

THE PEARL WITHIN

DISCOVERING THE RICHES OF THE UNDERWORLD

PHILIP LEVINE, M.A.





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Contact:

Philip Levine
490 Spurwink Avenue
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107
philip@cosmicwindow.com

Chapter Eleven

Sex: The *Coniunctio*

MANY OF THE MOST PERVASIVE AND FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS that make up your world and mine—like matter, gravity, magnetism, electricity, and sex—may be taken for granted because we’ve heard their names throughout our lifetimes. But with any reflection we realize that they are truly mysterious and unknown. We can compute the duration and speed of an object falling from a tower or from space through mathematical formulae with great precision. We can determine the strength of attraction between two magnetic fields, whether of heavenly bodies or inside an atom. We can generate enough electricity to light up the planet and to allow instantaneous communication between any two points in our world, or even beyond it.

But we still do not really understand what these things are. We have learned to control and to use them to our great advantage without having penetrated to the Mystery that they express. Just as we discussed with regard to religion and the word “God,” we mislead ourselves through our long familiarity with these terms into believing we understand what they are. And familiarity breeds contempt, some say, or at least complacency. How can we be curious or in awe about something we think we already understand?

As we said very early on, the Mystery is present every moment, in everything, or else it is not the Mystery. In the pause for the right word, the scratching of your head in perplexity because the question or problem doesn’t have a ready answer, the Mystery is right there, requiring only humility and a hunger for depth. But we are so habitual in our skimming of the surface for the quick answer or—if none can be found—the easy dismissal of the problem, that depth is a flavor we need to learn to savor once again.

Nothing probably captures the fascination and deep reaches of the Mystery more than the feelings between lovers. Caught in the attraction that threatens a sweet drowning in the tides of our emotions, we can only wonder in amazement: “Who ARE you? What is this feeling on the edge of out-of-control that draws me on and scares me at the same time?” Feeling like fate or predestination to many, evoking a sense of deep familiarity, romantic love has avoided all attempts to quantify or explain it.¹ Only the poets are able to approach this Mystery at all, just as they are the spokespersons for the Mystery in other realms.

*If you look for the truth outside yourself,
It gets farther and farther away.
Because someone has made up the word
'wave,' do I have to distinguish it
from water?*

*There is a Secret One inside us;
the planets in all the galaxies
pass through his hands like beads.*

That is a string of beads one should look at with luminous eyes.²

It is only the compelling force of romantic love that can make most of us stop long enough to dive into what we do not know. And we can because we have a partner in the task. But all the other mysteries that surround us cannot compete with the frantic pace of our lives. There is no apparent “pay-off” in penetrating them. Yet we will throw everything away and put all our concerns aside for the chance to penetrate another human.

What is going on here?

Why is it that mystics through the ages have tried to express their joys and realizations in the same terms and language that describe romantic love?

Today we are impoverished in so many ways, none more than in our confusion of love, sex and intimacy. Sex has become for so many silicon implants, lots of skin, and tight buns. Talk about how the Mystery has become lost in our shallow literal approach to life! Instead of the mysteries of sexual attraction and pleasure, we have pornography, strip shows, lap dances, and more and more revealing of the body to cover up our sad loss of appreciation for what is not revealed. This is an apt symbol for our loss of the Mystery. We seek it in the most literal and shallow ways, and do not even know what it is we really seek.

What gravity, magnetism, electricity and sex—and romantic love—all have in common is attraction. Something draws bodies together, whether celestial, atomic, electrical or biological. It makes you wonder if our whole universe is not primarily run by attraction. Of course, remembering the opposites we could equally make a case for repulsion as the fuel that drives everything. We have to recall Jung’s statement:

The factors which come together in the coniunctio [conjoining, merging] are conceived as opposites, either confronting one another in enmity or attracting one another in love.

What is he really talking about? What is the *coniunctio*? What are the “factors which come together?”

The imagination of the alchemists, as they sought to unlock the secrets of matter and its transformations, offers a revealing picture of the unconscious psyche’s own behavior, as it was projected onto the outer chemical substances. Inadvertantly for most of them, they provided a powerful and colorful representation of the psyche’s process of its own metamorphoses. And these metamorphoses are not abstractions, they are what you and I are living every day.

The great decisions of human life have, as a rule, far more to do with the instincts and other mysterious unconscious factors than with the conscious will and well-meaning reasonableness.

The psyche dries up, drowns, burns. It turns black, or white, or red. When it does these things, you feel it. It colors your moods, fantasies and desires. It can inflame you or quench you, submerge you or depress you, enlighten you or elate you. This goes on inside of you and me every day. We rarely think about it. And yet we make our decisions based upon these inner states which come to us from a source other than our conscious selves and which we do not understand at all. The alchemists have passed on to us through their lonely and often unrewarding work, for which many of them devoted their adult lives, a glimpse of our hidden roots. For their efforts they are considered idiots and fools, now that the science of chemistry has set us straight about how things REALLY work.

In their fantasy of what they were striving for, their imagery may suggest the symbolic goal of the psyche. Was it gold, the most precious metal, which cannot be corrupted, the highest Value? Or was it the philosophers’ Stone, equally incorruptible and solid as the rock of Gibraltar? Or was it the healing elixir, the medicine which they claimed could cure ALL ills? Most likely it was all these things, as well as the long list of contradictory opposites they used to describe the Stone. Is this Stone our Pearl?

Another favorite image for the alchemists of the successful outcome of their *opus* was the marriage of King and Queen, or Sun and Moon. This seems fitting if the descriptions they left to us of the Stone are so paradoxically filled with pairs of opposites. The human being who has reached the goal of his psychic growth is a marriage of opposites, of conscious ego and unconscious soul. This royal couple was often depicted in sexual embrace. They were merged or fused together, the meaning of “conjoining”.

This makes us wonder about the fact that everything seems to consist of opposites which are “confronting one another in enmity or attracting one another in love.” What is this mysterious force inside of each of us that drives us toward or away from particular people and things?

There have been attempts to explain romantic love with theories of hormonal activity, endorphins and other brain substances, or as the effort to recapture Freud’s childhood desire for the parent of the opposite sex. Perhaps all of these are partially true, but not the whole answer. We may never know what desire really is, but there appear to be two different kinds of desire. The alchemists distinguished between what they called the “crude sulphur” and the “true sulphur,” as sulphur symbolized for them the burning power that moves or motivates us.

The crude or base sulphur could be the raw desires that spring from our ego and its self-centered passions, hungers to feed the separate self and its biological drives. And the true sulphur could be the passion that comes from within to transcend the separate ego self, to fulfill one’s dharma or true Self. Remember when discussing the Fountain of Treviso (see Appendix), Jung said: “The enemy is your own crude sulphur, which burns you with the hellish fire of desirousness.”

The images drawn by some of the alchemists depicting the *coniunctio* show intercourse, or sexual union. This was their way of trying to portray the total merging and coming together of the opposites. This image of the man and woman in sexual embrace (often in a tub of water, making it more of a dissolving/fusing) seems to portray a deep and prevalent quality in the unconscious psyche. So much so, we could imagine it almost as THE driving force in our world. This would be fitting with regard to our discussion of the opposites and how everything is really the dynamic interplay between pairs of opposites.

Ancient myths tell how lovers are really the two sides of one soul that got split in half. The meeting and conjoining of two lovers is really the reuniting of the one soul. What if this fantasy is also true for our individual selves—that we each are half a soul, meaning the ego, the one in us who says “I,” is separated from its other half, and that other half could be what we have been calling Mystery, or unconscious, or Companion, or autonomous psyche? If that were so, we would be in a perpetual state of unfulfilled desire, yearning unconsciously for our “other half.”



Coniunctio from *Rosarium Philosophorum* (1550)

Figure 3

Perhaps that is exactly what is going on in our world of desire. We yearn to find and merge with our other self, which is first presented to us in the form of our shadow. Not an appealing prospect, but if we survive that stage, then behind the shadow come deeper layers of the psyche, emerging from the unconscious in dreams and fantasies, often evoked by real-life human beings (or pets) that stimulate our desire for closeness. What is the ultimate closeness but merging? Thus the confusion of sex, love, intimacy and closeness, both with each other and possibly with what Jung called the “thirsting for eternity.”

Suddenly in the grip of obsession to possess a shiny new car, a fancy new dress, a tenured professorship, the hot young thing down the street, we do not recognize the roots of our desire. Instead we imagine and project our ultimate yearning to merge the separate, isolated and defended ego with its true Nature onto these things and people. Doing so, we expend great amounts of energy and often do damage in our one-sided pursuits, only to find that whatever joy or satisfaction we anticipated may dissipate very quickly and leave us with a sense of emptiness. Is this because we find that the desired object does not fulfill our unconscious fantasies of the wholeness we imagined?

We are not asserting that *all* desire is really a misguided urge to conjoin with our other half, the unconscious Self, or God, or eternity. Just as it is the *exaggerated* and one-sided emotional reaction to others that is a sign of our projection of our shadow qualities, it is the compelling obsession to possess—the *need* to have it—and the sense of futility or disappointment with the outcome that signifies a deeper unconscious motive at work than normal desire.

But we also discussed how desire serves the alchemical process of *coagulatio*, leading us to deeper involvement in the life of material pursuits and the specific here-in-this-moment and at-this-particular-point-in-space life we live. It seems desire both draws us deeper into the ego life of concrete matter, and can also motivate our detachment from, or transcendence of, that life of ego.

In fact, there could be a third kind of yearning or desire which was described in alchemical literature and in Freudian psychology as being quite dangerous. This would be the longing to return to the womb, to merge regressively with the source we came from, interpreted in a literal way by Freud as incestuous sexual desires for the mother. Most people upon hearing Freud's ideas find them incredible: to think that I could have wanted to sleep with my mother when I was a little boy! But as absurd as this sounds, it most likely points to something there, even if not literal sexual desire.

So we have three types of desire or yearning:

1. **Longing for a return** to the comfort and security of the womb, before you were born, which is a retreat from life and a giving up of any individuality. Examples are all around us: the sacrifice of individual differences in order to have a relationship or to belong to a group that offers safety; "cocooning" with drugs, alcohol, television or other escapes in order to avoid risking failure, exposure, or vulnerability; clinging to habit and family tradition so as to avoid the loneliness of standing on your own.
2. **Longing for objects**, situations and people, in order to be with them, find closeness which we imagine will bring comfort and peace, a sense of well-being and fulfillment. Examples: the new car we must have, the man or woman we can't live without, the job or promotion that we crave. It is not unnatural to want things, but this feels more driven, like our life is somehow at stake and to fail will mean doom.
3. **Longing for God**, for enlightenment and liberation, but for what purpose? This is critical, because it is easy for many to pursue spiritual goals in order to escape life. This suggests that they are still being controlled by the activity of the pairs of opposites—in this case either dirty, sweaty, suffocating material life with its limitations and responsibilities, or a kind of high and free "above it all" transcendence to be with God. The latter is really another ego defense disguised as spirituality, a type of "getting high."

We are imagining here that "true" longing for God (whatever that may really be) is not an escape, but a merging into a larger and more inclusive identity, bringing with it an even greater sense of being in this world, of manifestation, sacrifice, and a larger consciousness which includes previously separated opposites.

Incest is defined as "from *incestus*: sexual intercourse between persons so closely related that they are forbidden by law to marry." Freud's use of that fantasy, something he inferred from his pathological patients, refers to a taboo subject, the sexual relations between father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister. It is completely characteristic of the very literal and materialistic 19th-century thinking.

"Incest" as a fantasy of the unconscious psyche would then imply the merging of two elements closely related, of same origin or background, or perhaps the merging together of something with its "mother." If we

abstract ourselves from the literal sex aspect (which does occur and is taboo) and see into the fantasy, then incest would be the merging of your ego self with its source, the unconscious, the early womb environment we described in #1 above “Longing for a return to the comfort and security of the womb.”

This is one of the main reasons why the journey we are taking here is so dangerous. If one is not mature enough, or stable enough, then there is a real risk that the personality could disintegrate by regressing backwards to an “incestuous” relationship with its source (or “mother”) which is the unconscious. Then we have schizophrenia or psychosis. This would be a “negative *coniunctio*,” a merging or fusion that obliterates the ego personality, not in a spiritual transcendence but in a drowning death and loss of self.

Ken Wilber has described in his writings the “pre/trans fallacy.”³ He believes that modern psychology/psychiatry has confused the descriptions of mystics and sages who have achieved a genuine consciousness beyond (“trans”) typical ego consciousness with the experience of regression back (“pre”) before consciousness. Both are described in terms that refer to a blotting out, immersing or swallowing up of the ego’s conscious identity. But in one case the ego’s identity is lost in an incestuous return to the bliss of life before (“pre”) consciousness, and in the other the ego has transcended (“trans”) its solitary stance by merging with a greater and more inclusive consciousness (“Self”) spontaneously or through meditation.

In this fallacy, modern psychology denies any possibility of achieving a state of awareness beyond that of our everyday ego (because it cannot be measured quantitatively), thus assuming that the teachings of great Eastern and Western sages are only the babblings of psychotics. This denial of any kind of progressive future path of consciousness leaves us in a spiritual cul-de-sac. We have reached the limits of “me, me, me” and have nowhere to advance to. It does seem rather absurd for the advocates of “normality” and of the defended ego to be passing judgment on states of awareness that they have never experienced. Yet that is the official position on these matters.

Let us slow things down here and try to get our bearings. This is not easy for us to fathom, again because we are talking about the fish and the water it lives in—we are so immersed in desire and longing that we rarely step back and look at it.

We can bring in here a different perspective that may allow us to understand the role desire plays in our lives, how this ties into the mission to retrieve the Pearl, the encounter with the opposites and the unconscious, the facing of our buried shadow and the discovery of the Companion, the pursuit of the gold, elixir, or Stone, or the *coniunctio* of the alchemists and their imagery. All of these are really quite personally important, as they pertain to your journey back to your Home after losing your way, like the hero sent for the Pearl.

We referred earlier in our sketch of human evolution to a sequence that appears to begin with the person embedded in a tribal group (Chapter Six). At first what is important is the existence of many human beings in order to provide the membership for a group at all. Individuality and differences are not suitable when the goal of evolution is the formation of a group. The child is first initiated into the customs and rules of the family, in order to be a member of the family, so that the family will be preserved. The child is also indoctrinated with the traditions and customs of his or her ethnic culture and/or nationality for the same reason.

In all these cases, the group or collective and its needs dominate the individual. Individuality and its differentness are a luxury, only safely indulged in when the collective stability and security of the group are ensured. But looking backward in time we can see that eventually the individual did emerge from the group, and differences became more accentuated as a way of defining the person as distinct from everyone else. We could call this the emergence of the ego in the history of human consciousness.

The ego is the vehicle of individual development. It emphasizes being separate, individual, different, and defends its turf against the influences of the group. That is its nature and probably part of its purpose. Without the ego, we would all still be members of the masses, following like sheep. In our times we like to think we don’t do that anymore, yet careful observation of ourselves and our environment would show that the original need for safety in numbers and belonging is not gone.

If the ego prefers to think of itself as the ultimate ruling authority in the personality, then it may be necessary for the comfort of the ego that our earlier needs, for being a member of the herd and like everyone else, be rendered unconscious and part of the shadow. So we may follow the group in a devious way in order to preserve the illusion that we don't need them and are somehow more conscious or advanced in our growth. To really emerge from the group and to stand on your own is much more terrifying than we like to admit. Sacrificing the safety of numbers takes a strong personality. It invites attack from the other members of the family or society who are threatened ("what if everyone thought they could do this?") and makes it necessary to find a new foundation for security. The tribal group is supported by the unquestioned authority of the instincts and also its traditions.

So much of psychotherapy over its short history has been centered on this difficult initiation wherein a person needs to emerge from the safety of the collective to the stage of individual ego. Either the person cannot take the step because of the fear of standing alone, or the resistance of others, or the stepping out makes necessary some damaging behaviors that require healing and repair of family and social relationships, or the now-separated ego flounders without the necessary inner authority, strength and support.

As Freud discovered, the ego wins its independence by overcoming the compulsive domination of the instincts—what he called the *id*. But when the ego learns to sever its connection to the body and its natural instincts, it risks losing its unquestioned authority. What will it stand on now? Do we need to adapt to the norm around us, or will that cost us newly won individuality? These are some of the major problems facing would-be individuals in our times.

Perhaps our present discussion can provide some perspective on these issues. We must remember that our theme here is not sociological or therapeutic, but based on the pressing need we have in our time to recognize the reality and great importance of our neglected inner world. These developmental issues can be seen as originating inside of us, and the possible resolution of these problems may only be found within. Thus to remain neglectful of our interior will probably only prolong our difficulties.

Heroism and the Outward Arc

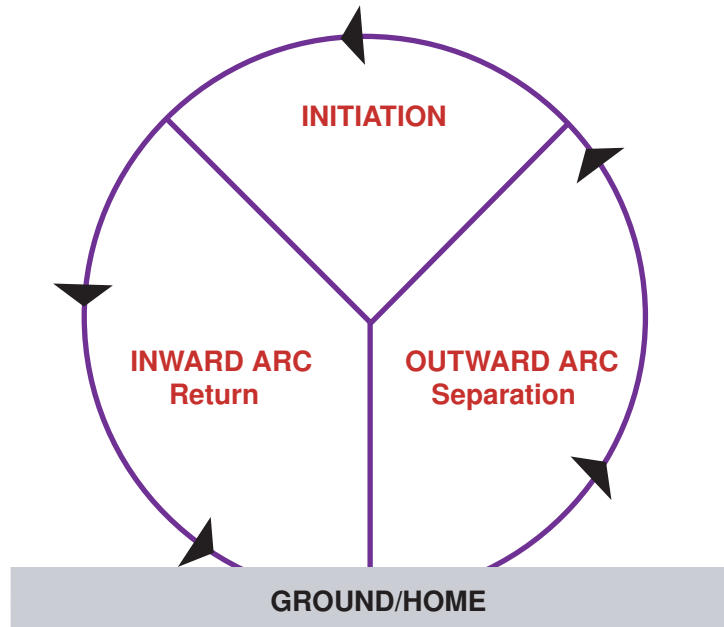
There is a repetitive motif that runs throughout mythology and religion. The fact that it appears so frequently and in so many different unrelated times and places suggests that this theme is inherently built into our unconscious psyche, as if part of the psyche's own history. Joseph Campbell studied comparative mythology and was able to identify certain sequences that stood out, regardless of the specific characters or settings of differing cultures. In his book, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*⁴, he described a prevalent type of dramatic structure found in many myths—the journey of the hero. This is relevant for us here for at least two reasons: first, we have been following the "Hymn of the Pearl" as a symbolic story which suggests striking parallels to our current predicament, i.e. finding ourselves lost, without a memory of the purpose that got us here, and descending into chaotic behavior because the central core meaning for our journey has been forgotten, become unconscious.

The story of the Pearl is a perfect example of the mythological theme described by Campbell, what he and others would call the archetype of the hero (see figure 2). The hero leaves his home and familiar surroundings, goes on a journey or quest, sometimes alone and sometimes with a companion, seeking a treasure (golden fleece, pearl, etc) which is hard to attain, often guarded by dangerous monsters or natural challenges. He undergoes a test or ordeal, by battling the monsters, scaling the cliff, enduring torture, avoiding seduction, etc. and if he succeeds, he retrieves the treasure and returns as the hero, saving the land or the people, redeeming the king or somehow bringing healing and salvation as the result of his trials. In our

story, the letter from his parents is the crucial factor that restores the hero's memory and sets him back upon his intended path.

THE HEROIC JOURNEY OF INITIATION

derived from Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*



"The hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." (page 30)

Figure 2

The second reason for citing Campbell's map of the heroic journey is that modern psychology has often described the development of our ego as following exactly the same theme: the ego leaves its safe and protected environment (unconscious bliss, the womb, the Garden of Eden) and ventures into the world, facing challenges and trials, with a heroic attitude of domination, unyielding determination, and macho pride. The ego wrests its independence from the jaws of the dragon, or snake, or bloodthirsty monsters, which are interpreted as the instinctual drives buried in the unconscious. If successful, the ego acquires the light of reason, freedom of choice, and the strength to stand alone and to lead.

Some schools of psychology have recognized that, in its necessary effort to free itself from its mother's (the unconscious) domination by instinct, the ego heroically must spurn the feminine qualities of the mother, like safe containment, close nurturing, and warmth and comfort. Just as the aborigine feels it necessary to noisily and roughly snatch the adolescent boy from his mother's arms, the ego has to fight aggressively for its freedom, because passivity means death or still-birth⁵. This is not just a story of a psychological abstraction or of heroes from ancient myths; it is the story of you and me, who to this day are threatened by the possibility of being taken back into the womb of the unconscious if we do not continue to fight in this aggressive way to maintain our independence.

So Campbell's heroic journey is what we have been describing in part. You have left home in at least two ways. You have left the safety (if it WAS safe) of the family and your mother to venture into the world,

where you must heroically strive to establish yourself against the regressive pulls of your own fears and doubts, your greedy and lustful instincts, and the threats of the outer objective world as well (trickery, deceit, competition, domination by the collective in its need for conformity). Secondly, you as the ego have left the safety of the unconscious and heroically sought survival as a responsible freely self-conscious and willing human being.

The very important implication of both Campbell's work and our "Hymn of the Pearl" is that *there is a further step to be taken*. What matters most here is to recognize that in fact deep in your psyche, conditioning you since at least birth, is a necessity, whether we call it scientifically evolution, or theologically God's Will, or just a Mystery. This "calling" has demanded that humanity take the step forward, out of our prehistoric past, to move beyond being instinctive animals controlled by aggression and desire, part of the herd serving what we call "instinct," to a more "enlightened" stance in which we are capable of reflection and choice. Ideally it is the ego who reflects and chooses.

Quite often, however, it is still the instinctive so-called "lower" self who makes the choices for us, and the ego only serves to rationalize and justify what our instincts choose. This is a deceptive pretense, and the cause of so much of our difficulty. By pretending we are making choices with conscious reflection and logical thought, we do not reflect upon our real motives, and the world remains a prehistoric jungle in so many ways, only with more modern architecture and technologically sophisticated weapons.

In addition, in your life and mine, we are repeating the same pattern as our human race. You also have left the early womb and the life dominated by instinct that is so appropriate for the young child, and have tried to forge a more mature and conscious approach. This is the development of your own ego, partly forced by socialization that teaches you that to pursue only selfish and greedy goals that are purely self-serving will not be tolerated. But we have the same problem as humanity as a whole—you and I often pretend to have arrived at a choice by clear thinking and reflection, when in fact what we do is driven by unconscious motives closer to the Neanderthal.

To emphasize the most important point—there is largely agreement that you and I both as individuals and as members of the human race have arrived here as the result of an ongoing heroic struggle to free ourselves from being unconsciously embedded in tribal instinctive desires (called *participation mystique*). Though we may overestimate our gains, and be more subject to the past we claim to have defeated than we wish to realize, we are still very much involved in the heroic struggle. That heroic quest is one which we can see is "out" from being contained in the family or tribe, "out" toward greater freedom and independence, "up" from our prehistoric roots in the earth and in nature—"out" and "up."

But Campbell, the "Hymn of the Pearl", and other myths and fantasies all indicate that life is NOT only a linear movement in a single direction—"out" and "up"—and away from our source, whether the jungle, the earth, the mother's womb or the unconscious. In each case there is a turning point, a reversal, a *metanoia*, or an *enantiodromia*, such as we described in our discussion of the opposites. We have pretty much believed that our human history has been a single forward movement from ignorance and instinct to enlightened thought and rational self-awareness, from unconscious to consciousness. This belief is—according to the myths from the mysterious unconscious—false. We have been told by the unconscious that we are only seeing a partial picture. In our modern neglect of the unconscious and its messages, we have gone dangerously too far down (really *up*) a path that diverges more and more from our true journey. We are ignoring its messages from our past and its signs in the present.

It is only natural that if we ignore the unconscious Mystery which is capable of a greater perspective than that of the ego, we will continue to pursue the ego's direction without ever turning. If our evolutionary goal as human being was to move "out" and "up" in order to gain freedom from the earth, body, and tribe, or if your personal goal was to move "out" and "up" from the womb and passive conformity to instinct and collective norms, then *why not* keep going? There is nothing in the ego or the world we have built upon that upward and outward movement that can show us what's next. But the unconscious has left us signs in our myths and does so every day in our dreams and fantasies.

On the day this book began, at virtually the same moment, the space shuttle Columbia crashed to the earth. Psychics and fortunetellers rushed in, as they always do after a catastrophe, to tell us what it meant. If it has

any meaning at all, beyond the scientific and cause-and-effect reasons for its happening, at the very least it can be said that it represents a movement “down.”

In Campbell’s image (figure 2) there is an Outward Arc and an Inward Arc. The hero journeys first away from his source and home (out), just as the hero of the “Hymn of the Pearl” does. Like the prodigal son in the Bible, there can be no return home if we do not leave. There can be no life lived if we do not leave the safety of womb and mother. We will simply die someday with life unlived. The Outward Arc serves two purposes: to take the hero out and away from his embeddedness in the unconscious (**phase 1** of our cycle in [Figure 1](#)) and the familiar, and to lead the hero to his initiation trial (**phase 2**).

The Inward Arc: A Different Heroism

So the story of the hero has both an Outward Arc, leading to initiation, and an Inward Arc, returning to the source—what we have been calling our journey Home, to our True Self. These are just words, conveying no literal sense of what these images really stand for. But they are all we have. We must not take them literally, but symbolically as fantasy.

We have reached the end of the Outward Arc. We are in danger of failing our initiation and not returning. It is time to stop our linear movement “out” and “up.” It is time to reverse ourselves and begin moving “in” and “down.” The frantic activity, speeding up of time, loss of quiet and stillness, are all pathological defenses to avoid “in” and “down.” We do not value inward and downward. A “downward” trend means only one thing today: defeat, loss and failure. “Out” and “up” are at their peak. Their opposites—“in” and “down”—are eclipsed and needing to reassert their presence.

At the time of initiation, the hero faces the need to reverse the direction and attitude that brought him there. Overcoming the dragon, retrieving the treasure, it is time to STOP the quest, because it is over. The hero does not make a life of permanently going after every dragon in the universe. He cannot do this, because he now is responsible for what happens to the treasure—the Pearl, the golden fleece, whatever he has attained through his sacrifices, endurance of ordeals, and heroic acts. To continue in the same manner would make no sense. We would say he has become addicted to his role as hero, or at least to the first part of his journey. Because isn’t it also the hero’s role to return to the source with the treasure for the betterment and redemption of all? He doesn’t go home just to retire in a mansion and drive expensive cars. He brings back what he won, because he won it for all of us, and it is his destiny to bring it back to share.

And here we are. We have won (but are not finished winning) our separation from being lost and unconsciously embedded in nature. We have gone so far that we cannot stop seeing nature and instinct as our enemy, something to be conquered. We will never conquer nature. All we can hope to do is gain the freedom of choice inside of ourselves so that we are not unconsciously compelled by appetites and fears, nature within us. Nature shows us almost every day with her earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes, and droughts that we are nothing. It is not literal nature that we were meant to be victorious over, but the “natural”—because primitive and unconscious—drives we inherit by being biological beings.

Now our mindless mission, which has lost perspective, is our own worst enemy, not nature or dragons. The time calls for us to recognize the Inward Arc, the return with our treasure of self-awareness back to our Source. We do not even see our treasure, only our adversary, nature, and our compulsive need to win, to be the hero, to go up and up and out and out, conquering more and more frontiers. The new frontier is not outer space, but inner space. And we will need to turn ourselves around if we are to begin to fulfill the hero’s journey. We are being sent a letter, like our hero in the “Hymn of the Pearl,” a letter reminding us of who we really are and where we have come from. The letter, however, is also inside, and if we do not turn our attention in that direction then we will find that the world around us will increasingly continue to show, by disaster and violence and disrespect for life, that we have lost the way and are going too far.

Consider this: we seem to have originated in a state of unity. Once you and I were ONE. One thing. Not separate or different. We can see this in the myths of creation, where from a state of oneness comes separa-

tion of heaven and earth, above and below. We talked about this as the beginning of the pairs of opposites. We can also see it in the current creation myth of the Big Bang. Science theorizes that out of some kind of formless single substance came an intense and sudden “explosion” sending matter in all directions, and only later did it become separated different elements, which then formed stars, planets and eventually life.

Or if myths are too distant and abstract, how about yourself? You began as a zygote. Your mother’s egg received your father’s sperm cell. We ALL have this in common. Out of that one cell came all the cells that eventually made you who and what you are right now.

So whether it’s ancient myth, modern science creation theory, or obstetrics, the idea is still the same: if we look deeply at our origins, which is what we have been calling our original “Home,” we can see that we originated in a state of oneness or unity, and from that state we came forth by the process of separation and multiplication. The One became the Many. And here we are. Multiplicity and variety are the order of the day. So many different opinions, beliefs, systems. In our discussion of the interplay of opposites and the cycles of their movement, we saw that they swing back and forth between their two poles—first with one almost totally dominant, then reversing and shrinking while at the same time, its opposite grows in power until it dominates.

Here we have the pair of opposites (maybe the original two), One and Many. The “Outward Arc” we have been looking at from the various hero myths, where the hero leaves home, like our own “Hymn of the Pearl,” is our journey from the original One to the present multiple Many. But Many, if persisted in, leads ultimately to fragmentation, chaos and disintegration. What is “dis-integration” but the loss of a unifying center which holds things together? If we took the Sun from our solar system, we and all the other planets would just fly off forever into space, because the Sun’s gravity would no longer hold everything in orbit.

The hero’s myth shows that the Outward Arc leads to a moment of crisis, an ordeal or initiation. This moment could be seen to be the same as the mysterious point of reversal, of *metanoia*, or *enantiodromia*. It is an abstract version of our own personal turning point—the midlife crisis. For half a lifetime of moving “out” and “up,” out of the womb, out of the family, out of our early roots and groups, we follow a quest into the world, to carve out our own place where we feel we belong, where we can provide for ourselves and perhaps for others we love. But this is not the *only* direction for one’s life, just the first.

There naturally and necessarily comes a reversal of this direction, a turning point, which we vaguely name “midlife.” We are familiar with many of the signs or symptoms of this crisis, but have very little understanding of its real significance. From the One to the Many—the journey from simple unity to a variety of multiplicity. Then the initiation, the crisis of reversal, meaning that the dominance of the drive to go outward and to multiply must reverse itself. And this means that the power of the One, of unity and integration ascends once again, just as it ruled over our beginnings. For the first half of life we feel that we are moving “out” and away from our birth. After midlife, if we have navigated it successfully, our direction reverses and we are no longer moving away from our birth, but “in” and toward our death. This is hard to grasp if you think of death as only depressing and morbid.

We enter this life from a mysterious unknown place which feels like unity, and we depart to a similarly mysterious unknown place which feels like unity. Could they be the same, as the Buddhists and other religions imply? Death announces itself increasingly at midlife in the death or disablement of parents, the body’s gradual or sudden loss of youthful appearance and potency, the growing up of our children, and dreams of *mortificatio* themes, like corpses and graves, nightmares with heart palpitations and sweat, as if time is running out. Do we meet these shocking announcements with a desire to understand and to adapt, do we turn and flee as fast as we can, or reactively ramp up our heroic stance as if we can overcome the passage of time?

Reversal IS a shock.

In our culture we are not presented with the model of meeting our mortal limits willingly. Death is something we must fight against heroically, even if we know we cannot win. The stereotypical man of middle age who suddenly leaves his wife (because she is aging just as he is) for a much younger woman and a motorcycle is in full flight from death.

Midlife and beyond is a time (or should be) of assimilation, of gathering “in” the results of our quest and its challenges and rewards, and of integrating the various achievements, and lessons of defeat—inner and outer—into a sense of fulfilling wholeness, a feeling that we are One whole human being. Perhaps this is what the period we call “retirement” is meant to be. Not just a ceasing of work and instead traveling or living by the sea. That is what retirement looks like when it’s only seen on its surface, from the outside. But inside, if one still has any inner life, it is time for memories, recollections, and digestion of the life we have lived—bringing family, career, tragedies and victories into a single package, which is who we are. We could call this an alchemical *distillatio*, in which the precious gold is distilled from the debris.

Extending our perspective back out a bit, the hero’s journey, which we have just compared with one individual life with its crisis of reversal at midlife, has an Inward Arc. What is this really and what does it mean for us?

If we have journeyed both as individuals and as the human race outward from unity to multiplicity, from the One to the Many, then the Inward Arc implies a reversal. From the Many to the One. The perennial picture of human evolution that has been taught for centuries by sages is one that goes from the One to the Many and back to the One. The journey back to our original Home is this path back to the One, the same One or Unity from which we emerged when we were born, either as you and I, or as the human race and consciousness emerging from nature.

It is only natural that we misunderstand this reversal as a regression, a “going back” to the place we started, because we do not have any cultural maps provided by education or religion that can show that even though our direction goes back toward our original Unity, it is, as is sometimes said, “on a higher turn of the spiral.” We do not end up at the same place. That would indeed be a tragic waste of the journey.

The hero doesn’t just turn from the slain dragon and go back to mom and dad. He takes the treasure he has won, and goes back to his home in order to bring what he has retrieved, to heal or change the home he left. Thus the home he returns to is not the same as the one he left, very much because of the heroic journey and initiation he has undergone.

We need to turn and go home. We need to seek out the One that holds everything together, before our compulsive fleeing “outward” sends everything flying off into space. That Center is still here, even though Its presence has shrunk. We have lost It from our field of vision. We don’t know what to call It or where to find It anymore. It was called God, and other names, and It held everything and everyone in place around It.

It was right and natural that humanity had to grow away from that Unity, because the need to develop an ego and self-consciousness meant we could no longer stay in a conformist group of like-minded souls obeying unquestioningly the traditions and leaders who “knew best.” We have made it successfully, though not so far as we like to think, and not so free as we imagine. The presence of One and Unity is still here, but now it is unconscious as many follow the latest fashion or blindly serve the loudest voice. That is the old Unity, and it holds us back.

We need to find the new face of the One, which can continue to hold us together yet not bind us to the past. We are the hero and we have left home and reached our initiation. We are the hero of the “Hymn of the Pearl” who has reached this place, but remains asleep and who has forgotten the reason for coming here. We have forgotten the Pearl, and our royal parents, and the Home we need to return to and to rule.

Coniunctio

This long but necessary digression brings us back to the point where we started: the question of sex and the *coniunctio*. We began with a discussion of desire and its mystery. There is in each and every one of us something we call desire, something which gets stirred or awakened and makes us want things. When we experience that wanting or yearning, we want to take in the object of our desire, to merge with it, to conjoin.

Yet as we said, more often it turns out to be a temporary or unfulfilling experience. It is not really the object of our desire; we only thought it was. We do need to conjoin with *something*, but we rarely realize exactly what that is.

We feel emptiness, we feel hunger, but for what?

The hunger you and I feel is the hunger to conjoin with, to merge with the Oneness we originally left behind, only on a "higher turn of the spiral," with our reclaimed treasure of human self-knowledge. We don't know what this really is, but only this original Unity will fill our hunger. We may taste it in our highest sexual moments, but it does not last. And having tasted it, we go back for more. But just like LSD highs in the 60's, the more you try to use anything to go back, the shorter the high and the more dosage you need. Because it is not the real thing.

How will we find the real thing? Where is it in this world of cell phones and computers, reality TV and corruption?

It is where it's always been: INSIDE.

We have two clues: it is inside and it is a Mystery. It is the Mystery that dwells inside you and me. That may not be much, but at least it's a start.

The Mystery is always both inside and outside. The pursuit of the Mystery in Its outer form is the quest for knowledge and scientific inquiry, which has taken us out of our early state of ignorance and domination by instinct.⁶ We have gone from instinct to intellect. But there remains the further stage from intellect to intuition. Mystery in the outer world has brought us the intellect (from "perceive, choose between"). Mystery in our inner world takes us further to the intuition ("the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference; origin: to look upon, consider, contemplate").

There is inside of you a mysterious and unconscious Center, holding you together, letting you know when you wake in the morning that you are still the same person who went to sleep the night before. Even though you lose consciousness, something holds you together, like the little battery in the computer that remembers the date and time, even when the computer is unplugged. This something is present right now. It is watching you read this, and waiting to see if you will actually put down the book, close your eyes, and be quiet and listen. It wants you to. It wants to help us out of our predicament. It is waiting for you to pay attention, to observe and consider the dreams, fantasies, images and symptoms that keep arising from inside you, like smoke signals going up to the heavens for years and years until someone notices.

Recall that our present discussion began with sex. Recognizing that sex, as well as gravity, electricity and magnetism, were all at their core unexplained mysteries, we noted that they all had in common the phenomenon of attraction, which implies opposites being somehow drawn toward each other.

This attraction and urge for joining together is the same property that the alchemists used in their attempts to symbolize the goal of their work, or *opus*, in the *coniunctio*, when the King and Queen, or the Sun (Sol) and Moon (Luna) were shown holding hands in marriage, or in a sexual embrace. This appears to indicate a state beyond the antagonism and separation of opposites, where the two have overcome their differences and joined together. And we have noted that this merging without antagonism is identical to the state we imagine preceded our birth or the birth of the universe, a state of unity or oneness.

[put figure here]

Further, we briefly mentioned the "pre/trans fallacy" described by Ken Wilber, in which he argues that it is a mistake to believe that the absorption into mystical unity, with all that is described by meditators and sages, is really nothing more than a falling back or regression to our initial state before differences came into being.

Building on that point, we brought in the archetypal hero's journey as portrayed by mythologist Joseph Campbell, in which he showed, by examples of many different heroic tales, that the typical hero's journey involves:



1. An initial **Outward Arc**, or leaving of the familiar home, then...
2. An ordeal or trial, an **Initiation** in which the sought-for goal or treasure is achieved through conquering the opposition in the form of monster, dragon, giant, etc., and finally...
3. The **Inward Arc**, where the hero returns to his source or home, bringing with him the precious fruits of his initiation.

Finally, our initial discussion of sex and the *coniunctio* led us to the basic yet mysterious subject of desire. Desire is such a fundamental and yet unfathomable element of our lives. After all, in the basic Western myth of our origins, it was desire for tasting the forbidden apple that got us to where we are. Whether this story is something that actually happened in a physical Garden of Eden, or if it is rather a myth, spun from the unconscious psyche revealing our psychic origins, it still has had a remarkable significance for our world for thousands of years.

Eve took the apple from the serpent, or the Devil as some would say, or even from the shadow side of God, because her desire was stirred. Something in her believed that she would be better off if she “conjoined” with the apple, merged with it, took it into herself and made herself and the apple one thing. That is what eating symbolizes—taking in and absorbing so that it becomes one with you, rather than separate.

The mythical Prometheus, who stole the fire of the Gods in order to give it to mankind, so that we could be less dependent upon the Gods, had a desire to do so. Without that desire, he would not have acted, and humanity would have never had the opportunity to learn the skills of agriculture, technology and the other gifts represented by this “fire.”

Desire is an enigmatic force that arises from hidden depths in each of us. We now live in a world which is largely run by the sophisticated manipulation of desire by marketers. We are played upon by imagery to “push our buttons.” The morality of such manipulation remains open to question, but the prevalence and effectiveness of the practice is not. We live in a world now in which the making of a profit is the prevailing force, in which the political leaders care not for human welfare or the human soul, but are bought and paid for by the profiteers. So laws are passed, practices are protected, by which someone has the maximum opportunity to invade your time and space for the purpose of trying to arouse your desire for their product. We are officially largely statistics and wallets.

One might question the effects of these practices and this perspective on humanity, particularly how it relates to the soul. The marketing onslaught depends on our attention being occupied at all times, never at rest, with outer images and messages. There is not yet a market of any significant size that depends on our being quietly observant of our inner world. Surely there will be, once the trend toward the inner grows enough to interest the marketers. Then we will be called during dinner for meditation enhancers, like blindfolds, music, herbs, instructional tapes, etc. This already is happening in New Age publications.

But it does not matter WHAT is being marketed, whether it is smut, air miles, long-distance service or enlightenment. Apparently the ego finds the purchase of objects and programs about spirituality less threatening and more attractive than the actual experience of disciplined inner observation and the long effort involved in trying to really know oneself. It is the practice of marketing, of being sold to, that is an obstacle to our turning inward. Marketing is just one of the “ten thousand things” of our outer world that distracts us from the “voice of the silence” within.

So we are run by desire. This is so profound a thought, which, like the others we have been considering, is so common and obvious that we easily overlook it and particularly its implications. We are run by desire. Desire is what moves us. With no desire, we do not move.

The Buddha claimed that desire is the cause of all suffering.

What does *that* mean?

If you don't want to suffer, then do not desire.

We recall the quote by Jung in the Appendix about how we must detach from our desire, contain it, rather than be compelled by it. Many spiritual teachings are in one way or another about the mastery of desire. They often appear contradictory, because it obviously takes desire for liberation or some spiritual state to motivate someone to detach from desire for pleasure and comfort.

This brings us back to the alchemists' distinction between the "base sulphur" and the "true sulphur." If we consider sulphur to be, as Jung put it, "the motive factor in consciousness,"⁷ then the alchemists have, as they tended to do, simply found a chemical term to describe in fantasy a deep psychic unconscious mystery inside us. The base sulphur would be the desire that comes from the instinctive biological and animal body. It is our hunger for food, need for comfort and stimulation, desire for survival, belonging, power and recognition. It is the root of greed and lust, gluttony and megalomania. It is also the foundation of the ego and the Outward Arc.

We are each born with our own unique mix of these base sulphur motives. One person may be primarily driven by the need for attention, while another has little concern for that, but craves sexual pleasure. If we want to explore what kinds of base sulphur motivate us, all we have to do is look at the statistics for where people spend most of their money. Money and time go into the feeding of the instinctive desires that motivate all of us. How much is spent on defense, entertainment and cosmetics? On education, welfare, or spiritual development?

But beyond meeting our need for the necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter, which are powered by our instinctive desires, we can see that the motives of the base sulphur are for those things which support and bolster the ego—the separate self which rules the Outward Arc and which is mostly concerned with its own survival and empowerment. We rarely ask ourselves "survival for what?" For what purpose is the survival of the ego so necessary? If we were to ask the average person, what might they say? When only the Outward Arc is considered, then the point of survival for the ego is just that: to survive.

Survival of the ego has become the major concern only because it's preferable to death and annihilation. But the ego typically lacks a greater vision or meaningful purpose, just as life is prolonged by modern medicine for its own sake, just to forestall death, without any real concern for the quality or purpose of the extended life. This is indicative of a life being lived in the linear pursuit of the Outward Arc without any clue that there may be a further stage in one's life or in our evolution. I just have to keep going in the direction I've always been going, for as long as possible, because THAT IS WHAT I DO. This is sleepwalking. This is inertia. This is waking death.

But what about the "true sulphur" of the alchemists? What were they talking about or fantasizing? They imagined there was another kind of motive power or desire, and they chose to call this "true," implying that the "base sulphur" was less true. The motives of the base sulphur serve the survival and enhancement of the ego and the body. They are not wrong or evil, but natural and from instinct. They largely existed before humans came on the scene, in primitive forms in the animal kingdom.

But when we humans evolved to the current state of self-consciousness, of being able to be aware of our thoughts, feelings, and internal states, we gained (theoretically) the freedom to make choices. And this, we are told, is what distinguishes us from the animals. Yet if our choices are dictated by the compulsions of our instincts and base desires, there really is no difference. The last statement describes the animal state and by far the majority situation for humanity at this time, and usually the situation for you and for me for most of the time we live and breathe.

It is only the Inward Arc that provides the meaning for the ego's heroic movement up and out on the Outward Arc. Otherwise it is left with a goal of survival for its own sake. But the return from the initiatory turning point toward the Source, our Home, with the rewards of the trial is the whole point. And we have *nothing* in our current official theories of evolution that offers us this inspirational possibility.

Our own situation is usually largely unconscious, allowing us to imagine that WE, in our advanced state, are much more conscious than our more brutish fellow humans, and certainly that we have evolved far beyond the lowly animals. Yet one of the first recognitions that painfully dawns, when you commit yourself

to attending to your inner world and its true motivations, is that a good deal of the time you are operating at no higher a level than anyone else.

Literature and drama are full of examples of this “enlightened” façade and the accompanying buried unconscious shadow. One thinks of the 1930’s film “Blue Angel” with Marlene Dietrich, in which an intellectual professor is overwhelmed by his lustful nature when he meets the seductive singer. By living a life in which he had cut himself off from his “base sulphur,” it had only been waiting to surface, and he was ill prepared for it.

In our own ways, we too live this story when we think of ourselves as mainly evolved and conscious, beyond the more primal and base motives that seem somehow to control most of the world around us. The truth is certainly another blow to the pride and self-image of the ego, another encounter with the shadow, and a very good reason to leave the introspection to the gurus and impractical mystics.

But what about the “true sulphur?” Obviously there exists in some people (and perhaps deep in every one of us) some hidden spring in the unconscious that sends forth a stream of desire that craves to grow beyond the everyday world fueled by ego gratification. We can see this when a successful person becomes bored and even depressed with the abundance they have achieved. Sooner or later, they find it is not enough. It was enough to motivate their ambitions and sacrifices, but once gained, then what? This has been called an “existential crisis,” in some ways related to the midlife crisis.

After a great flowing of motivation and desire, it dries up, and emptiness and depression take its place. Of course, in our world this means a trip to the shrink and a prescription, replacing the emptiness with equanimity.

But if we don’t take the drugs, and don’t flee the void, and don’t just stimulate ourselves to distraction, it seems that something often arises from within—another motive, one that wants to do something FOR others, or WITH others, to create, to teach, to inspire. And perhaps also, to discover what lies within, beyond the well-lit areas of the psyche where the ego rules, in the dark and hidden places where one intuits that treasure may be found.

Might this be the “true sulphur:” motive that does not serve the ego and its separate desires, but instead serves the group, the community, mankind? In a sense, does this not suggest that the motivation of the true sulphur flows from a deeper Center, a Self that is not just yours or mine, but ours? Is this possibly the True Self, the Home to which we refer, the Place from which we departed in our beginnings, which we have forgotten and lost, but which awaits our return?

And could this true sulphur and the desire to serve others, to discover the truth and reality of one’s inner world no matter how challenging or uncomfortable, be what Campbell refers to as the “Inward Arc?”

If this is the case, then sex and all desire symbolizes the presence in us all of the *coniunctio* energy, whatever that truly means. The many desires that drive us onward, first outward toward greater self-determination and separateness, turn out to be forerunners of the need to conjoin, to meet and merge with the Center which is our real and true Source and which lies within (and all around). And the increasing disappointment or let-down that follows each lesser conjoining or merging with a sexual partner or a new car or a larger audience is not a sign of mental illness, but of having reached the turning point that takes us from the Outward Arc of the ego to the Inward Arc of return to the true Self, to the Pearl and to Home.

And what is the Pearl? Is it possibly the awakening to the presence of such a Self within us? Something that assures us that to feel emptiness and loss of joy from habitual appetites is not mental illness, but a deeper call? Do we not find this if we have the courage and patience to sit still in the increasing darkness and void, rather than clutching old thrills which are now empty husks?

Do we not need to do this now? Soon? Do you? Are you? Is it time for you? Does the growing fear and concern that you feel for the deteriorating respect for life that you see every day not say to you that it is time? Does the waning satisfaction and fulfillment of the things that once brought you joy and excitement not say to you that there is something more, even when our leaders and teachers cannot say what, or even if...?

It is within you to find. It is time to stop. Not all living, not the fulfillment of your needs, but the excess and the meaningless, the filling of the void with more void, more stuff, bigger garages and bigger cars.

Time is passing. Your heart has fewer beats left than when you started reading this. Perhaps 10,000, perhaps 10,000,000, perhaps 10. Think about it. Not to scare yourself, but to say “What am I doing?”

What... AM... I... DOING?

What would your life be like if you suddenly began seeing each and every desire that moves you, beyond the body’s need for survival, as a yearning to conjoin with the ONE from which you emerged at your birth? What if you began to question your “need” for this toy or that object, and to ask yourself what it hides behind it? What if you began to organize your life around the desire to find out what that hidden goal might be?

To do so may lead you into the bath, as the alchemists portrayed it. In a famous picture series known as the *Rosarium*, the couple conjoins, merges. And then... they die. The soul flies to heaven. The corpses are left in the bath. Then the dew falls, and the corpses are alive again, now one being, both male and female.

[pictures from *Rosarium* go in here]

What in the world does this mysterious series of pictures mean?

Why is the result of the initial conjoining shown to be death? Is this somehow meant to symbolize the state of the ego after it has been wounded by its first experience of the greater Self—depression and loss of identity?

The implication from the previously mentioned “pre/trans fallacy” is that if we believe only in the Outward Arc, away from birth and Unity and Source toward separate ego identity, then a *coniunctio* experience can only be interpreted as falling backwards to that original state, a defeat for the heroic ego as it tries to leave its mother, its unconscious origins. It is a retreat and a loss of what has been gained through great effort.

If we accept the possibility of an Inward Arc, partly from the testimony of the great religious teachers, and the myths spawned by the unconscious throughout history, then dissolving one’s sense of separate identity in a merging, a “bath” if you will, can represent a step forward to the future of our evolution, a victory of the highest kind, in transcending and going beyond the separate ego self. That is exactly what the spiritual teachers have said.

Without recognition of this Inward Arc we are likely to make serious errors about our situation. Advancement and transcendence are considered negatives, a loss and a failure of the ego to hold its hard-won ground. And so we will turn our backs on our future, as we are doing now. How will we progress then?

Equally disastrous is the mistaken belief that any and all loss of ego identity is a transcendent leap forward. Particularly in many New Age practices, any loss of self is understood to be a great mystical experience, when it can appear later that it was rather a backward slippage not a forward leap. Thus the two states are confused and experiences are misinterpreted, which at the very least, sends people backward thinking they are advancing, or misconstrues an evolutionary leap as a defeat.

What does a world with only an Outward Arc look like?

Well, for starters, the second half of life is no longer necessary or of any worth. The values and goals of the first half of life—the Outward Arc—are the only desirable objectives. Looking young, staying fit, seeking sexual conquests, trying to “make it” either sexually or materially are what matters to a young adult. But when these same goals are presented as the only options for the second half of life—when the Inward Arc is more appropriate—it starts to look a little foolish.

But what is one to do after 40? Or 50? What model do we have? How can we follow the natural inclination in our souls to go inward and deeper when the world around us seems to consist only of shallow and surface?

The heroism of the Inward Arc is the willingness to sacrifice the most obvious roles and goals of our youth and to begin a withdrawal, like the Hindu sages retreating to the forests in order to contemplate. Isn't it possible that part of the rampant depression of the second half of life arises from the lack of any such option?

If you want to "belong" in this world as it is right now, then you better KEEP looking young and measuring your worth by more and more sex and toys and money. But these things don't really nourish the soul after their appropriate stage in the first half of life. The heroism of the Inward Arc is sacrifice and surrender, the realization that the critical choices and acts of the Outward Arc which were aimed at establishing oneself in the world are past, and now it is time for the critical growth and deepening of consciousness.

We're going to have to make that happen ourselves, not wait for our leaders or culture or trends to take us there. And if we do turn in that direction—a reversal, a *metanoia*, an *enantiodromia*—there will be Someone there to meet us, to Partner with us and to show us the Way.

Notes

- 1 Ethel S. Person, *Dreams of Love and Fateful Encounters: The Power of Romantic Passion* (Penguin, 1989)
- 2 Kabir, in Stephen Mitchell (ed.), *The Enlightened Heart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 74.
- 3 Ken Wilber, "The Pre/Trans Fallacy" in *ReVision* 3, pp. 51-72.
- 4 Joseph Campbell, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949)
- 5 Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1954)
- 6 Alice A. Bailey, *From Intellect to Intuition* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1960).
- 7 C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW14, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) pp. 127-128.

Conclusion

Are You On the Bus, or Are You Off the Bus?

AND SO IF WE HAVE LEFT OUR FAMILIAR HOME OF HABIT AND ROUTINE, role and comfort, and been forced to encounter the changes, breakdowns, failures and symptoms that are part of life, all the while seeking the landmarks and maps left to us by earlier and contemporary soul travelers, we are likely to find ourselves temporarily without an anchor.

In each moment that you and I live, we are choosing where we want to be, what we believe, and how to cope with the openings and closings presented to us. It is a life-long and sometimes tedious work. The desire to escape or to fall asleep is at times overwhelming. Do we have what it takes to live consciously? Will it make any difference?

In the 60's, there was a popular book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* by Ken Kesey, about the Merry Pranksters, one of the original communal bands of hippies. These people rode around in a psychedelic bus, often high on acid, and pursued their pioneering adventure in alternative lifestyle. In their counter-culture life, before being a hippy was trendy, when dilemmas or conflict arose within the group, a person would be asked, "Are you on the bus, or are you off the bus?"

A lot of times the Pranksters seemed very much as if they were trying to find their way together to the kind of consciousness as a group being discussed here. A setting aside of ego, a listening to inner calls, a sense of participation in a greater and more inclusive Whole—these were part of what it meant to be "on the bus."

At this time now, the same question could be asked of you. There is a rising tide of trouble out there. Shallowness and distraction are starving us. An oasis is available inside each of us, a precious Pearl, and a connection with your true Home. If you feel called to make that journey, fully aware of its dangers and the necessity for some very hard work and courageous honesty, then it's time to ask: "Are you on the bus, or are you off the bus?"

I am an orphan, alone; nevertheless I am found everywhere. I am one, but opposed to myself. I am youth and old man at one and the same time. I have known neither father nor mother, because I have had to be fetched out of the deep like a fish, or fell like a white stone from heaven. In woods and mountains I roam, but I am hidden in the innermost soul of man. I am mortal for everyone, yet I am not touched by the cycle of aeons.¹

Listen to the voice of the orphan inside you, in your innermost soul. Listen to the warnings that arise when you allow yourself to feel your innocence, and how it hurts to witness the daily inhumanity and blind destruction of our environment, increasing when it should be decreasing. Where can this lead?

I don't want it to happen, but I think it will. It already is. You don't want it to happen either. I think of my daughter and your children, of the children to come. If it is going to happen, then let us do all that we

can to make it happen in the best possible way. If you can find your way Home, if you can reconnect to the Mystery at your core, then perhaps that Center within us will provide us with solace, and with ways to soften the pain and suffering that inevitably will come with the end of our time. That Center is What brought forth this writing, and it may bring something forth from you.

If we must go through what is to come, then let us do it well.

I wonder—have I given a voice to the orphan? Have I come close at all to articulating her message, buried inside of us?

The orphan IS the Pearl.

The Pearl IS the orphan.

Is anyone listening?

*Dancing in the dark 'til the tune ends
We're dancing in the dark and it soon ends
We're waltzing in the wonder of why we're here
Time hurries by, we're here and we're gone*

*Looking for the light of a new love
To brighten up the night, I have you love
And we can face the music together
Dancing in the dark, dancing in the dark.²*



Notes

1 C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (New York: Pantheon, 1963), p. 270.

2 Lyrics by Howard Dietz, "Dancing in the Dark" (1931).

Appendix

A Taste of Alchemy: Jung and the Fountain of Treviso

If thou knowest how to moisten this dry earth with its own water, thou wilt loosen the pores of the earth, and this thief from outside will be cast out with the workers of wickedness, and the water, by an admixture of the true Sulphur, will be cleansed from the leprous filth and from the superfluous dropsical fluid, and thou wilt have in thy power the fount of the Knight of Treviso, whose waters are rightfully dedicated to the maiden Diana. Worthless is this thief, armed with the malignity of arsenic, from whom the winged youth fleeth, shuddering. And though the central water is his bride, yet dare he not display his most ardent love to-wards her, because of the snares of the thief, whose machinations are in truth unavoidable...¹

THE FOREMOST STUDENT OF MEDIEVAL ALCHEMY in the 20th century was Carl G. Jung. His dreams led him to its study—even though he was a scientifically trained physician—and he spent decades researching and writing about obscure texts. He was not constrained by the prejudices of his education or religious upbringing. Let us look at one such jewel, buried but not lost in the alchemical writings of the 17th century (1645). This is part of his interpretation of the above “Fountain of Treviso” :

If thou knowest how to moisten this dry earth with its own water, thou wilt loosen the pores of the earth,
...

“If you will contemplate your lack of fantasy, of inspiration and inner aliveness, which you feel as sheer stagnation and a barren wilderness, and impregnate it with the interest born of alarm at your inner death, then something can take shape in you, for your inner emptiness conceals just as great a fullness if only you will allow it to penetrate into you. If you prove receptive to this ‘call of the wild’, the longing for fulfillment will quicken the sterile wilderness of your soul as rain quickens the dry earth.”

...and this thief from outside will be cast out with the workers of wickedness...

“You are so sterile because, without your knowledge, something like an evil spirit has stopped up the source of your fantasy, the fountain of your soul. The enemy is your own crude sulphur, which burns you with the hellish fire of desirousness... You would like to make gold because ‘poverty is the greatest plague, wealth the highest good.’ You wish to have results that flatter your pride, you expect something useful, but there can be no question of that as you have realized with a shock. Because of this you no longer even want to be fruitful, as it would only be for God’s sake but unfortunately not for your own.”

... And the water, by an admixture of the true Sulphur, will be cleansed from the leprous filth and from the superfluous dropsical fluid...

“Therefore away with your crude and vulgar desirousness, which childishly and shortsightedly sees only goals within its own narrow horizon... The water of your interest is not pure, it is poisoned by the lep-

¹ C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 160-168.

rosy of desirousness which is the common ill. You too are infected with this collective sickness. Therefore... consider: What is behind all this desirousness? A thirsting for the eternal, which as you see can never be satisfied with the best... The more you cling to that which all the world desires, the more you are Everyman, who has not yet discovered himself and stumbles through the world like a blind man leading the blind with somnambulistic certainty into the ditch."

... The unconscious demands your interest for its own sake and wants to be accepted for what it is. Once the existence of this opposite is accepted, the ego can and should come to terms with its demands...

... And thou wilt have in thy power the Fount of the Knight of Treviso, whose waters are rightfully dedicated to the maiden Diana...

"The ever-flowing fountain expresses a continual flow of interest toward the unconscious, a kind of constant attention or '*religio*', which might be called devotion. The crossing of unconscious contents into consciousness is thus made considerably easier, and this is bound to benefit the psychic balance in the long run... If attention is directed to the unconscious, the unconscious will yield up its contents, and these in turn will fructify the conscious like a fountain of living water. For consciousness is just as arid as the unconscious if the two halves of our psychic life are separated."

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