, 'the word', rationality, logic, intellect, achievement). Our current knowledge of the relativity of gender qualities makes Jung's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' problematic and this becomes marked when he claims that men operate under logos and women under eros (CW 10, paras. 158, 255). There is a confusion between references to qualities which anyone might possess (which *might* be named masculine or feminine for whatever reason) and real men and women.

On the other hand, Jung was also of the opinion that eros and logos coexist and balance each other within an individual's psyche and irrespective of anatomical sex. Elsewhere, I have referred to this as the feminist side of Jung

(Samuels, 1984): 'it is the function of Eros to unite what Logos has sundered' (CW 10, para. 275).

Sometimes Jung moves beyond sex and gender qualities and even beyond complementarity: 'Eros is a *kosmogonos*, a creator and a father–mother of all higher consciousness' (1963, p. 386).

The earlier claim that erotic feelings are necessary for analysis should be considered alongside a more detailed examination of what is meant by 'erotic' in terms of a personal relationship. We can identify five aspects of this. First there is eroticism as an adjunct to reproduction. Then there is the possibility of lust. Thirdly, the partners perceive each other as individuals; hence caring, romantic and aesthetic factors come into play. This occurs alongside projective and introjective processes. Next, we can speak of a spiritual dimension and each partner is deeply enhanced by the presence and impact of the other. Finally, an awareness dawns of a relationship quality that is very difficult to define. Jung's word for this was *sapientia* or wisdom and he reminds us that this is what Solomon chose when he could have had anything he wanted (CW 16, para. 361). We can now find other meanings in Jung's gnomic utterance about

the mystery of life being hidden between two (see above). One cannot pick and choose which of these aspects of eros will occur in analysis; nor will they appear in any given order—indeed, they may all be working in parallel having been present in potential form from the onset. The need is to unpack what is meant by *erotic*, giving each nuance its due and hence moving beyond fear or inhibition.

These remarks about the centrality of eros in therapy can be seen as an addition to Searles' observation of the inevitability of erotic feelings and fantasies in both patient and analyst in the clinical situation (1959). Briefly, Searles distinguishes the analyst's reciprocal response to erotic transference from his neurotic countertransference. The latter springs from a course *other* than the analytical realationship. Then there is the analyst's narcissistic pleasure in his patient's growth. Finally, the analyst has to explore the essential loveableness of the patient as a person who matters to him. Given this range of possibilities, we may even say 'no eros, no analysis'. Searles is pointing out that romantic and erotic fantasies and feelings towards the patient figure prominently in an analyst's experience. This remains true when the patient and analyst are of the same sex. Aside from homosexual desire, homoerotic feelings may take the form of identification with the patient, intense feelings of friendship or of rivalry, or voyeuristic fantasy. Again, such involvement is inevitable. It should be noted that Searles does not advocate 'confession' save in certain circumstances. And we know that failure to recall the symbolic dimension leads to sexual acting out with its damaging consequences. But the movement from sensual and concrete to symbolic cannot simply be wished into being; the 'lower' state and the 'higher' each has its place.

The argument suggests why the question of sexual activity between patient and analyst remains of perennial interest. Provided we interpret what looks like prurience as an involvement at an unconscious level with symbols of growth, cultural preoccupation with patient/therapist sex is not far off the mark (cf. Carotenuto, 1982) ; (Malcolm, 1982) ; (Taylor, 1982) ; (Ulanov, 1979). The present aim is to re-value eros in analytical therapy, moving beyond a reductive perspective which concentrates on infantile eroticization of feeling or behaviour to a more positive estimation.

EROS AND AGAPE

There has been considerable interest in analytical psychology in *agape*, defined as non-erotic, disinterested love. According to Lambert, it is agape that enables an analyst to control his retaliatory fantasies *vis-à-vis* his patient (Lambert, 1981,

pp. 40–1). Yet, as we have seen, in the absence of a connexion which is truly erotic, transformation may not take place. Can eros ever be divorced from agape? Does not the act of helping bring its own pleasure and gratification (cf. Lambert, 1981, p. 42) ? The risk in leaving eros out or not specifying its presence is that the therapist's power shadow or the reparative fantasies accompanying his choice of profession are avoided. He is cut off from his own unconscious and hence unable to use his countertransference at all. In fact, there was a time when eros and agape were not regarded as separate (p. 39). It is not my intention to set up a new

either/or polarity; *sapientia* may represent the ultimate integration of agape and eros. Agape, and qualities such as survival, reliability, flexibility, understanding, do remain of the utmost importance for sexuality is not the only force in analysis, nor constantly present in the analysis of any one patient.

In contrast to Lambert, other post-Jungian writers such as Plaut (1977) and Stein (1974) have continued to develop Jung's thesis that incestuous regression is a necessity for psychological growth (CW 5). The erotic involvement of patient and analyst, hopefully understood in the terms just outlined and therefore not acted upon, is the analytical version of this psychological theme. The principle must be 'as much eros in analysis as necessary, not as much as possible'. The incest impulse and the incest taboo are as natural as each other. To stress the taboo but ignore the impulse may well provide a frustration-based boost to consciousness but this will be spurious, desiccated, intellectual. To stress the impulse but not the taboo leads to short-lived pleasure and the risk of exploitation of the patient's vulnerability by the analyst or, conversely, to the patient's capitalizing on his more than special connexion to a powerful authority figure. We might add to this that it is one function of the incest prohibition to force an individual to consider with whom he may or may not mate. He has, therefore, to regard a potential partner *as an individual* ; this stems from the limiting of his choices by the taboo. In addition, the prohibition forces libido out of its exclusively sexual channel into a deeper venture. This is demonstrated by Figure 4 which precedes Figure 3 in the *Rosarium* illustrations: the queen is preventing intercourse with her hand. However, the implication is that such deepening requires an integration of its carnal foundation. It would be interesting to discuss whether there are differences which require stating between the experiences in this area of male and female workers. I take it as an assumption that a male may appear as female in the transference and vice versa, and that age differences may not impinge as they would in ordinary social circumstances.

Lest these reflections be considered Jungian fancies, we should note Searles' further suggestion that acknowledgement of attraction between father and daughter or mother and son is at least as important a factor in the resolution of the Oedipus complex as identification with the same sex parent. Only if this has taken place can an individual feel desirable and viable as a sexual being (1959). In my experience, it is more often female patients who have suffered injury in this regard. This is because men tend to be cautious about becoming erotically involved with their daughters whereas a mother will have experienced a closer and earlier physical bond with all her children and hence be less anxious of her own oedipal impulses. The father's failure to participate in a mutual attraction and mutual, painful renunciation of erotic fulfilment with his daughter may take several forms: mockery of her sexuality, over-strictness or indifference.

Similarly, Kohut (1982) has stressed the role of the Oedipus complex in promoting inter-generational alliance as much as inter-generational conflict. For father and son to work together, for mother and daughter to get along, it is necessary for contrasexual attraction to have taken place. Then father and son will have loved the same woman, mother and daughter the same man. It is one base from which to proceed.

A further parallel to be drawn is with the omnipresence of eros at difference stages of normal development: eros towards the self in healthy narcissism, the pleasure of mother and baby in each other, oedipal attractions. Furthermore, we speak of the gradual emergence of the erotogenic zones and the different modes of relatedness associated with each. Eros in analysis may be seen as equally *normative*: we should expect eros and speculate on its absence in terms of psychopathology. This would be a different conceptualization from those which express surprise or concern at the *presence* of eros. The yardstick is passion, so that states of anger, hatred and envy may also be considered from an eros standpoint: is there warmth there? Or a more schizoid coldness? The idea has use in initial interviews, for example. The analyst would be more concerned if he were not stirred by the prospective patient. Though the capacity to move others has its sociopathic variants, it is also a sign of a level of emotional development.

COUNTERTRANSFERENCE AND BODY

One implication of our focus on the many different aspects of eros in therapy is that events

within the analyst's own body and his perception of them acquire a greater significance. Recently I conducted a research survey into the non-neurotic countertransference experiences of over thirty analysts and therapists. The hypothesis and results of this project has been published elsewhere (Samuels, 1985) but there is one aspect of the research which is helpful here. Of the 76 specific countertransferences reported by means of questionnaire, about a third consisted primarily of a bodily response—falling asleep, aches and pains, strange sensations, sexual arousal. Another third of the responses referred mainly to feeling states, many of which found expression and were noted in the therapist's body—anger, depression, frustration. (The remaining third of the experiences were fantasies in the therapist, some of which were erotic; there was also some overlap.)

Bearing this data in mind, there is an empirical background to the claim that it is his body, functioning as an organ of perception, that provides an analyst with information about his patient. The nature and quality of his erotic involvement then becomes an important specific instance of a general phenomenon. We may go further and assert that, though it *is* the therapist's own body that is involved and the sensation is quite real, that body is also an imaginal body—in Corbin's phrase, a 'subtle body' (1972). That is, on one countertransference level the therapist's body does not belong to him at all but to a virtual midpoint between him and his patient. We should regard even the most corporeal countertransferences as images because of a lack of the external stimulus that would usually be necessary to produce such a response. The analyst's 'countertransference body' inhabits the *Mundus Imaginalis* —a topic to which we shall return.

CASE ILLUSTRATION

The following two vignettes from an analysis illustrate my theme. In one of them, some sexual acting out occurs. Looking back, I can see that this unfortunate event happened just because I had been denying sexual feelings for the patient. I was therefore cut off from a symbolic understanding of the feelings and hence completely out of touch with my patient's internal world. In the second incident, I was much more aware of what my body was trying to tell me.

The patient was a young, unmarried woman from overseas who had come here to study and also to escape a difficult family background. She had had a previous analysis which broke down when she and her analyst became sexually

involved. There were other erotic entanglements with 'forbidden' authority figures.

One day in the first year of work, after we had been talking about the previous analysis, just as she was going, I asked her to look out of the window and give me some advice concerning the garden, which had often appeared in her material. By this spontaneous and unprecendented invitation, I played a full part in initiating what happened next. For the garden had been a symbol of my personal relationship with my partner, as far as this patient was concerned. As we were standing side by side, looking at the garden through the window, she gave me a kiss on the cheek. Then when we had moved towards the door, we embraced. I was sexually excited by this but was able to manage to control myself. I felt too guilty to go on with it and, perhaps, could indulge my rivalry with the previous analyst by *not* succumbing in the way he had. My restraint therefore a competitive shadow in it. But something also made me prevent myself from leaping away and so we continued in our embrace for a short while. Afterwards, I could understand what I had empathized at the moment of our physical contact: there was a pressing need for an affirmation of her erotic viability and also for the chance to have a relationship with a father-figure in which this would not be acted out. At one point, in a later session, I said to her that I could easily see us in bed together and that the thought excited me but that, even though we both wanted to, we were not going to do it; we would both have to work towards an acceptance of that.

The second incident occurred after four years' work. I had the very strong impression of being in an enormous desert, as the bottom of a wadi. Looking over my shoulder, I could see my footsteps stretching into the distance. I felt a thirst so intense I thought I should have to excuse myself and leave the room to get a drink. Instead, something made me tell the patient of my fantasy. Quite unruffled, she replied by saying that this was the desert where, during the war, her father

had met the man who probably became his lover and certainly became her mother's lover. A mosaic of relationships from which she was excluded and to which she felt inferior came into focus in a way they had not done before: father and lover, mother and lover, father and mother. It was, from the relationship angle, a desert nd, moreover, one in which she was still lost. We went on, in that session and subsequently, to talk much more deeply about the lack of erotic feedback from her father, how this had made it difficult to relate to men on anything other than seductress/anima/inspiratrice terms. In fact, in her

childhood this reached a climax when the lover of both of her parents made a sexual move towards her. As far as the analysis was concerned, the implications of the earlier incident had been worked through. For, during that first period of analysis, I had not known consciously where the area of her emotional deprivation lay.

Using the ideas worked out in this paper, the interpersonal *coniunctio*, which eventually forced its way into consciousness, fed into an internal realignment or *coniunctio* of the patient's internal imagery. In this instance, what shifted was the image of herself in relation to a man; more sure of herself erotically, she could function in a more independent way (for example, at work) and emerge from her Lolita-like position. Preoccupation with her sexual prowess was transformed into an on-going internal exploration.

Certain areas of the analyst's experience are also highlighted: for instance, the need to be aware of bodily erotic feelings as a foundation for understanding. The analyst's being 'in' the treatment just as much as the patient was shown both by my unconsciousness and what I gained from the eventual awareness. This gain was an increased understanding of competitiveness as a motivation for being a 'good' analyst and a comprehension of my seductiveness towards female patients. And I obtained something of value on a more personal level.

If we return to our diagram for a moment (Figure 1), intrapsychic processes in me (the acting out) are shown in (2), the unconscious-conscious connexion within the analyst. But something also happened in (6)—the relation of the analyst's unconscious to the patient's unconscious (the 'desert' fantasy). This is an illustration of the *Mundus Imaginalis* hypothesis in practice: the place where images exert their archetypal power, drawing in both participants in analysis and in so deep a manner that their very bodies are affected. Analysis involves the sharing of this imaginal world by two persons, fostered by the erotic link between them. This is shown on the diagram by (4), (5), and, of course, (1). Or, as Jung put it:

> *The unrelated human being lacks wholeness, for he can achieve wholeness only through the soul, and the soul cannot exist without its other side, which is always found in a 'You'. Wholeness is a combination of I and You, ... the conscious union of the ego with everything that has been projected into the 'You'. Hence wholeness is the product of an intrapsychic process which depends essentially on the relation of one individual to another (CW 16, para. 454).*

DARKENING

A focus on the healing aspects of eros in analysis should not obscure an additional impression of a darker side. This was a reason for choosing the illustrative case material. Immersion in alchemical imagery has reinforced the picture of analysis as a 'dark' and difficult process (the *nigredo* of the alchemists). It has been remarked how the so-called 'treasures of the unconscious' involve incest, sado-masochism and all the abhorred parts of personality which are only available 'behind Mother's back' (Redfearn, 1979, p. 190).

Alchemy does not possess a sickness-health schema. Or, rather, everything is regarded as being in a state of disease, dissolution, decay. It is a dark way of looking at life and one which gives a generous place to psychic pain. The search for the *lapis*, the stone, is a search for a breakthrough into the light. Alchemical metaphors therefore support a non-quantitative approach to growth; it is the quality of the 'personal equation' that counts. Winnicott put it like this:

> *We are not only concerned with individual maturity and with the freedom of individuals from mental disorder or psychoneurosis; we are concerned with the richness of individuals in terms not of money but of inner psychic reality ... Richness of quality rather than health is at the top of the ladder of human progress (1962, pp. 65–6).*

What we seek in therapy and analysis is a concentration, deepening, distilling of personality. The minutiae of therapy and the therapeutic relationship help us to keep our feet on the ground. The trivial, the absurd, the ordinary remain the therapist's province. He potters away at his work, part doctor, part artist, part craftsman, part priest. He knows, for all his sophisticated theory and technique, how much is hit and miss. He hardly dares to say what it is that heals and has certainly ceased to speak in terms of cure (cf. Paolino, 1981, p. 87). He works on the earthy and the concrete with metaphor and his metaphor is challenged by bodily and sensual realities. His body and his images blur so that he cannot always say which it is that is active or to whom it belongs. The alchemists did their work in a *laboratorium* but they prayed for its success in an *oratorium*. And written above the door the words: *Deo concedente* —God willing.

SUMMARY

A previous paper sought to establish Jung as a psychoanalytic pioneer and as more in the mainstream of psychodynamic thought than is usually believed. However, this paper examines an interest of Jung's which may be considered to have brought him into disrepute—alchemy. Jung proposed alchemical imagery as a metaphor for transference–countertransference processes in analysis. The paper begins by demonstrating the ubiquity of alchemical imagery in psychological discourse and also the centrality of metaphor as a means of perception and expression. Then Jung's theories about alchemy are detailed, together with his linking of interpersonal relationship and the 'hidden mystery of life'. Alchemy's terms and principles are shown to have a relevance for clinical practice. An interactional mode of analysis is introduced and discussed. Psychoanalysis and analytical psychology have shared in a general re-evaluation of non-neurotic countertransference as having a positive use in analysis. The illustrations to Jung's 'The psychology of the transference' demonstrate the importance of sexual imagery and its symbolic use to illuminate psychological process. This leads to a re-consideration of the role of erotic involvement in analysis. Research data is introduced which highlights the part played in non-neurotic countertransference by the analyst's body. A hypothesis about this is illustrated by clinical material. The paper concludes with some reflections about the practice of analysis.

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