



9-1-2018

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## Recommended Citation

Julich, S. L. (2018). "An alchemy of heaven on nature's base": Intimations of the universal opus in the integral yoga and the divine life in man in the work of C. G. Jung. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 37 (1). <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2018.37.1.132>



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# "An Alchemy of Heaven on Nature's Base": Intimations of the Universal Opus in the Integral Yoga and the Divine Life in Man in the Work of C. G. Jung

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This comparative study addresses two main questions. First, considering the status of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as spiritual teachers and Jung as a psychologist: might their respective views on transformation be too divergent to warrant comparison? Second, considering that one of the goals of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's yoga was the transformation of physical substance, could their relationship be viewed through an alchemical lens? The discussion begins with a comparison and differentiation of integral and analytic psychologies and a discussion of the nature of awakening in the two traditions, which leads to an extended amplification: "a method of association based on the comparative study of mythology, religion and fairy tales, used in the interpretation of images in dreams and drawings" (Sharp, 1991a, see entry under "amplification"), of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's relationship and yogic goals through analysis of the *coniunctio* motif in various alchemical traditions. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are described as living symbols (in Jungian terms) of the union of divine masculine and feminine principles. A comparison of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's views on the supramental speciation and Jung's on alchemical transformation follows. A final, personal reflection concludes the paper.

**Keywords:** alchemy, analytic psychology, integral yoga, Jung, Mirra Alfassa, the Mother, myth, The Red Book, Savitri, Sri Aurobindo

Truth is one, the sages call it by many names.  
(Rig Veda 1. 164:46)

Know that the foul earth quickly receives white sparks. (Attributed to Morienus, as cited in Jung, 1954/1969d, p. 190 [para. 388])

But when the hour of the Divine draws near  
The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time  
And God be born into the human clay  
In forms made ready by your human lives.  
Then shall the Truth supreme be given to men:  
There is a being beyond the being of mind,  
An Immeasurable cast into many forms,  
A miracle of the multitudinous One,  
There is a consciousness mind cannot touch,  
Its speech cannot utter nor its thought reveal.  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 705)

This passage, from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, is a poetic description of the ultimate promise of his and the Mother's yoga. The Divine Mother, consort of the Supreme Absolute and carrier of the light of the conscious-force of the Creator, takes birth as a human woman in order to unite with the Creator's soul in the form of a human man, and through their union effect an evolutionary transformation that will propel life beyond the level of mind, unite spirit and matter, and transmute Creation. When this takes place,

The spirit's tops and nature's base shall draw  
Near to the secret of their separate truth  
And know each other as one deity.  
The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze  
And Matter shall reveal the spirit's face.  
Then man and superman shall be at one  
And all the earth become a single life. (p. 709)

In the following pages, I will be analyzing *Savitri*, and the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's relationship as a whole, through the lens of the alchemical *syzygy*, or sacred union of masculine and feminine principles in alchemy. Comparisons between integral yoga and European alchemy could be seen as inexact, if one accepts the argument (see Principe & Light, 2013) that the main focus of alchemy in the West was on the chemical transformation of external substance while integral yoga's is on the spiritual transformation of the substance of the body. In this way, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's yoga might better be compared to the internal alchemies of China and India (Principe, 2013, pp. 17–18). However, it has also been argued that in the West alchemy sought “simultaneously to liberate the spirit mixed into the flesh and the soul which is ensnared in the elements” (Fraser, 2007, p. 40). This was the line taken by Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung and it is through his alchemical writings that I have found the richest vein of correspondences to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In Jung's (1963/1970) ideas on the higher union of the alchemical king and queen in the completion of the alchemical opus, I see a parallel to the union of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and its significance for the completion of their yoga. In Jung's (1911–1912/1967b) ideas concerning the transformation of libido, the energy of the psyche—“the totality of all psychic processes” (p. 463 [para. 797])—which he saw in its aboriginal form as nothing less than the longing of nature for God and of God for nature (p. 205 [para. 299]), I see a parallel with Sri Aurobindo's (Ghose, 2003) idea of the *cit-shakti*, the “pure energy of consciousness” (p. 29) or conscious-force of the Divine, and the reciprocal love of the Creator for humanity and of humanity for the Creator (Ghose, 1971a, p. 764). In Jung's (1937/1968f) vision of the teleological striving of the unconscious towards the “*homo totus . . . who is at once the greater and the future man*” (p. 6 [para. 6]), symbolized by the Aquarian individual, representative of the higher Self (p. 340), I see intimations of the evolution towards “the divine gnostic consciousness” (Ghose, 1997a, p. 367) and the supramental being in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teaching.

Although I believe there is ample evidence to support my claims, there are important differences. Despite the above assertions, Jung (1957/1967a) as a psychologist restricted himself, at least in his professional papers, to interpreting alchemical texts psychologically,<sup>1</sup> while the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were clear that the transformation promised by their yoga was physical (Alfassa, 1998, p. 208 [31 May 1969]). In *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), the universal light is associated with the feminine principle and the universal soul with the masculine, while in hermetic philosophy, the light is generally pictured as masculine (e.g., “Phos”—Fowden, 1986, p. 151) and the soul as feminine. Sri Aurobindo's yoga posits three stages to the transformative process (the *triple transformation*), while in alchemy there are many variations. There are enough real differences to question whether a comparison between these two systems is even advisable.

Yet, reduced to their most basic idea, the goal of integral yoga (Ghose, 2006, pp. 547–550), alchemy (Holmyard (1957/1990, p. 16), and Jung's psychology (von Franz, 1975/1998, pp. 270–271) is *transformation*. Within the alchemical traditions, this transformation requires the re-union of what was divided at the beginning of the world, when substance was separated from the primal Unity. The division between Creator and creation is symbolized by the division between light and dark, heaven and earth, good and evil; however, even more mysteriously, the Absolute is seen as being beyond all opposites while the opposites themselves are seen as being within the gross and subtle realms of manifest existence alone—an understanding which even splits God into two: manifest and unmanifest.

The oppositions, understood to present both an inner and outer reality, heavenly and earthly (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 11 [para.8]) are often depicted as masculine and feminine pairs. Creation is seen as a cascade of division and separation into oppositions. The goal then is to re-unite what has been separated in the creation of a third thing, which is at once the two terms of the opposition, and a higher unity transcending the two. Often, what is born out of the process of union—pictured as the sacred marriage of contra-sexual opposites—is symbolically depicted as a child. Jung likened this child to the

*filius macrocosmi* (son of the macrocosm), the goal of the alchemical opus. In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1993) used similar language to describe the transformed soul, *Satyavan*, when at the end of the tale she returns with him to the surface world and back to their human lives after her battle with the Lord of Death for his soul: "Ever she held on the paradise of her breast/ Her lover charmed into a fathomless sleep,/ Laid like an infant spirit unaware/ Lulled on the verge of two consenting worlds." (p. 716; emphasis mine).

### **Objectives**

In this paper, I will be addressing two main concerns: (a) whether analytic psychology and integral yoga are compatible systems; and (b) whether the symbols and structures of alchemy can be used as a lens to explicate the idea of supramental transformation in integral yoga. As integralist Kireet Joshi (2017) wrote in another context:

The deeper question is as to whether mystical or spiritual experiences on which different religions are based are utterly ineffable or whether these experiences are capable of being expressed, if not fully, at least partially or symbolically, and, if so, whether the conflicts among religions are rooted in the actual differences that are conveyed through expressions and symbolisms. (p 105)

As my argument involves an analysis of images and ideas drawn from a number of traditions, it will make some demands on the reader. I have tried to touch on as many of the important similarities between traditions as I could, while not shying away from the possibly problematic differences, disagreements, and contradictions. I have also tried to avoid the application of a single metric framework to all three paradigms (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 68). My background is mainly in comparative religion and myth, the literature of analytic psychology—especially the writings of Jung and his pupil Marie-Louise von Franz—and only secondarily in the literature of integral yoga. At the beginning of this study I was more familiar with the Mother's books, which I had read extensively for my dissertation, than I was with Sri Aurobindo's, with the exception of *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993). My

knowledge of India's rich and varied metaphysical systems is basic, my knowledge of alchemical literature only a bit more comprehensive. So, rather than an adjudication of previous knowledge, this study was undertaken in the spirit of exploration. My conclusions, therefore, have been colored by my level of exposure to, and subjective appreciation of, these bodies of work.

Others have worked more with specific theoretical issues concerning integral and analytic psychologies (see especially Johnston, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Singh, 2003). To my knowledge, no one has yet attempted a comparison of integral yoga and analytic psychology from an alchemical perspective, which seems surprising, given the transformative nature of both. My analysis centers on describing Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical system as mythic and symbolic, and on the archetypal intersection between integral yoga, alchemy, and analytic psychology. I dedicate my work to the Mother, and have proceeded in the spirit of a line from Jung's (2009) *The Red Book: Liber Novus* (hereafter referred to as *The Red Book*): "Let me lay my head on a stone before your door, so that I am prepared to receive your light" (p. 238).

### **Introduction**

Between the first and the last Nothingness  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 1)

There are significant differences between the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the one hand, and Jung on the other—differences that should not be ignored or minimized. Many of their core assumptions, especially concerning the nature of salvation and the goal of the evolutionary process, appear to diverge in ways that cannot be reconciled so easily. The simple fact that Sri Aurobindo's writings are steeped in the intricacies of Indian yoga while Jung's are steeped in Christian, gnostic, and alchemical teachings should be a warning to anyone attempting a comparison. The sheer volume of background material necessary to have even a rudimentary grasp of these two traditions is beyond the capacity of any one scholar, and so it is arguable that such an undertaking would be unwise. I certainly do not claim the needed expertise, and

although Sri Aurobindo had an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Indian traditions, and Jung a similar one concerning the Christian traditions, neither had a commensurate level of knowledge concerning the other's areas of competence.

In my experience, although their foci differed markedly, there are significant similarities between these two sets of teachings, which reveal potentially common underlying assumptions concerning the structure, function, and possible goal of existence. Both Sri Aurobindo and Jung's ideas have been described by their students as new revelations. Analytic psychologist Edward Edinger (1996) wrote that "we are right on the verge of witnessing the birth of a new God-Image as a result of Jung's work" (p. xiii), while integralist Debashish Banerji (2012) wrote that Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga* "represents . . . no less than the second birth of fire, the fire of conscious evolution" (p. 4). It is evident that both men (and in Sri Aurobindo's case, the Mother as well) envisioned a coming sea-change in human consciousness and foresaw the advent of a new age. Both bequeathed to humanity a blueprint for transformation in conformance with their vision of this goal.

The path to salvation for both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as for Jung, led through psychology, which was a nascent science at the turn of the 20th century when all three were coming of age. In the West, psychology as the scientific study of subjective mind states drew many who were interested in spiritualism, séances, Theosophy, and the occult, but the pressure for psychology to conform to the methods of the hard sciences led to battles between those who saw it as a science concerned with states of consciousness and those who saw consciousness as an epiphenomenon of brain chemistry and psychology as a subfield of biology (Ellenberger, 1970; Shamdasani, 2003).

Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1997a) defined psychology as "the knowledge of consciousness and its operations" (p. 305); however, by this he did not mean that psychology should focus only on mind states. "A complete psychology," he argued, "cannot be a pure natural science, but must be a compound of science and metaphysical knowledge" (p. 305). Integral yoga—and so integral psychology—is

concerned with the spiritual impulse behind the evolution of consciousness, and with "the liberation and transformation of the human being. It is not personal Ananda, but the bringing down of the divine Ananda—Christ's kingdom of heaven, our Satyayuga—upon the earth" (Ghose, 1998, p. 71).

That Sri Aurobindo would draw on the image of the kingdom of heaven here is instructive and, in many ways, it is just such images upon which this paper pivots. Throughout my study of this topic I have been repeatedly struck by the similarities between Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's discussions of *supermind*, the intermediate level of consciousness between what they considered the current evolutionary level of mind, and *sachchidananda*, God, or infinite existence, the powers of which work "as a multiple Oneness, in harmony, without opposition or collision" (Ghose, 2012a, p. 147), and Jung's (1963/1970) discussions on the attainment of the alchemical *unus mundus*, the *one world* or "highest degree of conjunction" (pp. 533–543 [para. 759–775]), which Jung (2009) described as "the melting together of sense and nonsense, which produces the supreme meaning" (p. 229).

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spent their lives exploring and discussing the nature of higher consciousness, and in their work, long passages, entire chapters, and even complete books are dedicated to the subject. For an understanding of Jung's ideas on the nature of higher consciousness one must search through the *General Index* (Jung, 1979) of his works for specific passages from his papers and books because he did not concern himself with metaphysics as a matter of course except where it might amplify his psychological work.<sup>2</sup> In *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (Jung, 1963/1970; hereafter referred to as *Mysterium Coniunctionis*), his final major work, he focused specifically on the union of masculine and feminine archetypal principles in the alchemical transformation of the psyche; but, with the possible exception of *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) and certain passages from his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1989; co-authored and heavily redacted by his secretary Aniela Jaffé), he never wrote a metaphysical or theological treatise.

Jung (2009) did privately publish and distribute a handful of copies of one genuinely metaphysical document during his lifetime—*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* (hereafter referred to as the *Seven Sermons*; Jung, 1989, pp. 378–390), the climax of *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009, pp. 346–354), which although slightly edited from the original to make it a stand-alone work, is not really a separate document. *The Red Book* also contains his *Systema Mundi*: a visual representation of the metaphysical teachings from the *Seven Sermons* (p. 364), and the first of numerous mandala drawings done by Jung during his *Red Book* period. *The Red Book* is most definitely concerned with broader metaphysical questions; however, Jung specifically requested that it not be published until long after his death. Although it is undoubted that “much, if not all, of his scientific work may be based on visionary revelations” (Hoeller, 1982), Jung consistently eschewed metaphysics in his professional capacity as a physician.

There were a few writings published during his lifetime that hinted at Jung’s metaphysical interests. *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (Jung, 1959/1968a; hereafter referred to as *Aion*) contains his clearest description of what he saw as the archetypal structure of the psyche, and its stepwise development from the ego to the Self—the archetype of wholeness, which in the West he saw as represented by Christ. In *Aion*, Jung’s concern was with what the psyche might be saying about the goal of human development. The work attempts a snapshot of the Western Christian psyche in an attempt to understand the greater forces governing the Self’s evolution, globally. Although in *Aion*, Jung wrote “as a physician, with a physician’s sense of responsibility, and not as a proselyte” (p. x), the discussion ranges not only inward to the symbolic structures of the human mind, but outward to the great arc of cosmic history pertaining to the precession of the equinoxes and the passage from the aeon of Pisces to that of Aquarius.

Sri Aurobindo’s body of work constitutes a fully developed metaphysics of both the cosmos and the human being’s place in it through a synthesis of Indian and Theosophical systems with an evolutionary cast. Unconstrained by the requirements of Western scientific discourse, Sri Aurobindo was

free to give full reign to his yogic insights. Whereas analytic psychology was intended to help people to attain psychological wholeness, integral yoga was from the beginning intended to produce spiritually transformed individuals who would be the vanguard of the coming supramental race—an evolutionary leap that would fundamentally transform the nature of reality. While Jung was mainly focused on the psychology behind metaphysical assertions, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were concerned with metaphysics as psychology.

I have undertaken this comparison as a part of my own ongoing research into the nature of psycho-spiritual transformation. It is an extended meditation or “circumambulation”—Jung’s word for “the interpretation of an image by reflecting on it from different points of view” (Sharp, 1991b, entry for “circumambulation”). Although I have tried to be systematic in my approach, when working with images my own tendency is to circumambulate the material in a painterly way, constructing a gestalt picture of the material rather than laying out ideas in a stepwise fashion. For this reason, there will be some overlap and repetition between sections. There is a narrative arc, however, which roughly moves from a comparison of the notion of psychology in each system to the nature and goal of transformation in both.

The lynchpin of this paper is alchemy, which I view more as a global phenomenon rather than a specific and parochial one restricted to Medieval Europe. When Jung’s views on the psychological nature of alchemical symbolism are applied to the relationship of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, fascinating correspondences becomes apparent, which may bring into relief both the originality of integral yoga and its similarities to transformative systems throughout history. Preeminent among alchemical symbols is the *syzygy*; this symbol, in relation to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is central to this paper.

### **A Brief Comparison of Integral Yoga and Analytic Psychology**

The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 487)

The syzygy is a term designating hierarchical pairs of gods that appear in early Christian (especially Valentinian) Gnosticism, but extend back as far as the ancient *Ogdoad* of Old Kingdom Egypt. In both integral yoga and depth psychology, the uniting of oppositional pairs in spirit, psyche, and nature is the solution to overcoming and transcending the “web of opposites” (Ghose, 1998, p. 338) inherent to embodiment. Jung used the term to refer to oppositional forces in the human psyche, which serve to divide consciousness and the unconscious, the union of which must be effected before the individual can approach the Self—the archetype of wholeness superordinate to the ego.

“Jung’s interest[s]” wrote Read, Fordham, and Adler (1961) evolved “from psychiatry through psychoanalysis and typology to the theory of the archetypes, and finally to the psychology of religious motifs” (p. v). Beginning his professional life as a medical psychiatrist, at midlife (beginning around 1911) a series of internal and external crises catapulted Jung into an exploration of the trackless land of his own unconscious psyche. A trained scientist, he began experimenting with a method of self-guided meditation that he would come to call *alchemical active imagination*, which was intended to deepen the connection with and perception of the unconscious. He systematically catalogued the startling material that came to him in these meditations (and in his dreams and visions from this period), ultimately transcribing them into *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009). On this journey, Jung mastered a symbolic language of the psyche, in turn teaching others to apply that language in clinical settings with clients, in their own inner work, and also to the great religious and spiritual systems of the world.

Sri Aurobindo, by contrast, studied poetics and the classics at Cambridge, worked as a teacher in India, was early on involved in the Indian independence movement, and was even arrested and tried by the British as a political revolutionary. But later, after a number of remarkable spiritual realizations<sup>3</sup>—most notably one where his mind was emptied of all thoughts in an experience he called *Nirvana* (Ghose, 2012a, p. 71), the “silent spirit” of Brahman (Banerji, 2012, p. 27), and another in which the spirit of Swami Vivekananda visited and

guided him when he was in the Alipore Jail in Calcutta awaiting trial, culminating in a vision of the entirety of creation as the face of *Krishna* (Ghose, 1997b, p. 460), “the Divine Person immanent in all beings” (Banerji, 2012, p. 27)—Sri Aurobindo began to write from a different perspective. From his pen poured volumes of sublime poetical philosophy and metaphysical poetry, culminating in his magnum opus, *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), a tale of evolutionary spiritual transformation on which he worked for over 30 years.

As Jung did in both Gnosticism and alchemy, Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1999) saw in the great religious traditions of India fully realized psychological systems. It makes sense, then, that it would be the usual practice among those writing about these two men to compare their psychologies (see especially Singh, 2003). Apart from a short digression, however, I will view their work and words through a mythological and alchemical lens rather than a psychological one. I believe this provides greater interpretive latitude, because I am not working under constraint of specific psychological theories but rather with multivalent symbolic images and mythopoeic narratives. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are to me, as Jung (1940/1968e) would say, “a living and lived myth” (p. 180 [para. 302]). So, when the Mother said: “Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body: they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention” (Alfassa, 1979, p. 171 [June 22, 1958]), I read this as a statement of one who is living within a mythic consciousness. In this sense, she was and remains a mythic being, one who offers a doorway to the Infinite.

Jung (1916/1966d) argued that all psychology is individual psychology (p. 289, para. 484), and that each person is a unique concatenation of biology and history, instinct and archetype, matter and spirit. Although he never failed to point out that there are universals, the only way to come to know them is through the filter of the particular instantiation that is the individual body-mind, with all of its limitations. In fact, it is these limitations alone that provide the opportunity to experience at all.

My fascination with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s teachings is with the way in which their

story and the system they created bear resemblance to extant mythic narratives from many eras, and yet, arising within a particular zeitgeist at the turn of the 20th century, they display many similarities to other evolution of consciousness systems that appeared in the wake of Darwinism, including Theosophy and analytical psychology. I feel that this is one of the strengths of integral yoga, and it is through this lens that I find the greatest meaning. Accordingly, I find myself approaching the Mother's admonition to disregard her biography obliquely: I am not interested in the "particular details" of her story as much as I am in the fact that her and Sri Aurobindo's biographies and work can be read as myth, and their relationship as a mythic relationship, similar to that of numerous male-female pairs found in the mythological record. Any study of their lives reveals, I believe, the same types of incidents one finds in the biographies of saints from many cultures. When one lives a mythic life, events of symbolic significance tend to coalesce around one.

### **Some Definitions**

Psychology is defined as "the scientific study of mental processes and behavior" ("psychology", n.d., n.p.). The *Online Etymological Dictionary* ("psychology", n.d., n.p.) entry for the word shows that its meaning has evolved over time. While earlier usage pointed to "spirit," and "soul" as its domain, later usage pointed to "mind." Western psychology has, over time, become more concerned with neuroscience while more personality-based approaches have been subsumed into cognitive and behavioral theories. The discipline of psychology has increasingly conformed to the methodological requirements of the natural sciences.

Changes to the definition and practice of psychology reflect the evolution of the collective understanding of human consciousness and the natural universe. For good or ill, concepts such as soul and spirit have been dropped from the purview—and so the definition—of psychology as a scientific discipline. Psychodynamic psychologies such as analytic, humanistic, transpersonal, and integral are often less experimental than relational, but it is just this that causes those working within the hard sciences to dismiss them (Berezow, 2012). Jung (1989) wrote that due to its subjective character,

psychodynamic psychology was seen as pseudo-scientific "nonsense" even in the late 1800s (p. 109), and that he was warned by colleagues and teachers in medical school about throwing away his career by not adhering to a more positivist discipline such as laboratory research. Even he admitted that psychiatry was primarily "a dialogue between the sick psyche and the psyche of the doctor . . . both in principle equally subjective" (p. 110).

Although psychology was criticized for lacking the "five basic requirements" of all science: "clearly defined terminology, quantifiability, highly controlled experimental conditions, reproducibility and, finally, predictability and testability" (Berezow, 2012), Jung spent the first ten years of his professional career working to develop laboratory methods for observing psychological phenomena through the use of a galvanometer and word-association experiments. His hope was that psychological states were capable of being classified through scientific methods, but he felt it would be a long time before the discipline had matured enough for this to take place. Although he was praised early on for his more experimental researches, as he adopted a more psychoanalytic approach he came under increased attack for his abandonment of them (See Ellenberger, 1970, for a study of this period of Western psychology).

The tension between the hard sciences, with their reliance on quantifiability and reproducibility, and the soft-science approach to subjective states of mind, was not lost on Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1997a), who was highly critical of Western psychology for claiming to have discovered properties of mind that had been discussed at length in ancient Indian systems of thought. He argued that Western acquisitiveness, coupled with a racist, Eurocentric, and materialist bias, blinded Europeans to the fact that their forays into psychology were late on the scene, immature, and incomplete. Although in his lifetime the discipline underwent several revolutions, he concluded that the "old errors are strangely entwined with a new fallacy which threatens to vitiate the whole enquiry,—the fallacy of the materialistic prepossession" (pp. 315–316).

That materialist assumptions were one of the unfortunate characteristics of the psychology of

his day also disturbed Jung, from as early as 1895 (see Jung, 1983, Lecture II). Later, Jung (1929/1966a) would argue that “the distance between mind and nature, difficult to bridge at best, is still further increased by a medical and biological nomenclature which often strikes us as thoroughly mechanical” (p. 55 [para. 120]). Jung saw psychology as a healing art that grew out of the confessional (p. 55, para. 123), and so was originally spiritual in nature. He argued throughout his professional career for an expanded view of the psychological sciences, which included the study of subjective states and the use of more psychodynamic approaches.

Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1999) saw psychology as a predominantly spiritual discipline as well, calling the ancient system of yoga a “practical psychology” (p. 44). He defined psychology as “the science of consciousness and its status and operations in Nature,” but argued that it must extend “beyond what we know as Nature” (as cited in Dalal, 2001, p. 306) if it was to truly comprehend the human being in its totality.

Taking into account the evolution of both the discipline and the word, Jung (1921/1976e) differentiated between the more spiritually focused psychology of the ancient world and the psychology of the modern West, which he saw as a medical discipline. “So long as the historical world has existed,” he argued, “there has always been psychology, but an objective psychology is only of recent growth” (p. 8 [para. 8]). Where Sri Aurobindo’s psychology was grounded in yoga and the spiritual wisdom of ancient India, Jung’s was based upon clinical observation and medical science; however, as mentioned, Jung’s professional stance often belied a deeper, experiential knowledge of the spirit.

The other term associated with Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s work is *integral*. The term integral—from the Latin *integralis*, meaning “forming a whole” (“Integral,” n.d.)—is today most often associated with the work of Ken Wilber, but its roots lie in integral yoga. The term came to Sri Aurobindo through the Mother, who brought it with her from her years of work with European occultist, hermeticist, and kabbalist Max Theon, the founder of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (Godwin, Chanel, & Deveney, 1995; Heehs, 2011). Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1972b)

had used the Sanskrit *purna* to describe his yoga (p. 61ff), which translates variously as “full,” “complete,” “perfect” (“purna,” n.d.). Over time, *purna* was dropped in favor of the English equivalent.

A simple definition for integrality was given by Sri Aurobindo (as cited in Dalal, 2001): “You must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest” (p. 300). Reality is comprehensible only if the entire range of human and cosmic experience is taken into account. Integral psychology is evolutionary, seeking the “total transformation of our earthly nature” (Singh, 2003, p. 354), raising consciousness out of its material prison and into a way of cognizing that is beyond the oppositional thinking of the human mind. As for the Freudian unconscious, the murky underbelly of instinctual and biological drives, it must ultimately be eliminated in the spiritualization of the individual (and collective) body-mind (Sen, as cited in Hadnagy, 2008, p. xvii). Wholeness is a higher wholeness—an evolutionary leap that leaves behind the dark *inconscience* of matter in a physical nature transformed by spirit.

Analytic psychology is also known as depth psychology (*Tiefenpsychologie*), a term coined by Eugen Bleuler, director at the Burghölzli Mental Hospital in Zürich where Jung worked from 1900–1909. Depth psychology means simply a psychology that takes the unconscious into account in its observations. There are numerous depth psychologies, for example, Freud’s, Assagioli’s, Janet’s, and James’. In the case of James, Jung, and Assagioli, depth psychology must be seen as a precursor to transpersonal psychology (it was James who coined the English term, transpersonal). The school of depth psychology founded by Jung has been variously called complex, objective, and analytical psychology, although often his school alone is associated with the word depth. Following Shamdasani (2003), this discussion uses analytic when referring to Jung’s psychology.

It has been argued that analytic psychology is more limited than integral because it does not take the whole person into consideration—only the descending dimension of the unconscious (Daniels, 2013). Another criticism, from an integral perspective, is that Jung did not look into higher

realms, leaving out the superconscious dimension. Although Jung the psychiatrist did center primarily on the depth dimension in the problems of his clients, he may have disagreed with this assessment. For Jung (1954/1969d), the unconscious is not merely a stratum of subterranean material lurking beneath the threshold of consciousness (this, to him, relates only to the personal unconscious). Rather it is the unknown psyche—a timeless and spaceless dimension that touches the known but attenuates into the unknown and ultimately unknowable regions of both matter and spirit. His argument was that although one may adhere to the conscious mind, favoring the safety of its well-lit spaces, in order to be whole, one must also take into account the dark unknowable vastness of that which lies beyond the limits of focused awareness. Jung's unconscious not only pertains to the instinctual and biological substrate, but the spiritual dimension as well. The goal of Jung's (1944/1968d) psychology is the progressive reclamation of material from the unconscious for use by consciousness in the development of "moral autonomy" (Hinkle, 1915/1991, p. xliii), which requires psychospiritual wholeness.

To Jung (1921/1976e), the unconscious is neither a substance nor an entity. It is simply that which is unknown or "not related to the ego" (p. 483 [para. 837]). The collective aspect of it, expressed through the filter of the biological substrate, is shared by all people at all times and places. The collective unconscious is not under the sway of the conscious will, and its activity often feels uncanny. "Manifestations of a psychic activity not caused or consciously willed by man himself have always been felt to be demonic, divine, or 'holy'" wrote Jung (1948/1958a, p. 162 [para. 242]). This, to Jung, makes the collective unconscious psychologically analogous to, though not identical with, subtle spiritual realms—even with God itself (Jung, 1952/1958b, p. 468 [para. 757]), whom Jung saw as "an unknown quantity in the depths of the psyche" (Jung, 1938/1958f, p. 87 [para. 144]) appearing as an autonomous force, though one can never truly know it with the mind. Jung's (1973) assessment of his own teachings was that their main focus was "not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but

rather with the approach to the numinous" (p. 377), especially those experiences that are overwhelming, and life-changing.

Borrowing a transliterated word from Indian philosophy (*atman*; Jung, 1921/1976e, p. 118 [para. 189]), Jung identified the *Self* in psychological terms as the center of the personality (see also Jung, 1943/1976a). Integrating the *Self*, which to Jung encompasses both consciousness and the personal and collective unconscious, is the goal of human development; however, the Western psychologist, unlike the guru, did not have the freedom to direct the patient or client towards that which they were not inclined. "If it does not grow of itself," Jung argued, "it cannot be implanted without remaining a permanent foreign body. Therefore we renounce such artifices when nature herself is clearly not working to this end" (p. 819 [para. 1817]). Analytic psychology, as integral psychology, might concern itself with the idea of wholeness, or completeness (*purna*), but as a medical doctor dedicated to issues of mental health Jung could not make wholeness—if by wholeness is meant either spiritual salvation or God-consciousness—his primary focus with his patients.

Thus, there are, in a sense, two Jungs: one whose work in the world had to do with healing psychological illness, and the other, who had his eye turned towards the imperishable numinous *One*. He bridged this divide through working with complexes, dreams, and visions—the psychic images that point to the mystery of the origin, and which connect the human being to the transcendent worlds of spirit and matter through the archetypes.

The Mother also said that wholeness was requisite for true spiritual knowledge, stating that "it is only when one has a global, simultaneous perception of the whole in its oneness that one can possess the truth in its entirety" (Alfassa, 1980/2001, p. 124). Wholeness is not merely an attention to different facets of the individual (in fact it is precisely not that), but a gestalt apprehension necessary for an understanding of truth in its entirety, and in harmony.

Jung did not discuss wholeness in such non-dual terms, although he did see it as paradox. Writing about the creation of the alchemical *rebis*

(Latin for *double matter*), the divine androgyne that is one image of the end product of the alchemical syzygy, Jung (1946/1966c) wrote: "The opus ends with the idea of a highly paradoxical being that defies rational analysis".<sup>4</sup> The unconscious, then, is "the true spiritus rector of all biological and psychic events. Here is a principle which strives for total realization which in man's case signifies the attainment of total consciousness" (Jung, 1989, p. 324). As paradox, total consciousness is simultaneously dual, non-dual, and beyond both.

But although Jung (1989) argued that realization of the Self is "the road to knowledge of God" (pp. 324–325), the Self itself, because it encompassed both consciousness and the unconscious and was therefore ultimately unknowable, had in psychological science to remain a postulate (Jung, 1921/1976e, p. 460 [para. 789]). This attitude, coupled with Jung's refusal to publish the record of his own inner work, has led some integralists such as Singh (2003) to argue that

While Jung extricates the idea of self from various sorts of projection of it as revealed in fantasies, arts, and myths and places its study on empirical footing, Sri Aurobindo substantiates the empirical and speculative possibilities by means of direct experience. (p. 350)

In Jung's defense, however, even a cursory reading of *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) will show that he had, in fact, direct experience of many of the realities here in question. *The Red Book* is a journey of the awakening of Jung's soul that bears comparison to Sri Aurobindo's own awakening to the "psychic entity and its representative soul personality" (Joshi, 1989, p. 268). In *The Red Book* Jung is approached by his "guru," Philemon (see Jung, 1989, p. 182ff.) in a way that is remarkably similar to Sri Aurobindo's meeting with Swami Vivekananda's spirit in the Alipore jail. Further, Jung's experience of what his biographer and student Barbara Hannah (1997) called his five "enlightenments" on his trip to sub-Saharan Africa, which culminated in an experience "of perfected concentration and of being accepted in the immense void of heaven" (p. 180), bears comparison with Sri Aurobindo's vision of Nirvana, "where all is abolished but the mute Alone" (cited in

Joshi, 1989, p. 10). Jung's understanding of his own work was that it attempted to "extricate the idea of the self from various sorts of projections of it" (Singh, 2003, p. 350). It was an effort to find cross-cultural comparisons for his own inner experience, not a halting intuition drawn from various wisdom traditions (see Shamdasani's comments in Jung, 2009, p. 197, 208, 220).

Because her books are largely transcripts of talks, the Mother's language was direct, although the content was profound and at times mysterious. Jung and Sri Aurobindo, especially early in their careers and in their letters, could be as direct, but as each deepened in their realizations their language became more poetic and imagistic, breaking the constraints of linear cause and effect thinking and "the will to the Omniscience of Reason" (Banerji, 2010, para. 5) that pervaded late 19th and early 20th century culture. But while Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke from a predominantly spiritual viewpoint, Jung, as a medical doctor and scientist working within the Western paradigm, was cautious in his professional assertions. He wanted to analyze the etiology of such experiences from a scientific perspective.

Sri Aurobindo developed a technique of writing from the standpoint of what he called the *Overmind*, the intermediary plane of consciousness that connects the upper (*parardha*) planes of *sachchidananda* and supermind (*mahas*) to the lower (*aparardha*) planes of matter, life (vital), and mind (Ghose, 2012a, p. 138), continually rewriting passages of *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993) to accommodate new yogic insights. Jung wrote with what he called "a double bottom" (as cited in von Franz, 1975/1998, p. 4), a positionality that melded the rational and the irrational, arguing that "our present day consciousness possesses no conceptual categories by means of which it could apprehend the nature of psychic totality" (Jung, 1958/1964a, p. 335 [para. 635]).

Operating under the assumption that only holding sense and nonsense (one might say ego consciousness and the unconscious) in a tension of the opposites could approach the paradoxical nature of reality, Jung (2009) wrote at the opening of *The Red Book*:

The spirit of the depths took my understanding and all my knowledge and placed them at the service of the inexplicable and the paradoxical. He robbed me of speech and writing for everything that was not in his service, namely the melting together of sense and nonsense, which produces the supreme meaning.

*But the supreme meaning is the path, the way and the bridge to what is to come. That is the God yet to come. It is not the coming God himself, but his image which appears in the supreme meaning. God is an image, and those who worship him must worship him in the images of the supreme meaning.*

*The supreme meaning is not a meaning and not an absurdity, it is image and force in one, magnificence and force together.*

*The supreme meaning is the beginning and the end. It is the bridge of going across and fulfillment.* (pp. 229–230, italics in original)

This assertion, that the duality within which humans find themselves is paradoxical is an important insight in Sri Aurobindo's (Ghose, 2005) work concerning the simultaneous existence of the One and the many as a "suprarational mystery" (pp. 513–514). Those familiar with Sri Aurobindo's designation of the Mother as the conscious-force of creation might also be struck by Jung's use of the term "magnificence and force," which bears some resemblance to the conception of the Absolute and His conscious-force descended from the "cosmic spirit, the one self inhabiting the universe" (Ghose, 2005, p. 561). To Sri Aurobindo, the Mother is precisely that bridge—the carrier of the "magnificence and force" of the Absolute into the manifest world. As he wrote, "Transcendent . . . she stands above the worlds and links the creation to the ever unmanifest mystery of the Supreme." (Ghose, 2002, p. 14)—a representative of what Jung (1957/1966b) would call the "maternal intellect" (p. 54).

It would be impossible to prove that the conception is identical, but taking into account the ways in which Jung later came to symbolize this split alchemically in the division between masculine and feminine principles, they appear to be comparable.

As I will discuss further on, the Mother, as such a bridge in Sri Aurobindo's conception, bears resemblance to the *Sophia* of Gnosticism, *Shekinah* of Kabbalah, and the *Anima Mundi* of alchemy and hermeticism. This image of the divine feminine as the bridge to higher consciousness (Jung's "Self") is explored in *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009).

In Jung's conception of paradox, the alchemical androgyne is a symbol of the Self as a *complexio oppositorum*: a union of masculine and feminine principles within the human being. These principles are divided either at the beginning of time (as in the myths of Adam and Eve or Brahma and Sarasvati), or in childhood, with the battle for separation of the child's ego from its maternal environment (as symbolized by the Mesopotamian myth of Marduk and Tiamat). The division of consciousness from the unconscious is also the division of spirit from matter. This division takes place at the creation of the universe with the original separation of light and dark, but occurs within each individual when one awakens from sleep, or comes out of a reverie and recollects that one has been somehow absent. At first, the two principles are intermixed and not separable; in manifestation, the two principles are distinct from one another. The goal is to re-unite consciously what has been divided. In kundalini yoga, a type of spiritual alchemy in and of itself, the twin *naḍis*, *ida* and *pingala*, unite with the central channel at the *ajna* or brow *chakra*, which opens to the *sahasrara* where the mystical marriage of Shiva and Shakti takes place (Saraswati, 1984, pp. 127–136, 189–193). To Jung (1996), the *ajna* is the site of the *mysterium coniunctionis*—the union of psychic oppositions.<sup>5</sup>

If the Self represents the teleological goal of the process of psychological maturation—simultaneously experienceable and inexperienceable by the mind—then Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are, at least symbolically, the *imago* of that goal as a *complexio oppositorum*. They are the Self manifested, the embodiment of *yang* and *yin*, the alchemical *Rex* and *Regina*, "a union of opposites," and "united duality." Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1993) wrote his *Savitri* as a paean to the divine Mother, and as a description of both his and the Mother's yoga borrowed from a folktale collected in the

*Mahabharata* about the winning back by a young bride of her husband's soul from the Lord of Death. Theirs is envisioned as a single yoga performed in two separate bodies spiritually united for the creation of the *supramental*, or *gnostic being*: "the inner conscious Existence self-revealed" (Ghose, 2005, p. 1031).

Very much as is the *rebis* of alchemy, the supramental or gnostic being of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a transformation and higher union of masculine and feminine energies. *Savitri* especially, conceived as a mantric text, is intended to draw the reader in to an experience of their psychic core, what is called in integral yoga the *psychic being*—the evolving aspect of the soul (Ghose, 2012a, pp. 102–124)—through its spiraling rhythm of separation, opposition, and union, leading to the final apotheosis in the rebirth of Savitri's consort, Satyavan, through her defeat of Death. The poem, as do all great mythic narratives, touches upon archetypal and numinous realities, ending with the synthesis of the higher self in the image of the divine child.

This discussion has made a case that Jung's work may be more comparable to that of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother than some devotees of the latter might hold, based on a closer examination of Jung's experiential accounts. While comparative work on the insights of integral and analytic psychologies is undeniably important, there is also opportunity here to pursue an applied comparative exercise: a consideration of the relationship between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as embodiment of the mystical union between male and female, the *coniunctio* or *syzygy* of the alchemical king and queen. This theme of union is prominent in the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as in Jung's analytical psychology, so the exercise provides opportunity to apply Jung's alchemical vision of *coniunctio* to the example that Sri Aurobindo offered of the corresponding concept within integral yoga, as a sort of pragmatic comparison case.

### **Integral, Analytical, and Alchemical Symbols in Context and Comparison**

In living symbols study Reality/ And learn the  
logic of the Infinite (Ghose, 1993, p. 76)

In numerous religious traditions, the nature of existence is understood to be separation or alienation from the unchanging spiritual source of being, with its consequent suffering and death. In the West, this idea can be traced from Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, through Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and alchemy, to 19th century occult and esoteric philosophies, including spiritualism. Foundational to all of these, according to Jung, is Gnosticism (see Goodrick-Clarke, 2008).

According to Williams (1996), Gnosticism is neither an independent nor unified religious tradition but a set of metaphysical beliefs that were held to one degree or another throughout the ancient world and have survived until today in various forms. Gnostic beliefs, among which are the idea that this world is a corruption of the original ideal world, that human beings are composed of both matter and spirit, that salvation depends on the intervention of Sophia, the Wisdom and Light of the Creator, and that liberation means liberation from confinement in material substance (Hoeller, n.d.), are found in various culturally inflected forms in Egyptian religion, Greek philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and even Mahayana Buddhism. Sri Aurobindo, who saw the division between East and West predominantly as one between spirituality and materialism (another pair of opposites), characterized Gnosticism, and the Western lineage from Plato to Spiritualism, as a garbled survival of Indian, Upanishadic spiritual wisdom (Ghose, 1972b, p. 82; 1997b, p. 270; 2012a, p. 353). He also held that the Western tradition had lost touch with the higher levels of consciousness. Those who had rediscovered the ancient wisdom had done so only through hearsay and intellectual research, and were incapable of fully understanding it. The original revelations were the product of spiritual discipline and so were more complete and accurate as representations of higher knowledge than Western philosophical speculation, which was the result of intellectual supposition and cultural borrowing. This idea was not new in Sri Aurobindo's day, having been popularized by Theosophical writers of the 19th century, such as King (1878/2011).

Jung (1989) discovered Gnosticism early in his life, and felt that he had found in it an ancient

kindred spirit that provided him with “evidence for the historical prefiguration of [his] inner experiences” (p. 200). He saw his own experimental researches into the unconscious as a link in the golden chain (*Aurea Catena*) of higher wisdom running from Gnosticism to alchemy, Goethe, and eventually to Nietzsche, which constituted what he called “a voyage of discovery to the other pole of the world” (p. 189). His *Seven Sermons* was even written in the style of the gnostics and attributed to Alexandrian gnostic, Basilides (see Hoeller, 1982).

While integral yoga is not a form of Gnosticism and diverges from gnostic teaching in a number of key ways, its cosmology and evolutionary ontology overlap enough with gnostic teachings that a comparison may be helpful in understanding integral yoga’s historical antecedents. One of the central themes of Gnosticism is that to grasp the truth of existence is beyond the ability of reason (Merillat, 1997, Introduction). Another, that the individual lives in a state of alienation from contact with the Self and must seek for salvation through contact with a higher reality, which is simultaneously outside and within (Hoeller, 1982, p. 15). Both of these ideas are present in integral yoga and analytic psychology.

Where Abrahamic faiths teach that all evil in the world has come as a result of human action, Gnosticism teaches that evil is the result of a spirit known as the Demiurge (literally, “worker”), who, thinking himself the High God, created a pale, material imitation of the ideal world latent in the mind of the true God. The Demiurge employed the help of beings known as *aeons*, who were generally seen as operating in pairs, the first being the most powerful while successive aeons decreased in power.

In Valentinian gnosis, emanated reality is dual, consisting of thirty male-female pairs, or syzygies, although as Jung (1944/1968c) stated, “the male-female syzygy is only one among the possible pairs of opposites” (p. 70 [para. 142]). Among these syzygies are such pairs as *Deep* and *Mingling*, *Unaging* and *Union*, *Self-Begotten* and *Pleasure* (Brons, 2003; although the author states that these are still considered male-female respectively). The Demiurge was said to have been the child of Sophia, who in some systems was the first emanation (divine

force), although in others she was the last. Jung’s (1989, 2009) *Seven Sermons’* central focus is on these dualities.

Sri Aurobindo wrote of the *dualities* within Upanishadic literature (see especially Ghose, 2005, p. 56ff). The Mother (as cited in Julich, 2013) discussed the dualities in Theon’s cosmology, where the divine Mother was charged with the job of creating the world, which she undertook with the help of the angels of Consciousness (Light), Life, Love, and Truth. Somehow, these beings came to see themselves as solely responsible for the Creation, which caused them to transform from angels of Light, Life, Love, and Truth into the *asuras* of Darkness, Death, Suffering, and Falsehood, respectively. In Theon’s cosmology, it was the task of the divine Sophia to descend into the Creation and convert each of these beings back to their original state. This motif was adopted by Sri Aurobindo (Johnston, 2010, p. 51) with some adjustment, and *Savitri* is, in part, concerned with the conversion of the Lord of Death back to the angel of Life by the Divine Mother.

The goal of Gnosticism is to free oneself from the material world through releasing the divine light trapped in the material body. This is accomplished by overcoming ignorance of the true nature of reality and seeing through the veil of physical manifestation to the pure spirit beyond. Only one’s own effort to overcome the illusion spun by this faulty creation could set one free. Thus, the emphasis was on *gnosis* (knowledge through spirit), rather than *episteme* (knowledge through the senses).

The ultimate goal of gnosis is the dissolution of the world and a return to the original state of non-being in the *Pleroma* (totality). In this way, integral yoga differs markedly from Gnosticism, because in integral yoga the goal is transformation of the created universe and not its dissolution. But the path to both goals runs through the syzygies of that which is divided. In this way, the two sets of teachings are similar. Similar also is the idea that if one cannot achieve gnosis in this life, one would be forced to return and take up the work from the beginning once again. Strangely, although Gnosticism teaches a turning away from matter, marriage was seen as a sacrament, and an earthly recreation of the higher,

spiritual syzygy of Christ and Sophia. This is a major difference between the two teachings. When looked at symbolically, however, the resonance is striking.

In alchemy, the syzygy is a symbol representing the stage of the opus known as the *coniunctio*, “an alchemical operation that combines two chemicals to produce a third, different chemical (Chalquist, 2007, n.p.). Jung (1963/1970) described the psychological process of the *coniunctio* in this way:

Just as there is no energy without the tension of opposites, so there can be no consciousness without the perception of differences. But any stronger emphasis of differences leads to polarity and finally to conflict which maintains the necessary tension of opposites. This tension is needed on the one hand for increased energy production and on the other for the further differentiation of differences, both of which are indispensable requisites for the development of consciousness. But although this conflict is unquestionably useful it also has very evident disadvantages, which sometimes prove injurious. Then a counter-movement sets in, in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting parties. (pp. 418–419 [para. 603])

The energy that effects the reconciliation is carried by the symbol. To Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1971a), a symbol is a “form on one plane that represents the truth of another” (p. 954). Although he differentiated symbols according to four types (*conventional*, *life*, *opposite*, and *mental*), generally speaking, “everything [is] . . . a symbol of a higher reality” (p. 954).

Here, apparently, is another difference in terminology between analytic psychology and integral yoga. Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1971a) viewed each symbol as pointing to or meaning a specific truth or reality in a higher realm—for example, he said, “the flag is a symbol of the nation” (p. 954), just as “the tree is the symbol of the subconscious vital” (p. 970). From Jung’s perspective, symbols do not have one specific referent but are more “feeling-toned” (von Franz, 1975/1998, p. 129), fluid and multivalent. He might have argued that Sri Aurobindo’s definition here more correctly defines what Jung called a *sign*:

a one-to-one correspondence. The strength of a symbol, to Jung, is its multivalent nature, which can catalyze the perception of paradox through which a leap beyond the mind into a more holistic knowing is experienced. Having said that, when Jung (1911–1912/1967b) argued that symbols “are images of [psychic] contents which for the most part transcend consciousness” (p. 77 [para. 114]), or that “symbols are tendencies whose goal is as yet unknown” (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 468 [para. 668]) the two men might be closer to agreement. “Our life,” Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1993) wrote in *Savitri*, “is a paradox with God for key” (p. 67).

To Jung, symbols overlap to a great degree, and are not easily circumscribed. Taking Sri Aurobindo’s example of the tree, Jung (1911–1912/1967b) might agree that in a particular case, the tree could symbolize the *subconscious vital* but would undoubtedly argue that a tree can also symbolize motherhood, masculinity, a city (p. 233 [para. 349]), “spiritual growth in time” (Jung, 1973, p. 221), and so forth, depending on the context. Symbolic images do not necessarily bear the same meaning from culture to culture, era to era, or even person to person. According to Jung, symbols can even lose their power to transform if the containing myth within which they arose loses its power to speak to the soul of the individual, as Jung (1989) argued is happening within Christianity in the modern era (pp. 327ff).

Therefore, if research on specific symbols is not grounded in their cultural and historical context, they potentially can lead the researcher into a quagmire of “everything in everything and in everything else” (von Franz, 1986, p. 130). The researcher should not err in thinking that any particular symbol has one and only one definition or application but must also safeguard against thinking that similarly described symbols from divergent times and places were experienced equivalently. The symbol is the bridge that links consciousness and the unconscious. It opens into a world of greater significance that touches upon the infinite. It is an image “expressing an as yet unknown and incomprehensible fact of a mystical or transcendent, i.e., psychological, nature” (Jung, 1921/1976e, p. 474 [para. 815]).

Jung's understanding of symbols can be seen through this anecdote: Jung's closest collaborator, Marie-Louise von Franz (Wagner & Whitney, 2004), shared the story of how when she first met Jung he told her that he had been working with a patient who made nightly trips to the moon (see also Jung, 1989, pp. 128–131). When von Franz (then eighteen years old) asked him if he meant to say that his patient had only imagined she had been to the moon, Jung emphatically told her no, she had been there. He did not elaborate on this further. Later that night, reflecting on Jung's statement, von Franz realized that what he was saying was that what happens in the psyche has its own ontological reality and must be respected as having such. Fantasy experiences are neither illusions nor metaphors. What is experienced when the gaze is turned inward and the mind silenced? Jung (1956/1976d) wrote that "all theological preaching is a mythologem, a series of archetypal images intended to give a more or less exact description of the unimaginable transcendence" (p. 682 [para. 1536]). He would undoubtedly say that although Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teachings fall into this category, there is no objective criterion with which one can determine their validity or even accuracy, but he would argue that they are absolutely real psychologically. I will return to this point later.

Taking up Jung's (1956/1976d) idea that "all theological preaching is mythologem" (p. 682 [para. 1536]), one can suggest that if the cultural and ideological veneers that adorn theological or metaphysical assertions are peeled back, the mythic structures that support them may be revealed. There at the meeting place of the universal and the particular, connections between a body of teaching and the symbol-making function of the psyche may become evident, although navigating the intersubjective space between symbol system and psyche is a complex endeavor, dependent as much on the experience and temperament of the individual undertaking the journey as it is on any objective truth of the teachings.

### **An Archetypal Lens**

My main research interest of late, inspired by Jung's (1958/1964a) assertion that there is a religious instinct (see pp. 343–344 [para. 653]), concerns

the possibility that the expression of archetypal structures and symbols underlying mythological, cosmological, metaphysical, and religious systems depend to a great degree on the particular moment in the evolution of consciousness. This specific line of research stems from an extended meditation on a paraphrase of Jung in Edward Edinger's (1995) lectures on Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*: "Someday all our present cosmological notions will be recognized as myths" (p. 297). Cosmological systems—even those coming from the hard sciences—are generated within the patterned structures of the mind, and ultimately, in Jung's view, share the general character of myths—not in the popular sense of false, but rather archetypal and symbolic representations, within the psyche, of unconscious realities.

The archetype, to Jung (1921/1976e) is "a precipitate and, therefore, a typical basic form, of certain ever-recurring psychic situations" (p. 444 [para. 748]) generated at the interface between objective reality (both spiritual and material) and subjective (psychic) experience. According to Jung (1954/1968c), "an archetype in its quiescent, unprojected state has no exactly determinable form but is in itself an indefinite structure which can assume definite forms only in projection" (p. 70 [para. 143]; see also Jung, 1919/1969c), which is "an automatic process whereby contents of one's own unconscious are perceived to be in others" (Sharp, 1991d). It is transformed by the organism into an image through interaction with the environment. "All the contents of our unconscious are constantly being projected into our surroundings, and it is only by recognizing certain properties of the objects as projections or imagos that we are able to distinguish them from the real properties of the objects" (Jung, 1948/1969b, p. 264 [para. 507]).

As "projections or imagos" (Jung, 1948/1969b, p. 264 [para. 507]), archetypes are "a condensation of the living process" (Jung, 1921/1976e, p. 445 [para. 749]) and "the precursor of the idea . . . and its matrix" (p. 445 [para. 750]). Archetypes are always collective, and the "mythological motifs" they engender among humans are "common to all times and races" (p. 443 [para. 747]). This is so simply because the

modes of apprehension available (the five senses plus thinking) are more or less uniform throughout recorded human history (see also Shamdasani, 2003, pp. 240–243). At one pole of consciousness these images are intertwined with the instincts, at the other “archetypes are living powers, they are the ‘thoughts of God’” (Jung, as cited in Ostrowski-Sachs, 1971, p. 59).

Jung’s argument concerning the religious instinct (Jung, 1926/1954, pp. 83–84 [para. 157]), was one which was not unknown at the time (see Hardy, 1913; Marshall, 1898/2006). Sri Aurobindo (1997c) himself wrote that “the religious instinct in man is most of all the one instinct in him that cannot be killed” (p. 193). Jung’s theory of archetypes came under fire even during his own lifetime (see, e.g., Jung, 1975, p. 153). Today it is often classed under the heading of “human universals” (Witzel, 2013, p. 24) and criticized as a form of reductionism; however, Jung came to his conclusions regarding the existence of both after years of clinical experience, introspective self-analysis, analysis of clients’ and students’ dreams, comparative research into religious symbols, and most importantly his confrontation with the material from his own unconscious (Jung, 1989, Ch. VI; see also Jung, 2009). He saw his work as empirical and phenomenological (Jung, 1959/1968a, p. 67 [para. 121]).

Jung thought he had collected sufficient evidence to argue for the presence of an instinct that archetypally shapes the underlying structure of religious forms in much the same way that another instinct determines the infant’s need to root at the mother’s breast, or, to give one of Jung’s (1954/1969d) favorite examples, the specific type of nest a weaver bird will build (pp. 226–227 [para. 435]), which is the same everywhere the bird appears in the world. Given the great diversity in cultural expression then, can it be shown that religions are archetypal, instinctual creations? How is it that religious forms and ideas develop worldwide along lines that can be recognized across time and space? Traditions influenced by, say, Greek philosophy might be expected to contain similar structural forms, but how then can it be explained that similar forms appear in China, India, or even remoter places such as the Amazon Basin or Papua New Guinea? Why

is the matter-spirit dichotomy almost universally in world religions (Eliade, 1969a, pp. 127–175)? Why is spirit so often spoken about using spatial metaphors such as higher and lower, inner and outer?

Descriptions of subtle worlds from various religious traditions differ widely. Jung (1963/1970) argued that “nothing provides a better demonstration of the extreme uncertainty of metaphysical assertions than their diversity” (p. 548 [para] 782), yet the fact that such worlds are postulated globally regardless of the differences between systems points to the possibility that at least the largest organizing categories are universally or nearly universally present. To Jung, it is the simple fact that metaphysical assertions are made that is most important.

Where instinct—as an expression of human biology—meets archetype, the symbol appears (Jung, 1940/1968e, p. 173 [para. 291]). This does not preclude, however, the possible transmigration of specific symbols through human contact and their inevitable transmutation. Is there a single story that has, or set of stories that have, somehow journeyed out of Africa with migrating bands, surviving intact, being partially forgotten, evolving, recombining, through eons of trade, warfare, travel? Are there two separate narratives (Witzel, 2013) or perhaps more reflecting different migrations or long periods of isolation and differentiation that can be discerned in the human community? Or are the types of stories humans tell drawn from a deeper well?

Visiting the Elgoni of Africa in the 1930s, Jung (1989, pp. 268–269) observed an obvious emotional shift among the people at dawn and dusk. To the Elgoni, the daylight was cause for optimism. During the day, all things were good, and their outlook bright but as soon as the sun set “the optimism gave way to fear of ghosts and magical practices intended to secure protection from evil”; then, “without any contradiction,” as Jung observed, “the optimism returned at dawn” (pp. 267–268). The Elgoni retained an ancient practice of spitting into their palms and holding them up to the rising sun while uttering a prayer each morning. No Elgoni could tell Jung where this practice originated but said that their ancestors had done this so they did as well. They also told him that the moment of sunrise was God.

Later, Jung (1989) observed a troop of baboons reacting to the rising sun in a way that brought to mind what the Elgoni had taught him. Just before sunrise, the baboons would gather and sit motionless, facing East. Jung wrote that “they seemed to be waiting for the sunrise,” which reminded him of the statues “of the great baboons of Abu Simbel in Egypt, which perform the gesture of adoration” (p. 269) towards the rising sun. Thinking back over the various myths he knew about the victory of the sun god over the forces of darkness (such as are found in the Egyptian mysteries), Jung felt he had discovered in the baboon’s behavior the pre-human archetypal precursor of the human relationship to light and dark. The tension between day and night and light’s victory over the darkness runs as a leitmotif throughout the history of religion. Jung argued that the identification of the light with the masculine God and the dark with the feminine led to the development of myths of the birth of the sun out of the chaos of night—almost universally understood as the birth of the hero or the god of light and consciousness out of the dark womb of the devouring Mother or cosmic unconsciousness (Neurmann, 1970). As Jung (1989) wrote: “The longing for light is the longing for consciousness” (p. 269).

I would argue that light, symbolizing the *Conscious-Force* of the Divine, is the preeminent symbol of Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga, represented beautifully by the beam of sunlight that descends into the crystal sitting in the meditation chamber of the Matrimandir in Auroville, India. Even if it is true that light is a divine afflatus, there must be some mechanism within the human being that draws individuals towards it. Is this tension merely an extension of a common heliotropic response to light that in humans has been made more complex through the evolution of emotional and intellectual capacities? Is its genesis spiritual and archetypal, or is it somehow the confluence of spirit and matter in the human psyche that gives rise to the numinous experience of the first ray of sunlight in the morning?

### **The Alchemical Syzygy**

In alchemy, the syzygy describes one stage in the process of the transformation of substance

through fire. This is true whether one is speaking of the transmutation of base metals into gold (*chrysopoeia*), or the transfiguration and perfection of the human being (spiritual alchemy). In laboratory alchemy, the fire is actual physical fire or corrosive acid. In spiritual alchemy, the fire is the inner heat generated through spiritual austerities or practices—what in India is known as *tapas* or *yogagni* (White, 1996, p. 39), and in the West, is associated with prayer (Ambelain, 2005). The fire breaks down substances into oppositional pairs, which are then rejoined. The goal of alchemy is the synthesis of the transformed substance out of separated qualities seen to be antipathetic to one another.

In the West, alchemy is most often associated with the European Middle Ages and the alchemist with the idealized figure of the wizard or magician but alchemical practices were a global phenomenon existing for long periods of human history in China, Egypt, and India (Eliade, 1978; Fowden, 1986; Holmyard, 1957/1990; Needham, 1974). There is still debate about the birthplace of alchemy; even the origin of the word is uncertain. It could come from the Greek, Egyptian, Arabic (“alchemy”, n.d.), or even Chinese (Mahdihassan, 1988), with plausible provenance given for each. Still, European alchemy can be traced back in a line through Islam, Gnosticism, hermeticism, to Greek philosophy and ancient Egyptian funerary practice (von Franz, 1980).

In Jungian psychology, the *opposites* have to do with the psychic tension between ego consciousness and the unconscious in the regulation of psychological balance. The opposites are the engine of psychological evolution. So much so that Jung (as cited in Sharp, 1991c) argued that “there is no consciousness without discrimination of the opposites” (n.p.). In Abrahamic religion, the opposites appear at the beginning of the book of Genesis, where God divides earth and heaven, dark and light, woman and man. Creation begins with division. Healing or salvation comes through reunification of the divided halves. This is especially stressed in Christianity, where the Christ is seen as both the symbol and reality of union of the human and divine, matter and spirit, at once fully human and fully God. In India, the opposites appear in the

Upanishads (Ghose, 2003, p. 5), where salvation also comes through uniting them.

As stated above, oppositions in the form of paired divinities underlay gnostic cosmologies. In alchemy, the opposites join, according to Jung (1959/1968a), through “the process of conjunction and composition” of consciousness (p. 191 [para. 298]). In integral yoga, the opposites are “creations of Life or of Mind in life” (Ghose, 2005, p. 628). Uniting them is the dialectical “secret to attaining an integral vision of the total truth” (Chaudhuri, as cited in Subbiondo, 2015, p. 14). Union of the opposites raises consciousness to the level of the Absolute out of which they come, and “which gives them their being and their justification” (Ghose, 2005, p. 398). The Mother put it this way:

In the Supreme it's a unity that contains all possibilities perfectly united, without differentiation. The creation is, so to speak, the projection of all that makes up that unity, by dividing all opposites, that is to say, by separating (that's what was caught by those who said that creation is separation), by separating: for instance day and night, white and black, evil and good, and so on (all that is our explanation). All together, all of it together is a perfect unity, immutable and . . . indissoluble. The creation is the separation of all that "makes up" this unity—we might call it the division of the consciousness—the division of the consciousness, which starts from unity conscious of its unity to arrive at unity conscious of its multiplicity IN UNITY. (Alfassa, 1998, p. 434 [November 19, 1969]; emphasis in original)

The anthropomorphized symbol of the union of the opposites, the syzygy, appears in many religions as the underlying structure cast in the form of the separation and eventual joining of man and woman in the creation of new life. Although it is not the sole form of creation story, it is perhaps the most universal, existing in places as far flung as Africa, New Zealand, Sumer, Greece, and China (von Franz, 1972/1995), dealing as it does with the biological imperative of procreation. The syzygy as the coupling of masculine and feminine energies is central to the teachings of Indian Tantra, Jewish Kabbalah, and alchemy where it is seen as

a recapitulation of the act of divine creation on the human level. As Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their spiritual relationship are seen as constituting such a syzygy, the offspring of their symbolic and spiritual union—what they called the *gnostic being* (Ghose, 2005, Ch. 27)—I would suggest is analogous to the goal of alchemy: the lapis or philosopher's stone, often symbolized as a divine child.

Jung placed the syzygy at the very end of the transformational process, and rarely speculated what might exist beyond it. It is possible that he would have taken issue with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's assertion that their yoga actually begins on the other side of the unitive and totalizing experience that is the syzygy, or that they themselves were free of “the mill of the opposites” (Jung, 1975, p. 196). This argument, however, is not my concern here. What I am interested in is whether the syzygy they embodied in their teaching can be explored constructively through Jung's theories. I believe it can.

Jung has been accused of creating his own metaphysical system (with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother this is understood to be the case), where the archetypes are discrete entities experienced identically everywhere and at all times (see Witzel, 2013, pp. 12ff.). But although the number of basic archetypes may in some ways be limited, they are also infinitely variable in form. As touched upon above, von Franz (1975/1998) argued archetypes “can be isolated only relatively; they overlap to an extraordinary degree” (p. 129). To reduce them to a handful of concrete and bounded images is to de-potentiate them as agents of genuine transformation and reduce them to signs and even elements of coercion, where belief in the truth or permanence of a particular image trumps the fluid and often paradoxical nature of inner experience.

Jung (1938/1967d) offered an “Archimedean point” (p. 108 [para. 144]) outside of religious systems from which to comprehend such systems globally. From the perspective of a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this type of analysis applied to integral yoga might seem reductive. Certainly, integral yoga is a rich and coherent system needing no outside lens to explicate its teachings. For one contained within the system this

will be enough, but for those who find themselves on the outside looking in Jung's ideas may help one gain insight and engender a greater respect for integral yoga by highlighting the ways in which it converges and diverges from traditional teachings—in other words its place in the warp and woof of the spiritual and broader cultural history of humankind. If one accepts the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's injunction that each person must find their own path to the Divine then why not be guided by Jung (1989), whose entire focus was the hidden psychic structure underlying numinous phenomena (p. 4)? Sri Aurobindo provides his personal map of the terrain of the inner planes. Jung provides a key that can help to understand that map as an alchemical path.

The myriad cultural constructs are in constant interaction, recombination, and flux. Even the most conservative forms are constantly being shaped by forces around them. For example, one could argue, following Jung, that the development of European science is as tied to the Judeo-Christian worldview as the development of Chinese science is to the Taoist (see Needham, 1974, 1976, on the development of Chinese science). The separation of religion and science was a late development that would not have been understood or accepted by alchemists within any culture in which the discipline appeared, yet current Western scholarship (Maxwell-Stewart, 2008; Principe, 2013) tends to argue that alchemy was a science alone and in no way an occult art. Occult-oriented alchemy, or spiritual alchemy, is considered a pseudo-science, an aberration, or even a later misinterpretation and misrepresentation (this in reference to Atwood, 1850). Except for a few outliers, alchemy is today seen as a failed proto-science.

Perhaps, then, it would be better to speak of chemical and occult alchemy as separate and only tangentially-related traditions. Further, perhaps it would be more correct to apply the term alchemy only to the cultural axis of Egypt–Greece–Islam–Europe, which produced the Western variety. It might be better not to classify European alchemy with other inner practices such as the *siddha* and *rasayana* traditions in India, *weidan* and *neidan* in China, or shamanism in Siberia and Tibet, but to look

at it only in isolation. Given the possibility of wide diffusion of ideas through trade, war, and migration however, it is possible to speak of the various *alchemies* as if they were all part of one somewhat coherent world-wide tradition undergoing a long process of diffusion, individuation, recombination, and transmutation during a prolonged period of human cultural and intellectual development.

The Mother said that many of the ideas concerning the spiritual transformation of the human being travelled both East and West from a single cultural locus located near modern Iran and Afghanistan, “more ancient than the Vedic and the Chaldean [cultures] which must have been the source of both” (Alfassa, 1973/2003e, p. 85 [3 April 1957]) and remarked that both Sri Aurobindo and Theon had told her about this common root (see King, 1878/2011 for the possible Theosophical source of this idea). As Jews in the diaspora encountered Zoroastrianism among other ideas living under the Persians, and as Jews settled in India perhaps as long as 2,000 years ago, they could not help but come into contact with Indian religions and philosophies, and it is not much of a stretch to posit the effect of Indo-Aryan ideas on the Abrahamic cultures of the Levant (see Holdrege, 1996), or even the reverse. It is beyond the scope of this paper, however, to explore this line of thought. I would only add here that the belief in the possible transformation of the human body into what in Abrahamic traditions has come to be called the *glorious body* or *corpus glorificationis* (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 535 [para. 763]) and in integral yoga the supramental or gnostic being might have common historical roots and be less archetypal than a product of cultural diffusion.

But theories of diffusion do not explain why such ideas would have sparked the human imagination in the first place or have remained popular for so long across so many cultures. Trade routes on land and sea in the ancient world undoubtedly brought ideas along with material goods but disruptions in relations between nations and societies could well have led to the independent development of alchemical ideas in isolation. Much of the pre- and early history of alchemy occurred before writing. In such cases, where no concrete proof is available, archaeologists tend to accept

the possibility of independent origination of ideas. It is possible that alchemy arose independently the world over around the same time (Debus, 1987). Jung (1989) would argue that regardless of where or when, alchemical symbols and thus alchemy itself are archetypally based (p. 347) and therefore united by the common structure of the human brain.

The aspiration for the transformation of the earthly condition or contact with that which transcends it might be learned or it might be hard-wired into the brain. The morphological similarities of various teachings from disparate traditions might be due to cultural diffusion but might also be a product of an archetypal aspect in human consciousness that governs the way in which humans tend to structure cosmological and metaphysical systems and symbolically imagine the evolution of human consciousness.

Regardless of whether the survival of alchemical ideas is coincidental or archetypally-based, it is obvious that there are analogous ways of understanding the possibility and purpose of human transformation across traditions and time periods. The key to these analogies lies in the saying, *as above, so below*, which is a formulation from hermeticism “ascribed to Hermes or the Egyptian Thoth” (Holmyard, 1957/1990, p. 97) but could also be inferred from the ancient image of the cosmic being whose body serves as the foundation of the universe as in the *purusha-sukta* of Rig Veda, X. 90. The structure of the cosmos created in the image of the creator or first sacrificial being is in turn the prototypical path taken by the aspirant to unite the upper and lower worlds, heaven and earth, God and humanity.

### **Transformative Schemas in Integral Yoga, Analytic Psychology, and Alchemy**

This higher scheme of being is our cause  
And holds the key to our ascending fate  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 99)

Whether concerned with the transmutation of base metals into gold, the spiritualization of the physical body, or with the evolution of human consciousness to a higher level, alchemy is understood to be a process requiring specific

techniques and steps to achieve the desired goal. In both integral yoga and analytic psychology, however, the individual is admonished that they must find their own way to the Truth. The Mother (as cited in Hadnagy, 2008), for example, likened the search for the psychic being to “the explorer’s trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land” (p. 37), stating that “the important thing is to live the experience; that carries with it its own reality and force apart from any theory” (p. 35). Jung (2009) similarly warned that people should be “not Christians but Christ, otherwise you will be of no use to the coming God” (p. 234). “This life is the way,” he wrote in *The Red Book*, “the long sought-after way to the unfathomable, which we call divine” (Jung, 2009, p. 232). Yet, in both schools there are also techniques and stage-wise procedures developed by the founders and intended to catalyze specific states or types of insight.

In this section, I begin looking at the transformative systems of these two sets of teachings. It is important to state at the beginning, then, that I have taken to heart the Mother’s admonition that “these things are subtle . . . and as soon as you try to formulate them, they elude you—formulation deforms” (Alfassa, 1981, p. 383 [7 November 1961]). This, I believe is what Sri Aurobindo was pointing to when he said concerning his schema, reproduced in *The Absolute and the Manifestation* (Kazlev, 2009), that “it’s only a diagram, it’s just for fun.” (Alfassa, 1981, p. 279 [28 July 1961]).

I view the records of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Jung’s teachings as revelations of their separate paths to awakening. Although each is capable of carrying the student far, in the final analysis, one’s spiritual awakening is one’s own responsibility. Even if the basic practice of integral yoga is surrender to the Mother, one person’s surrender will not be like that of another. Each individual’s way—each individual—is unique. As John Hick (1990) wrote: “All human beings have been influenced by the culture of which they are a part and have received, or have developed in their appropriation of fit, certain deep interpretative tendencies which help to form their experience and are thus continually confirmed within it” (p. 119). Further, “the great religious traditions of the

world represent different human perceptions of and response to the same infinite divine Reality” (p. 119). The baseline assumption here is that there is “an infinite divine reality” of which one can speak. Following Jung, I cannot accept the hypostatic reality of such perceptions a priori, but rather I analyze them symbolically.

Even if underlying all religious truth claims there is a hidden structure uniting all of the disparate faiths under a single interpretive umbrella, Jung warned his Western readers that adopting systems of psychospiritual transformation from foreign cultures could be psychologically dangerous. Everyone, he argued, is bound to the cultures into which they are born. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fully comprehend any religious system from outside of one’s own cultural container. “What has taken [another culture] thousands of years to build cannot be acquired by theft,” Jung (1957/1966b) argued. “Of what use to us is the wisdom of the Upanishads or the insight of Chinese yoga if we desert our own foundations as though they were errors and, like homeless pirates, settle with thievish intent on foreign shores?” (p. 58 [para. 88]).

This injunction is not emphasized as much these days in Jungian circles. Although cultural borrowing has been problematized in the wake of subaltern studies, with the quickening pace of globalization, the whole notion of East and West is being challenged. In Sri Aurobindo and Jung’s day, however, it was generally held that Indian and European consciousness differed essentially. This was still a period of European colonialism; exchanges, though often fruitful, were as often brutal. Misunderstanding, mischaracterization, and appropriation were rampant. Both Jung and Sri Aurobindo waxed eloquent on this subject.

Although Jung (1931/1964b) held Eastern teachings in high regard as psychological systems, even going so far as to say that “psychoanalysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise—a development which we consider specifically Western—are only a beginner’s attempt compared with what is an immemorial art in the East” (p. 90 [para. 188]), he focused on psychology and argued that “the spiritual development of the West has been along entirely different lines from that of the

East and has therefore produced conditions which are the most unfavorable soil one can think of for the application of yoga” (Jung, 1936/1958h, p. 537 [para. 876]).

As a psychologist, Jung was keenly aware of the provincial nature of European culture and the European mindset. Jung (1931/1969a) argued that individuals are made up to a large extent of “the accumulated deposits from the lives of our ancestors” (p. 349 [para. 673]) and it is those ancestors—their unanswered questions and un-lived lives—that people must address themselves to and not those of the ancestors of other lands. This did not mean that individuals could not, depending on their temperament adopt another culture as their own. Although neither Jung nor Sri Aurobindo could make their home in foreign cultures, the Mother was able to make the transition from France to India. I believe that Jung (1957/1966b) might have credited her flexibility to what he called the *maternal intellect*—“a receptive and fruitful womb that can reshape what is strange and give it familiar form” (p. 54 [para. 76]).

Jung (1936/1958i) saw yoga as an attempt to halt the endless flow of mind-stuff from the unconscious. He saw Westerners, with their overly rational attitude, as needing to open, in a controlled manner, the gates to that mind-stuff in order to establish a healthy connection to the unconscious. He saw yoga as “an approach to and connection between the specific nature of the non-ego and the conscious ego” (p. xxiii), which is in agreement with Sri Aurobindo’s definition (Ghose, 1971b, p. 1149). Jung (1996) did feel that there was much that the West could learn from the wisdom of the East—especially concerning the mastery of what he called libido, or psychic energy (p. xxviii). Yet, while Sri Aurobindo saw India’s spirituality as world-redeeming, Jung’s concern for Westerners was that they must create their own yoga, which he felt should be formed along the lines of Christianity (Jung, 1944/1958e, pp. 585–86 [para 963]).

Though Jung was a scientist, he argued against the prevailing bio-medical model of psychology and attempted to reconnect Westerners to the roots of their own spiritual heritage—a heritage he believed contained all of the necessary

ingredients to achieve psychic (read: spiritual) wholeness. This could be inspired by Indian metaphysics, even if he considered adoption of yoga philosophy ill-advised (Jung, 1944/1958e, p. 586 [para 963]). His main professional writings were an investigation of the structures of the psyche through cross-cultural, comparative analysis of religious motifs and of the dreams and visions of his clients and patients. He saw in specific, culturally bound religious symbols an underlying universal structure, and although he ultimately fixed his attention on the West and on alchemy he attempted to organize the various ontological schemas that exist in almost dizzying array around the world through his theory of archetype.

Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1999) developed a synthesis of *karma*, *jñana*, and *bhakti* yogas, presenting his own integral system as the next step in the evolution of consciousness. This system is laid out in *The Life Divine* (Ghose, 2005), in which are presented the steps necessary for evolution to the next, supramental, stage of consciousness. When analyzing the structure of integral yoga and Jung's schemas of the human being in relation to the cosmos there are noticeable similarities. When looked at in comparison with alchemical, kabbalistic, Neoplatonic, and gnostic systems of emanation, apparent connections become evident.

As stated above, because he chose to keep the details of his confrontation with the unconscious largely secret during his life, Jung's insights have often been interpreted as merely intellectual by those following Sri Aurobindo's unabashedly spiritual teachings (Reddy, 1990; Sen, 1986; Singh, 2003). Freudians, in turn, accused Jung of being everything from a mystic to an ambulatory schizophrenic, while others have accused him of being a cryptomaterialist. In a rarely cited correspondence with H. L. Philip, for Philip's book *Jung and the Problem of Evil*, just three years before Jung's death, Jung (1958/1976b) discussed this issue. Philip had raised a criticism by Josef Goldbrunner (author of *Individuation: A Study of the Depth Psychology of Jung* [1964]) that Jung's work implied "a positivistic, agnostic renunciation of all metaphysics" (p. 557, emphasis in original). Jung disputed Goldbrunner, arguing that it was incumbent upon a medical

psychiatrist not to make metaphysical assertions: "The human mind," he wrote, "cannot step beyond itself, although divine grace may and probably does allow at least glimpses into a transcendental order of things. But I am neither able to give a rational account of such divine interventions nor can I prove them" (pp. 707–708 [para. 1591]). Metaphysics cannot be a science because its assertions cannot be objectively proven.

Adopting Sri Aurobindo's terminology, this might place Jung's insights at best at the intuitive level of *higher* or *illuminated mind*. "Intuition is a direct contact with the higher Truth," Sri Aurobindo (2012a) argued, "but not in an integral contact. . . . its truth gets mixed with error" (p. 159). Ultimately, however, it makes as little sense to judge Jung according to Sri Aurobindo's system as it would to judge Sri Aurobindo according to Jung's. Asserting the superiority of one teaching over another increases the potential of falling into a tautology in which the other is viewed as less-than because it has been defined within one's belief-system to be just that. And although in both Hinduism and Christianity ways have been developed to determine the depth or level of one's realization, I see no objective way of measuring truth claims outside of the context of one's specific faith. One must accept too many conditional assertions.

Perhaps it was easier for Sri Aurobindo, as an Indian yogi, to assume a standpoint of the fundamental Indian insight of *tat tvam asi* ("I am That") than for Jung, who as a Western medical doctor was all but required in his professional life to keep his metaphysics discreet from his science. But to Jung (1996), this difference was less a personal issue than a reflection that Westerners and Indians operated within different contexts. From the beginning, for Jung (1906/1961), "in psychology the context [was] everything" (p. 6 [para. 14]). Indians, he argued, were primarily concerned with cosmic aspects of consciousness, while Westerners' primary concerns were material. Westerners viewed everything in terms of the root, or *muladhara*, chakra, while Indians had a natural tendency to transcendentalism. As alluded to above, today this generalization would perhaps be considered a form of Orientalism (Said, 1979), however it is instructive

to find that Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1997d) held a similar position (Kundan, 2008). My interest here is to understand the underlying vision of the world that gave birth to them.

Sri Aurobindo stressed the importance of knowledge through “identity,” one of the fundamental tenets of integral philosophy, wherein the aspirant feels her or himself to be one with the all and the all as oneself, “that this self again is the same as God and Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence” (Ghose, 1972a, p. 332).<sup>7</sup> Although the idea that the Absolute is indescribable is accepted as dogma among the Abrahamic religions, what is generally not accepted is that “the self is one with the universal self in all things” (p. 332). However, to say that Jung adhered to an orthodox interpretation and had no appreciation for this metaphysical insight (as argued by Reddy, 1990) would be incorrect. Jung (1921/1976e) wrote of yogic practice:

As a result of the complete detachment of all affective ties to the object, there is necessarily formed in the inner self an equivalent of objective reality, or a complete identity of inside and outside, which is technically described as *tat tvam asi* (that art thou). (pp. 118–119 [para. 189])

The problem, to Jung (1966/1977a), was one of establishing objective proof. “The unconscious has a kind of absolute knowledge,” he said, “but we cannot prove it is an absolute knowledge, because the Absolute, the Eternal, is transcendental” (p. 377). Absolute knowledge, he argued, “is something we cannot grasp at all, for we are not yet eternal and consequently can say nothing whatever about eternity, our consciousness being what it is” (p. 377). What can be grasped are its affects, which appear as symbols.

In alchemical symbolism, the heat necessary for the transmutation of metals in the alchemical oven is analogous to the heat necessary for inner transmutation. The transformative principle in both cases is fire—whether as a physical or symbolic fact (Eliade, 1978, p. 80, 1992, pp. 412–414). In alchemical systems, this action could take place outwardly in the process of transforming base metals into gold, or within the body of the alchemist

(especially in India and China) in the production of purified, perfected, and immortal existence. The union of heaven and earth in the substance of the alchemical body leads to the apotheosis of the practitioner. Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1997a) would perhaps have agreed with this analogy, since he saw evolution as “the progressive unfolding of Spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God out of his apparent animal being” (p. 334).

The “gradual self-revelation of God out of his apparent animal being” (Ghose, 1997a, p. 334) seems fundamentally opposed to Christian doctrine, which holds that only one human being is identical with God. But is it, really? One might ask the meaning of St. Paul’s dictum: “And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20, NRSV); or of Jesus’ “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said you are “gods”?’” (John 10:34). Jung (1952/1958b) wrote extensively about this in terms of what he called the “continuing incarnation” of the Holy Ghost (p. 413, para. 565): the evolutionary passage taken by the Deity through history and the limited, fallible human with all the suffering it entails. The end of this process is that the human ego, an essential structural development in the evolution of consciousness, is subordinated to the wider personality or Self while God self-limits, entering into the stream of evolution through taking on a human form. In this way, there is a meeting and reconciliation of Creator and Creation—a movement of both towards a middle term that stands between the manifest and the transcendent. I see this sentiment as quite close to that expressed by Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1999):

For man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower. (p. 8)

The idea that “God’s incarnation in Christ requires continuation and completion” (Jung, 1952/1958b, p. 414 [para. 657]), which entails a union of the upper and lower in the central term, or the human being, is similar to ideas found in evolution

of consciousness philosophy as it appears in the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Benedictine monk Father Bede Griffiths, in a fascinating correspondence with Amal Kiran (Sethna, 2004), a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, argued just this point. God descended into the womb of the Mediatrix, through whom he was born as a human being, thus unifying spirit and matter through her. Through Mary, the Mother of Christ, comes the possibility for “the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower” (Ghose, 1999, p. 8). Once manifested in one, ever-after God is *in potentia* in each human being. All that is required is a state of surrender symbolized by the acceptance of the reality of the death and resurrection of Christ for the sins of humanity. The mystery now rests upon the ability to experience the divine spark that sleeps within each person. Griffiths saw in the supramental manifestation the renewed promise of the glorified body presaged in Jesus’ transfiguration, and argued that it is just this transfiguration that is present in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and described in his evolutionary drama, *Savitri*. This interpretation is not strictly accurate, as Sri Aurobindo argued against interpreting the supramental body in terms of a spiritualized body (*cinmaya deha*; Ghose, 1998, p. 540), this contradiction is less important here than the idea that the transcendent reality slumbers within the physical body in seed-form, awaiting to be awakened and assimilated, which is central to alchemical traditions across cultures.

### **Involution and Evolution**

In perhaps his most succinct description of the nature and purpose of integral yoga, Sri Aurobindo wrote that his teaching

starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. (Ghose, 2006, p. 547)

It is the “separativity of consciousness” that somehow causes the mind to perceive existence

in hard divisions. In actuality, there is one reality: a single “Being and Consciousness” or “Self” (Ghose, 2005, p. 362), which Sri Aurobindo elsewhere called *purusha* or *purushottama*, equivalent to the *Lord Brahman*—“that which exceeds, contains, and supports all individual things as well as all universe, transcendently of Time and Space and Causality” (Ghose, 2003, p. 30), divided through its self-projection (Ghose, 2012a, p. 98) into the world in the process of *involution* (see also Alfassa, 1998, p. 434 [November 19, 1969]). The Self, in many of the traditions in which it or its equivalent appears, is the prototype and raw material of the ideal and manifest order.

Involution, a term borrowed from Theon—although the idea existed earlier in Kabbalah, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and other emanationist philosophies (Kazlev, 2004)—is the process of the descent of divine consciousness into densest matter where it awaits, in seed form, the impulse to return to its essential nature in what Sri Aurobindo described as “the progressive unfolding of Spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God” (Ghose, 1997a, p. 125). The theosophical conception of evolution owes much to the Spencerian idea of *ascent* (Kazlev, 2004), which fits neatly into the idea of the evolution of divine consciousness from its deepest involvement in matter, through life, mind, and in the end to supermind. “For only then,” Sri Aurobindo argued, “will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection” (Ghose, 2006, p. 547). This conception is also wholly Indian, and Sri Aurobindo described creation as “the self-projection of Brahman into the conditions of Space and Time” (Ghose, 2003, p. 24). It is *srsti*: “a release or bringing forth of what is held in, latent” (Ghose, 1998, p. 235), the natural expression of Brahman’s will to experience itself.

As spirit descends into matter, this first stage takes place only in the ideal world, later “falling” into increasingly coarser materiality. Only once the divine impulse (imagined as light in numerous systems) has reached its nadir in inconscient matter does the possibility of return occur. It begins its ascent back up through the various levels, as if climbing a ladder. So, in the process of descent into the field of

space-time, the divine energy commences, divides, and multiplies into the myriad objects of the subtle and gross worlds. The structures of the material creation mirror the emanations of the subtle world, which in turn mirror the ideal creation in the mind of the Absolute. The reunification and drawing back in of the multiplicity will take place eventually through the process of evolution—the path the involved Godhead undertakes for its return to Itself in the process of recollection. In many emanationist systems, this recollection means completion of a full circle, the return of the Godhead to itself, and the end of manifestation. In both integral yoga and analytic psychology, the return (at least at this stage of evolution) is not to the original unity, but to a new state in which the unified creature and creator form a third thing: a unity in multiplicity in which both the unity and the multiplicity exist simultaneously in the individual. In both Sri Aurobindo and Jung's way of seeing it, once this union is effected, consciousness will continue to expand infinitely without closing back in on itself and dissolving (in Sanskrit, *pralaya*).

Evolution is a slow labor through the unconscious and often meandering impulses of nature, but now that the level of mind has been reached evolution can be undertaken consciously. The human being is capable of intentionally directing the will towards transcendence of its imprisonment in space-time. This willed quickening of the process is the signal idea of all alchemical systems. In such systems, the levels of coherence within the body mirror the levels of coherence in the cosmos. Engaging the corresponding levels within the body catalyzes cosmic processes that resonate outwardly in the higher processes of universal evolution.

Proponents of these systems view the levels within the human constitution hierarchically and phylo- and ontogenetically with the lowest reflecting the most primitive, inorganic stage of development, moving up through chemical-biological, plant, animal, human, to that which transcends the human. I would argue that this vision of ascent is present in the symbolism of the chakras and the three channels or *nad.is* (*ida*, *pingala*, and *sushumna*) of kundalini, the *sefirot* and three channels or *kavim* (severity, mercy, and mildness) of Kabbalah, and the metaphysical emblems of alchemy with their

bi-lateral symmetry of masculine and feminine, and light and dark energies in opposition and union, with a central tree or human form representing the link between the lower and higher worlds (see also Stavish, 1997). All of these describe a vertical and hierarchical scale extending from matter to spirit, from sensing, upward through feeling, thinking, and the subtle perception, through the interplay, tension, and eventual transcendence of oppositions at the various levels and stages of development.

Sri Aurobindo was well acquainted with the chakra system but used Theon's terminology for his system (Heehs, 2011; Kazlev, 2005), placing the human being in a hierarchical scale that runs from the deepest unconscious, through the physical, mechanical, reproductive and digestive systems, the vital "impulses, emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions" (Ghose, 2012a, p. 194), and the lower mental workings, respectively, then through the higher mind to supermind, *sachchidananda*, and the *Supreme*. As Jung (1989) argued,

the three-dimensional world in time and space is like a system of co-ordinates; what is here separated into ordinates and abscissae may appear 'there,' in space-timelessness, as a primordial image with many aspects, perhaps as a diffuse cloud of cognition surrounding an archetype. Yet a system of co-ordinates is necessary if any distinction of discrete contents is to be possible. (p. 308)

Even with all of the contextual differences between systems there is a remarkable amount of agreement as to the nature of what Jung (1958/1976b) called the "transcendental order of things" (pp. 708 [para. 1591]) in the subtle worlds both within and without and Sri Aurobindo's complex and multileveled vision, illustrated in *The Absolute and the Manifestation* (Kazlev, 2009), which was distilled from his *Record of Yoga* (Ghose, 2001b). Both men described systems that were quadripartite: Sri Aurobindo's, as stated above, included the level of the sub- and unconscious, the vital energies and lower mind, higher mind, and the levels of spiritual manifestation. Jung's (Jung, 1959/1968a) system, described in *Aion*, includes four "quaternios," ranging from the unconscious, material creation to the spiritual man (p. 247, para. 390).

In a way that is consonant between systems, there is “a double-process” (Ghose, 2005, p. 858), not only of involution and evolution of form but of physical and soul evolution; of the interplay of the temporal and eternal. In Sri Aurobindo’s system there is a horizontal plane that works in tandem with the vertical, which moves from the superficial, collective, surface consciousness back through numerous levels to the innermost core-nature or *psychic being*—the “soul developing in evolution” (Ghose, 2012a, p. 82) that resides behind the physical heart. As mentioned above, the psychic being is another term borrowed from Theon. Theon himself may have derived it from the kabbalistic *pnimiyut*, the “innerness” of the heart (Crispe, 2018) or “point in the heart” (Laitman, 2009), a spark of the divine light, which is the evolving part of the true being, although obscured by the surface consciousness (in Hebrew, *Chitzoniyut*, or outwardness). This “point” also exists in alchemical literature, as described by Jung (1963/1970, pp. 45–48 [para. 40–41]).

In Jung’s (1959/1968a) quaternary system there is also a horizontal polarity, the “Philosophical-Psychological Plane” (Harms, 2011, p. 152), stretching between *Diabolos* and *Christos*, and passing through *Serpens*—symbol of the one who is caught in the opposites. This split “symbolizes the strongest polarity into which the Anthropos [Original Man] falls when he descends into physis [the material creation]” (p. 247 [para. 390]). Where for Jung the task is to hold the tension in the service of wholeness, for Sri Aurobindo the task is to draw the psychic being forward and thus join it to the surface consciousness. In both, the goal is a higher union of the opposing forces.

According to the Mother, humanity operates at best at the level of mind, stating, “the ordinary human being is conscious only in his physical being, and only in relatively rare moments is he conscious of his mind” (as cited in Hadnagy, 2008, p. 125). Mind is a necessary stage in the cosmic evolution towards supramental consciousness. Its strengths, however, are also its weaknesses. As Sri Aurobindo stated, mind, although “in its origin a principle of light” (Ghose, 1998, p. 571), “goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle” (Ghose, 2006, p. 548). This circling is seen, in the

end, as self-defeating, hindering passage to the next stage of evolutionary development. Transcendence of mind is to be accomplished through “the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga” (p. 548). But it is not the traditional understanding of the goal of yoga that Sri Aurobindo intended, focused as it was on individual salvation. Integral yoga posits a universal transformation that is much more consonant with alchemy, Kabbalah, and Western theosophical systems. The goal is to release the higher “Self or Spirit” in the world, which would

replace the mind’s ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental truth-consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race. (p. 548)

In Jung’s (2009) *Systema Munditotius* (p. 364 [Appendix A]), his “psychocosmology” (Jeromson, 2005-2006, p. 6), he described “the antinomies of the microcosm within the macrocosmic world and its antinomies” (Jaffe, 1979, p. 75). A vertical pole stretches between *Abraxas*, the god of darkness and lord of the physical world, and *Phanes*, the god of light and the source of the energy of creation. This pole, as described by Harms (2011), corresponds to the “Polar Cosmological Alignment” (p. 152) with the Self at the center. This polarity between light and darkness is inherent in Sri Aurobindo’s cosmology as well. In both systems, the light and dark meet and comele in the human being, standing midway between the two. The union at the center catalyzes the birth of the new being.

According to Shamdasani (2009, pp. 205–207), the *Seven Sermons* was the culmination of Jung’s visionary work during the period of his confrontation with the unconscious. In it, Jung described the birth of the *new God image* within his soul—a “uniting of the Christian God with Satan” (p. 206), light and dark, which he believed was a more accurate picture of the totality that is God as experienced by human consciousness. Because human beings are still mired in oppositional thinking, the image of God is necessarily dual. Among the greatest of these dualities are good and evil, associated in alchemical

systems with light and dark, man and woman, life and death, respectively. It is for this reason that such pairings are found in the emblems of alchemy and the *Etzha Chayim*, or *Tree of Life* of Kabbalah. Such oppositions are also present in Sri Aurobindo's cosmic diagram (Kazlev, 2009), though without the typically Western distinction between good and evil.

Through the *Systema Munditotius* (Jung, 2009) and the quaternions in *Aion* (Jung, 1959/1968a), Jung explicated what he considered to be "the essential features of the symbolic process of transformation" (p. 259 [para. 410]) from ego to Self in Western culture. This transformation begins in the encounter between ego (for Jung, simply the focal point of awareness of the world) and shadow (unconscious aspects of the individual, *projected* onto the world and other individuals). In the projected shadow, one sees oneself externalized. In Jung's view, shadow projections must be assimilated and, if this stage is completed successfully, *anima* and *animus* (the image of the contra-sexual opposite within each individual, which is the archetype of life and the doorway to the greater unconscious) projections must be assimilated next.

To Jung, the ego forms through experiencing itself in opposition to that which it is not. This is a long process that takes place in the psyche of the growing child. It is a characteristic of children but also humans operating on a rudimentary cognitive level to be unable to differentiate one's self easily from one's surroundings. Either there is complete unconscious identification and merging or there is the projection of unconscious psychic contents out onto the environment. Only a strong ego can undergo the task of the second half of life, which is the recollection of projected content and the progressive subordination of the ego to the larger Self that gives it its existence. This final point concerning the ego is one the Mother herself would make:

In order to pass onto a higher plane, one must first exist; and to exist one must become a conscious, separate individual, and to become a conscious separate individual, the ego is indispensable, otherwise one remains mingled with all that lies around us. (Alfassa, 1973/2003d, p. 367 [28 November 1956])

In integral yoga, the ego is eventually to be substituted by the Self (Singh, 2003, p. 252). To the Mother it is absolutely essential that before the higher work can be attempted one must become conscious of one's hidden desires and motivations, weaknesses and strengths—quite similar to classic shadow work in analytic psychology. Once this has been accomplished, the devotee surrenders to the Mother—an activity very close to anima-animus work in Jung's schema. But should one ultimately identify with the Self? This is tricky from Jung's (1950/1968b) perspective as he felt that "the greatest psychic danger which is always connected with individuation . . . lies in the identification of ego-consciousness with the self. This produces an inflation which threatens consciousness with dissolution" (p. 145 [para. 254]). Yet in some Indian metaphysical systems, dissolution of the ego and identification with and as the Self appears to be the desired goal.

Sri Aurobindo wrote that "the Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative" (Ghose, 2006, p. 549). The idea that one could be a representative of a higher spiritual reality or principle was not unknown to Jung, but he would caution that one could never be sure of the validity of such a claim. While one who has attained this stage in India might be held in high regard even if such a realization led the individual into a form of madness, in the West that same person could easily wind up in a mental institution. To Jung, these are psychological, symbolic, and mythological states, not metaphysical hypostases. "Unadulterated wisdom and unadulterated holiness," Jung (1944/1958e) argued, "are seen to best advantage in literature, where their reputation remains undisputed" (p. 579 [para. 954]).

I will not enter into the complex interrelationships of the various quaternions in Jung's (1959/1968a) diagram from *Aion*. The main point I want to make was that he described a hierarchical system that leads from what he called the "Rotundum" or primal oneness before Creation to the "Anthropos" or "divine or greater man who must be freed from his imprisonment in matter and in darkness" (von Franz, 1975/1998, p. 199), who

to Jung symbolizes the psychological and spiritual wholeness that is the goal of the individuation process. As Creation is latent within the Divinity from the beginning and the Divinity is enfolded within Creation, the two are somehow both independent and yet one and the same simultaneously. In eternity, they are one; in linear time, they are divided. The journey from ego to Self comes through the process of differentiation and re-unification. In Jung's description: establishment in the ego, recognition and assimilation of the personal shadow, contact with and assimilation of the archetypal anima or animus, and if all goes right, breakthrough to the higher and more inclusive Self.

So, as reflected in the circular nature of Jung's (1959/1968a) schema from *Aion*, when the highest is reached, so too is the lowest. The end of the process is not the dissolution of the darkness and assimilation to the light but in experiencing "ourselves concurrently as limited and eternal" (von Franz, 1975/1998, p. 325)—a particularly Christian image, as Christ was both fully human and fully divine. This division, and the dark shadow that results from it, are, as Nolini said, "the occasion of a miracle. . . . The presence of evil [shadow] moved the Divine" (as cited in Hadnagy, 2008, p. 402) to descend into manifestation in order to release the soul from its suffering. In imagery drawn from Christianity, and its concept of the *kenosis* (self-emptying) of God in taking human form. Nolini said about this act of the Divine:

This is the calvary he has accepted, the sacrifice of his divinity he agreed to in order that the undivine too may gracefully serve the Divine, be taken up and transmuted into the reality from which it fell, of which it is an aberration. (as cited in Hadnagy, 2008, p. 403)

In Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's conception, the Absolute is pure light and all good. It is the human who is an admixture of light and dark. Eventually, according to the Mother, the shadow must be eliminated (as cited in Hadnagy, 2008, p. 148). According to Jung (1959/1968a) God is both Good and Evil in equal admixture (from the mind's limited perspective, as humans also are an equal admixture of good and evil, light and dark). *Aion* is, in essence, about the necessity for the Christian

to reclaim the Devil, Christ's twin brother, who is fully half of the inner wholeness sought and who is projected unconsciously onto others. The shadow is not eliminated but rather assimilated. Once assimilated, the shadow gives way to the anima or animus, the assimilation of which constitutes the divine wedding, which is the image of the coniunctio or syzygy. In *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), when the Lord of Death—who I see as a representative symbol of the shadow—is defeated, it is revealed that he is but a mask of the Divine. What is revealed behind or beyond him is the Divine Mother.

### Alchemy and Transformation

But who has lifted up the veil of light  
and who has seen the body of the king?  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 311)

Transformation in integral yoga has a specific *telos* having to do with drawing down higher consciousness into the lower levels of mind, vital, and body where the consciousness of the higher replaces the consciousness of the lower (Ghose, 1971b, p. 1143). It is not an escape to a transcendent level but a marriage of the upper and lower worlds that will effectively transform life in its present state. In the process, both spirit and matter will be more fully united in the alembic of the post-human body. The next step in this transformation is supermind, or truth consciousness: an intermediate stage in the grand evolution of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo pictured as a light purposefully drawn down into the darkness of the material world (Ghose, 1998, pp. 536–537).

Jung's focus was on the psyche, although he did touch on the idea of physical transformation in a number of places in his work. The type of physical transformation discussed by Jung that is most closely aligned with that anticipated by integral yoga would have to be *rebirth*, which Jung (1950/1968b) viewed symbolically. Although rebirth "implies a change of [one's] essential nature, and may be called a transmutation"—from "mortal" to "immortal," "corporeal" to "spiritual," "human" to "divine" (p. 114 [para. 204]), such an idea constituted an "intuition of immortality . . . connected with the peculiar nature of the unconscious . . . [which is]

non-spatial and non-temporal" (p. 142 [para. 249]) rather than a change in the nature of physicality. To Jung, the unconscious is that portion of the total psyche which transcends the limited awareness of the conscious ego. Transformation might be a process of becoming conscious of what is higher (or beyond, or more complete), and if not replacing, at least augmenting the limited ego consciousness with a broader and more inclusive awareness. He tended to stop short, however, of suggesting bodily transformation. There is, however, one enticing exchange, documented by Ostrowski-Sachs (1971), in which Jung is recorded as having said:

It seems to me that we are at the end of an era. The splitting of the atom and the nuclear bomb bring us a new view of matter. As physical man cannot develop any further, it would seem that this particular evolution ends with man. Like the caterpillar dissolves and turns into a butterfly, it is conceivable that the physical body of man could change into a more subtle body. It might not be necessary for him to die to be clothed afresh and be transformed. (p. 63)

This is the only reference to this type of transformation I have yet found in Jung's work. Mostly, the physical transformation spoken of by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was not examined in Jung's more psychological schema. Where they insisted that the supramental transformation would bring an evolutionary change to matter, Jung remained mostly silent.

To transform the substance of the body would require not only the superficial transformation of aspects of matter of which the mind can become aware, but of those processes and structures beyond its capacity to grasp. The issue once again revolves around the nature of the transcendent and just how fully the human being can become aware of or participate in it. Co-founder of quantum physics Wolfgang Pauli (Jung & Pauli, 2001), who was a friend and colleague of Jung's, said concerning the nature of transmutation that it is instructive to look at the works of the alchemists to see the way in which symbols could be held to be both scientific and religious before the split between science and religion took hold.

Not only alchemy but also the heliocentric idea furnishes instructive examples of the problem as to how the process of knowing is connected with the religious experience of transmutation undergone by him who acquires knowledge . . . it transcends natural science and can be comprehended only through symbols. (p. 208)

Although Sri Aurobindo and the Mother remained steadfast in their assertion that the physical universe would change as a result of the drawing down of supermind, for Jung (and Pauli) the only way to discuss this is symbolically. As the last period in Western history where science and religion were united in such a way that this type of transformation was thought possible was during the period of alchemy, it was to alchemy that they turned.

### **Material and Spiritual Alchemies**

In alchemy, metallic ores are conceived of as embryos growing in the earth. Their gestation then follows the same process as that of embryos in the human body, which transform according to the same rules governing like processes at the macrocosmic level. In India, the idea of metallurgical and biological resonance existed (White, 1996), as it did in China (Pregadio, 2014). Some scholars of alchemy (e.g., Holmyard, 1957/1990; Maxwell-Stewart, 2008) have argued that while in India and China the more mystical aspects of the discipline may have been a driving force in its development, in the West, monetary wealth and curiosity about natural properties of substances were the main catalysts. They argue that alchemy was early focused on transmutation of metals alone and that the alchemists were technicians working only with physical processes. They saw spiritual alchemy as a later corruption of the earlier science or proto-science. Perennialists such as Burkhardt (1967) disagreed, arguing the opposite: that the more cosmological and mystical element predated the later materialist focus.

Jung thought that the desire to transmute metals and the drive for spiritual transformation must have developed together at a time when humans had not yet made a clear distinction between conscious and unconscious processes and that the split was a late development, coming with the rise

of rationalism and materialism in the West. His view was that, regardless of their intentions, the chemistry with which the alchemists worked was, at least early on, a mix of rational and irrational thought. In the vacuum created by their ignorance of natural laws, alchemists psychologically projected their own unconscious material onto the unknown qualities of the substances with which they worked, seeing in them a reflection of their own psyches (Jung, 1938/1967d, p. 67 [para. 88]). One of the main projections arose from the assumption—perhaps unconsciously based on the story of Genesis—that the body and even matter itself are fallen into a state of alienation from God and therefore require help for their transformation and liberation. This narrative, with numerous variations on a theme, pervades alchemical speculation: Some essential, divine quality is lost to or trapped in matter. The transmutation of substance releases or reveals this hidden quality. The process of revelation or restitution occurs through returning to the source (see also Eliade, 1978, p. 120). Substances, whether metals or human souls, must be reduced to their original (chaotic) form and remade in the image of the Divine.

Eliade (1996) wrote, concerning the ancient Vedic sacrifice, “the human microcosmic work, in correspondence with the macrocosmic original, recreates the world with each new sacrifice” (n.p.). This understanding of the universe as a reciprocal field in which human action mirrors divine action is foundational to alchemy. In this mythic cosmology, ritual reenactment of cosmogony is not only psychologically healing but can lead to a state of unity with the divine will (Eliade, 1978, p. 120), and thus to immortality.

Sinologist Joseph Needham (1974, 1976), in his monumental work on the history of Chinese science and technology, showed how ancient alchemical practices developed following natural physical and metaphysical laws to transform the practitioner into an immortal being. Practices included meditative austerities (*Neidan*, or internal alchemy) but also the ingestion of specially prepared mixtures (*Weidan*, or external alchemy), which included mercury derived from cinnabar, a substance often associated with the philosopher’s stone in the West. Chinese alchemy,

similar to its European counterpart, was predicated on the principle of correlativity between the human and the cosmos (Pregadio, 2014, p. 19).

*Glorified body*, *corpus glorificationis*, *diamond body*, and *siddha body* are some of the terms used in various alchemical traditions to describe the goal of the perfected human who bridges heaven and earth through the transformed body. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke of how their teaching differed from and was an evolutionary advancement on these ancient understandings. Where the ancients sought individual immortality through the development of a spiritual body, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sought through their yoga a “species-wide becoming” (Banerji, 2008, para. 10) that would move the entirety of creation beyond the current state of physicality into a higher union of matter and spirit. This would necessarily create the circumstance of immortality for the individual as a byproduct of rising above the base forms of matter, although immortality for itself was not the goal.

But in Christianity, the idea of universal redemption is present at or very near the beginning of the tradition. As Western alchemy was embedded in the Christian worldview, this idea was likewise present in early alchemical writings. This is important to understand. “The experiments of the alchemists are, in fact, related not to the transmutation of metals,” wrote Richard Rolle de Hampole in 1380, “but to the transmutation of the entire universe” (as cited in Hauck, n.d., n.p.). Or as Edinger (1994) put it, echoing Jung, “The opus magnum had two aims: the rescue of the human soul and the salvation of the cosmos” (p. 147). The goal for all Christians was the Kingdom of Heaven and alchemists were no exception. Many saw their work as salvific and world-transforming.

How was this to be accomplished? Here matters become complex even within the alchemical tradition. Alchemy is understood to be a step-wise process producing specific chemical reactions *en route* to the production of gold. Yet there was no single set of steps leading to alchemical gold that were agreed upon by all alchemists. In some systems, there were four (often described in colors: black, white, yellow, red, each associated with an element), in others seven (planetary), twelve

(zodiacal), or even sixteen. Some began with the *nigredo* (putrefying), some with the *calcinatio* (purifying through fire). In some, the final stage was the *rubedo* (reddening), in others, *iosis* (purpling). "The arrangement of the stages in individual authors," wrote Jung (1937/1968f), "depend primarily on their concept of the goal" (p. 232 [para. 335]), which also differed from culture to culture and even alchemist to alchemist.

Jung (1963/1970) developed a model of the stages of transformation based on the writings of the alchemist and student of Paracelsus, Gerhard Dorn. These were: *unio mentalis* (unified mind), *vir unis* (unified, or single, man), *unus mundus* (one world); Sri Aurobindo characterized the stages as *psychic*, *spiritual*, and *supramental* (Ghose, 2005, ch. XXV). These two systems have much in common as each describes the development of the awakened witness consciousness from contact between and unification of the independent intellect and the soul, to establishment in the Self (Julich, 2013).

There is, however, one important difference. For Jung (1963/1970), "a consummation of the *mysterium coniunctionis* can be expected only when the unity of spirit, soul, and body is made one with the original *unus mundus*" (p. 465 [para. 664]), the primordial unity existing from the beginning of time, which can occur only after all corruptible vestiges are sloughed off in death. For Sri Aurobindo (2005), the yoga culminates in "a permanent new order of being in the field of terrestrial nature" (p. 923), which comes about through the union of spirit and matter in a living body—intended to be the Mother's.

I mentioned earlier that Jung is recorded as having said in a private conversation that "the physical body of man could change into a more subtle body" (Ostrowski-Sachs, 1971, p. 63), but in his professional writing Jung (1963/1970) argued that the final transformation at the current evolutionary level can only take place after death. To Jung, Christ's death and resurrection is the paradigm of alchemical transformation, while to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the paradigm is yogic transmutation. But interestingly, Sri Aurobindo's physician, Nolini Kanta Gupta, spoke of the death of the Mother, whose body was intended to be the ground of the

new creation, in a way similar to the alchemical understanding:

The Mother's body belonged to the old creation. It was not meant to be the New Body. It was meant to be the pedestal of the New Body. It served its purpose well. The New Body will come . . . . The revival of the body would have meant revival of the old troubles in the body. The body troubles were eliminated so far as could be done being in the body—farther was not possible. For a new mutation, new procedure was needed. "Death" was the first stage of that process. (as cited in Alfassa, 1983, p. 147 [6 April 1972])

Beyond the nuances of each system is the fact that they both (and others) share structural and symbolic similarities. It should be kept in mind that if there are terminological differences between integral yoga and analytic psychology in this regard, such differences exist across the spectrum of alchemical speculation. To give one example alone, Indologist David Gordon White (1996, p. 102) pointed out that the goal of the alchemical process in India was discussed variously as *jivanmukti* (immortality of consciousness), *siddhadeha* (perfected body), *vajradeha* (diamond body), and *divyadeha* (divine body), each having its own specific meaning. Because there never was just one single true alchemical process, the focus here will be more on the mythic structure of the alchemical narrative rather than the idiosyncrasies of each system.

The alchemical worldview is part of a coherent though informally related set of practices that existed for over 2000 years, from China to India, Persia, Arabia, Hellenized Egypt, and Europe, colored at every turn by the spirits of time and place. If alchemy is reduced to the essential idea of transformation and the once and future unity of spirit and matter, however, it becomes evident that these have been long-standing themes throughout human history and across cultures. Although each separate iteration had its own specific, context-bound set of practices and detailed metaphysics, the theme of the split between matter and spirit, the alienation of creature from Creator, the reuniting of

the two through human action, and the redemption of the world through the union of matter and spirit is arguably a recurrent one.

### **Alchemist and Soror**

The classic alchemical process involves an oven within which the base material is subjected to the heat of the transforming fire. Jung (1921/1976e) equated *self-brooding* with the Indian yogic practice of *tapas* or *inner heat* (p. 118 [para. 189]), and it is here the distance between Jung's work and integral yoga may perhaps be bridged. Frawley (2012), commenting on the nature of the Indian symbol of the *hiranyagarbha* (literally, "golden embryo") said that it is conceived in the form of a giant egg, which is "a form of the Sun God"; he mentioned Rig Veda X.121, pointing out that this hymn is still chanted today in India. Jung (1967b) also commented on this verse, and on the symbol of the egg, in terms of the *tapasya* of Prajāpati as a form of self-brooding.

Jung drew a parallel between the myth and the practice as undertaken by the yogi: The *hiranyagarbha* is within each person. It is the Self in seed form; "the 'collective aggregate of all individual souls'" (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 208 [para. 271]) associated elsewhere with the lapis or philosopher's stone of alchemy (Jung, 1937/1968f). This notion of a universal soul as a "collective aggregate," which splinters into the myriad human souls at Creation while remaining intact in each can be found as well in the writings of Paracelsus and in the teachings of Kabbalah (see Jung, 1959/1968a).

In a Taoist creation myth from 3rd century C.E. China, the story is told of the birth, life, and death of the first man: a creator god who was both a builder of worlds and from whose body the world was fashioned (Werner, 1922). According to the story, in the beginning the universe was a chaos contained within a cosmic egg. Yang and yin, heaven and earth, were confounded within the egg, and nothing could come into existence. Yet somehow out of the intermingling of these two principles a single being formed from the chaos. The dwarf-god, P'an Ku, gestated in the heat of the egg. When at last he was ready to be born, he stretched his body and the shell broke in two, releasing him. It is said that the lighter part of the shell rose to become the heavens while the heavier part sank to become the earth. Here the

god is instrumental in the primary division of Taoist metaphysics: the polarity of yang and yin—the two eternally present in the One. Although separated by the god, heaven and earth were still too close, so P'an Ku continued to stretch, growing vaster each day, using his hammer to fashion the cosmos little by little as he grew until after 18,000 years his body was so immense that the separation of heaven and earth was complete. At the end of the 18,000 years, exhausted from his labors, he died, his decomposing remains becoming the physical constituents of the world.

P'an Ku was a smith. Von Franz (1972/1995) placed him in the category of *Deus Faber* (God the Maker)—demiurgic artisan gods, each of whom "creates the world on the analogy of some skill or craft" (p. 132). In other words, he was an alchemist (see Eliade, 1978, for a discussion of the connection between ancient smiths and alchemists). The myth of P'an Ku deals with the fashioning of the cosmos through the separation of heaven and earth, which in the divinatory system of the I Ching are represented by the two primary hexagrams (heaven as six solid yang lines, earth as six broken yin lines). The cosmos that fills the separated heaven and earth are then represented by the remaining sixty-two hexagrams arrayed in two arcs descending from heaven to earth, thirty-one on either side, thus forming a circle. Once the universe was created, *P'an Ku* took the position representing the yang or masculine pole. As a complement to him, on the opposite side of the circle there arose a second being who embodied the feminine, earthly, yin principle. This was the goddess Nü Kwa and it was she who completed the work once P'an Ku died. After P'an Ku died, when the sky threatened to collapse, Nü Kwa melted down "stones of the five colors" (Werner, 1922, p. 83) to patch it. When the flood waters threatened to drown creation, Nü Kwa used the ash of burnt reeds to hold them back. When she was lonely for company, Nü Kwa fashioned human beings from the mud of the earth. Where P'an Ku was associated with creating and fashioning the universe, Nü Kwa was associated with its preservation and transformations.

In the story of P'an Ku and Nü Kwa, the alchemical theme of the alchemist and his *soror mystica*, or mystical sister, appears. In Chinese

alchemy (Needham, 1976) the soror is often the alchemist's wife. Jung (1963/1970) said that in the gnostic tradition, which he argued was a precursor to Western alchemy, the soror is present in the figure of Helen, a prostitute (Greek: *hetaera*) and reincarnation of Helen of Troy who traveled with the magician Simon Magus (p. 136 [para. 161]). In the tale of P'an Ku, the soror is his sister. Even in the story of Prajāpati, the feminine, produced out of the substance of Prajāpati, comes into play and is directly involved in the creation of humanity (see also Kramrisch, 1981, pp. 3–26). As White (1996) wrote concerning the feminine in Tantra:

Women, because they are embodiments of the goddess and because it is through their "wombs" that the lineage is perpetuated, have something that men do not; it is therefore necessary for males to tap into the female in order that that boundless source of energy be activated within them. (p. 200)

This "boundless source of energy" is the *chit-shakti* of the Divine feminine. The mystic sister is symbolically one with the alchemist as the *chit-shakti* is one with the Creator. In both cases, their consciousnesses are complementary aspects of the one consciousness from which they have sprung. On the horizontal plane, they are locked in twinship: either father and daughter, man and wife, or as in the case of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, co-avatars of the Supermind. On the vertical plane, the goddess is in many traditions the effective aspect of the god. This can also be seen in integral yoga, where it is the Mother who not only represents but is believed in actuality to be the *cit-shakti*—the manifest consciousness-force of the Divine. Just as in the Chinese myth it was Nü Kwa who had to complete the work begun by her brother, in the integral yoga, the Mother was to complete the work begun by Sri Aurobindo.

Commenting on the image of "the woman clothed with the sun" from the *Book of Revelation*, Jung wrote: "'She is the feminine Anthropos, the counterpart of the masculine principle,' and inasmuch as she completes the latter she 'reconciles nature with spirit' and prepares the way for a new birth of God" (as cited in von Franz, 1975/1998, p. 149). This idea is present in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

(Ghose, 1993), where it is Savitri herself who must descend into the depths of Creation to defeat the Lord of Death (who is also the Lord of this world—the world of death), and by so doing clear the channel for matter and spirit to unite, or for humans to finally perceive fully that they are united from the start. When this is accomplished, she effects the union of heaven and earth and the creation of the new world ensues.

In Sri Aurobindo's cosmology, the Mother is the first being to appear out of the Supreme. Lower down the chain of involution appear the pair *Unmanifest* and *Manifestation*. Lower down still appear the godly pair Parameshwara and Parmeshwari. These are all aspects of the division of the Supreme into complementary halves. But it is not until the feminine principle symbolized by Savitri descends into matter that the process can reverse. Then, evolutionarily, as consciousness moves back up the chain, the separated elements reunite until no further division exists. The perfected individual is a unity of complementary energies in a single whole. This is similar to the gnostic conception of the split and reunified syzygies.

### **Seed and Light**

According to Eliade (1978), the art of alchemy evolved, in part, from ritualized practices related to metallurgy to a worldwide religious system focused on the intentional transformation of substance in imitation of the Creator. Certainly, the linking of earthly and divine processes was there from the earliest extant alchemical writings (see Linden, 2003). White (1996) wrote about the way in which the mineral element played into the Vedic sacrifice and its tripartite homologies between water (*soma*), fire (*agni*), and air (*vayu*), and the body of the priest (microcosm), the sacrifice (mesocosm), and the universe (macrocosm). Citing the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* (9.5.1.11), White wrote: "When he [the sacrificer] has offered in the fire, he drinks [*soma*]; for that [fire altar] is his divine body, and this [the sacrificer's body] is his [the fire god Agni's] human one" (p. 12). White further went on to show the correspondence between the medical system of Ayurveda and alchemy through "the fluid element mercury" (p. 12), and how it is the element of fire which is transformative.

This narrative motif is analogous to that found in the Chinese myth of P'an Ku, but also in the Scandinavian myth of Ymir, the Babylonian myth of Tiamat, the Persian myth of Gayomart, and in the Hebrew myth of Adam Kadmon (von Franz, 1972/1995). von Franz called this motif that of the "first victim," claiming that this universal motif springs from the understanding that "it is not possible to create something without destroying something else at the same time" (p. 154)—one of the foundational principles of alchemy. As it is with the bodies of these other sacrificial beings, in the Indian myth the process of decomposition and transformation through heat releases the hidden treasure from within Prajāpati's body.

Let us note here that the thermal energy that transforms the body of Prajāpati into gold (and other myths of this sort, the entire created universe in all its parts) is an inner fire or heat that is kindled through religious austerities. Within a few centuries of the composition of this *Brāhmaṇa* text, a revolution in Indian thought would issue into the notion that humans too could internalize the sacrifice and thereby entirely bypass the mechanism of external sacrifice. (White, 1996, p. 13)

This is an historical insight into a fundamental change in relation to the notion of sacrifice. The wresting away of the power of the priesthood represented a revolution not unlike the Protestant revolution of later Christianity, where the individual rather than the collective became the arbiter of their own spiritual transformation. White (1996) analogized the myth of Prajapati to the "prealchemical" understanding of gold as "the ultimate product of a long period of germination or gestation within the womb of the earth" (p. 189).

The word alchemy rarely appears in either Sri Aurobindo or the Mother's work. In at least one place, Sri Aurobindo (2002) even wrote of it as a "dead superstition," saying: "And if God had not meant otherwise for our nation, the Sannyasin would have become an extinct type, Yoga been classed among dead superstitions with witchcraft & alchemy and Vedanta sent the way of Pythagoras & Plato" (p. 1100). Here Sri Aurobindo seemed to be

alluding to alchemy's supposed materialist bent and its failed attempt to synthesize actual physical gold from base metals. When it is understood in a more expanded sense, however, the aim of alchemy as a psychospiritual practice was nothing less than the transformation and perfection of the world through the transformation and perfection of the alchemist. The transformed alchemist bears comparison with the gnostic or supramental being of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—a purified individual freed from the taint of matter, whose transformation catalyzes a global one.

In Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), the divine Mother comes to Earth in the body of Savitri to end the reign of Death. The idea that the Divine Mother must enter the world to repair or transform it by freeing its inherent nature is an old one, appearing in kabbalistic and gnostic teachings, tying back into the idea that the essence of the Creator, generally pictured as light, is trapped in material substance. In many ancient myths, a partner is provided for the first man—either taken from his body by God, as in the Eden story or the story of P'an Ku, and Nü Kwa, or produced *sui generis* from and by the first being himself. In some versions of the myth, since this partner is created from the body of the man, his attempt to join with her is a form of incest (Kramrisch, 1981, pp. 3–26). Incestuous desire then traps the creator (or pieces of him) in his own creation. The alchemist can, through the manipulation of base metals or control of bodily processes, effectively re-sanctify and transmute her or his tainted *prima materia*, releasing the pure essence or light trapped within. von Franz (1972/1995) suggested that the idea that humans can participate in the liberation of the divine from matter arose with the first attempts of humans to manipulate matter through technology. As it takes countless eons for the base metal in the earth to turn to gold the adept assumes the place of the Creator to complete the process in the laboratory. The idea of participation would presumably entail the human correcting the primal sin of incest through the renunciation of sexuality, which is evident in analytic psychology and in integral teaching.

The alchemical *athanor* or furnace is an externalized womb within which the golden child—

the spark of the divine extracted from the base metal—can be incubated by the alchemist. In *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), Savitri's husband, Satyavan, is removed to the underworld by the Lord of Death. It is there, in the athanor of the earth, that Satyavan ("the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance"; Ghose, 1993, Author's Note) begins his metamorphosis. Savitri, that principle of transformation descended from the divine, takes the part of the soror, effecting the transformation through solving the mystery "of death and ignorance." This climaxes in the transformation and rebirth of Satyavan, who, reborn, is the symbol of the coming supramental being—the alchemically transformed human.

Alchemy can be seen as a wild surmise that failed in its attempt to transmute base metals into gold. In this scenario, pre-scientific inquiry eventually gave way to experimental science and the discipline of chemistry. Or alchemy can be looked upon as an intuition of a future evolution, in which a speciation takes place and the supramental or gnostic being rises from the ashes of the current human being—the current stage of the evolution of consciousness. Between these two extremes, alchemy can be seen as an ancient symbol system of psychospiritual development meant to transform the *prima materia* of the alchemist's soul into the gold of higher wisdom through projection of the alchemist's psyche into the chemical reactions in the laboratory, and thereby extract the primal light from the darkness of material ignorance.

Jung (1944/1968d) argued that "what the symbolism of alchemy expresses is the whole problem of the evolution of personality . . . the so-called individuation process" (pp. 34–35 [para 40]), which is a process of gradual divinization of the personality and the gradual recollection of the unity of the Self. Individuation, in analytic psychology, has been viewed from the integral perspective as having been "intended primarily to bring succor to neurotics, schizophrenics and those suffering from division of personality" (Singh, 2003, p. 267); however, as Jung (1958/1976b) stated: "Individuation is the life in God. . . . The symbols of the self coincide with those of the Deity" (p. 719 [para. 1624]). God as *logos*, in the Christian sense, is an inner light

trapped within all created things. The path back to reunification with the divine source that lies both within and without is the spiritual history of the world as a whole and of each individual as well. In both integral yoga and alchemy (and, by extension, Jung's psychology), the idea is that nature moves too slowly. The alchemist or yogi assumes the work of the Creator in order to speed up the natural process, either in the laboratory, in their own body, or, in the case of analytic psychology, in the psyche.

As Jung (1938/1958f) wrote, "ultimately, every individual life is at the same time the eternal life of the species" (p. 89 [para. 146]). Through this insight, one may glimpse that no matter how unique personal experiences might be, nor how distinct individuals are from one another, not only as individuals but also as societies, the greater part of what humans are is a common heritage. Our journey is both a singular journey and a collective journey. Our evolutionary history means we are ultimately made of the same stuff, and if there is a teleological goal towards which Creation is moving it is a collective goal, although played out in the life of each separate individual. If that is true, then no matter what one might believe to be the ultimate goal, the very fact that such an idea exists is itself an argument for acceptance of the universal and archetypal character of human consciousness.

"Everything depends on the individual," wrote Jung (1906/1961, p. 8 [para. 22]). Yet, as unique as each one's history might be, it can be seen as only a single instantiation of a universal process of which the entirety of humanity is but a transient stage. As Sri Aurobindo put it, "man is a transitional being; he is not final. For in man and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees that climb to a divine supermanhood" (Ghose, 1972b, p. 7). It may be that our shared biology—our nervous systems, our instincts, the structure of our brains, organically formed from the matrix of the planet and the fires of creation—leads us to experience, conceptualize, and act in common ways, yet simultaneously leads us deeper into our individuality ("Individuation is an expression of that biological process . . . by which every living thing becomes what it was destined to become from the beginning"; Jung, 1952/1958c, p. 307 [para 459]). Although each person and

each separate moment appear to be unique and unrepeatable, and although each arises within unique, unrepeatable contexts, everything that is can also be seen as an expression of a greater unity, summed up in the kabbalistic aphorism (after Deuteronomy 4:35) “There is none else beside Him” (Ashlag, 2010).

Jung (1954/1958g) argued that the energies underlying the manifest universe are perceived only through the medium of the psyche, and it is only a portion of the psyche—the union of all conscious and unconscious processes and “the densest darkness it is possible to imagine” (p. 296 [para 448])—of which there is any direct experience. The transcendent nature of spirit is a common idea, but to Jung (1939/1958d), matter is also transcendent, and therefore equally unavailable to experience. “Matter is an hypothesis,” he argued; “when you say ‘matter,’ you are really creating a symbol for something unknown, which may just as well be ‘spirit’ or anything else; it may even be God” (p. 477 [para. 762]), elsewhere arguing that “matter is just as inscrutable as mind” (Jung, 1931/1969a, p. 342 [para. 657]). Yet to Jung the whole mystery is locked within matter—within the human body. von Franz (1986) discussed this in reference to the early Church father, Origen, and Egyptian funerary mysteries:

As the logos of the tree (the “principle” of the tree) lies hidden in its seed, so does the seed of the resurrection body lie hidden within the old body. The seed is a *virtus*, a *dynamis*, a germ or a germ principle, which Origen characterizes as a *spintherismos*, i.e., “emission of sparks.” This invisible germ principle in the visible “seed” has substance and is the source of the body’s resurrection. It is a “seed-bed” (*seminarium*) of the dead, the ground from which they will rise again. However, the risen body which will spring out of it will no longer be of a coarse material but of a spiritual, even of a divine nature. It will be invisible to our present eyes and will not be able to be touched by the hands. (pp. 7–8)

The seed, as does the *hiranyagarbha* of Indian myth, contains within it the light of divinity. In alchemy, the heating process, known as *calcination*, reduces this seed to ash. Ash as “the spirit that dwells

in the glorified body” (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 194 [para. 247]), is symbolic of the purified substance. It is through the burning away of the impurities of the lower being that the higher materializes out of the old. The new will not be like the old but “will be invisible to our present eyes” (von Franz, 1986, p. 8).

### The Divine Syzygy

This whole wide world is only he and she.  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 63)

Neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother discussed Western alchemy or its Indian equivalent, *rasayana*, at any length, yet their assertion that they were “one consciousness in two bodies” (Ghose, 1993, p. 334) projected an image of their union that was analogous to not only the syzygy of Shiva and Shakti in Tantra and Purusha and Prakriti in Samkhya, but to cosmic pairs from many of the world’s mythological and religious traditions.

In alchemy, as mentioned, there was the image of the alchemist and the *soror mystica*: the old man and young girl who formed an archetypal pair. Jung (2009), through his *Red Book* experiments, discovered his feminine counterpart in the image of his soul and her numerous iterations. The inner work paralleled what was happening outwardly in his romantic relationships, especially with Toni Wolff, the young woman who was to become his “second wife”—the one who, as Barbara Hannah (1997) suggested, “was able to follow his extraordinary experiences and to accompany him intrepidly on [his] Nekyia to the underworld” (p. 119). It was she who carried his anima projection, enabling him to “live the whole of [his] erotic life” (p. 119), and thus become whole himself.

In his psychological writings, Jung analyzed numerous images of divine union, discovering in them “symbols of man and his soul and of the creation of the Androgynous [Self]” (Serrano, 1966, p. 75), which is the *coniunctio* of masculine and feminine energies. But in a late interview with Chilean writer and diplomat Miguel Serrano, Jung (1966/1977b) referred to his relationship with Wolff. When Serrano asked a question about the importance of the alchemical wedding, Jung, “as though he were in a trance,” answered:

Somewhere there was once a Flower, a Stone, a Crystal, a Queen, a King, a Palace, a Lover, and his Beloved, and this was long ago, on an island somewhere in the ocean five thousand years ago. . . . Such is Love, the Mystic Flower of the Soul. This is the center, the self. . . .

Nobody understands what I mean. Only a poet could begin to understand. (p. 405)

When Serrano asked if she were still alive, Jung answered that she had died eight years earlier, adding, “I am very old” (p. 405).

Sri Aurobindo was a poet who undoubtedly would understand, and the parallels between *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993) and *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) are powerful indicators of this. Both works are, to a great extent, revelations of each alchemists’ work with their sorors. Both are works of great feeling, and expressions of the effective power of love and divine union.

Another striking parallel exists between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s relationship and ideas from Kabbalah regarding the union of the masculine and feminine halves of the Godhead reflected in the joining of husband and wife, where the act of physical union is a ritual reenactment that “elevates man and woman to the status of deities” (Schwarz, 2000, p. 78). Considering Sri Aurobindo’s early attraction to Tantra (Stoeber, 2009), and the Mother’s association with Theon’s Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (Godwin et al., 1995)—a European occult school that had a strong sexual yoga component—it would be natural to wonder whether the Mother and Sri Aurobindo ever experimented with tantric practices or consummated their relationship physically, as did Jung and Wolff. Certainly, their status among devotees as twin avatars of the supermind come to earth to transform the material world could be seen as suggesting a deeper, physical side to their work.

Yet both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo made clear that the higher practices of integral yoga could be taken up only if the *sadhak* remained celibate. Understood literally or symbolically, procreation was understood to perpetuate a world where death is the inevitable result of being born through sexual reproduction. As Sri Aurobindo wrote to a student

concerning requirements for living at the ashram: “It is clearly insisted on that all sex impulse and sex relation must go. If any sadhak and sadhika want to establish this relation, they should immediately pack up their things and go—for it is forbidden here” (Ghose, 2011, p. 722). Here is another stark difference between these two schools of thought: Jung’s *homo totus* (complete man) was both spiritual and carnal, living a full life in both worlds. But while neither the Mother nor Sri Aurobindo condemned sexuality for those of their devotees who were not yet ready to fully commit to the higher practice, the integral yoga was intended to transcend the plane on which sexuality operates. Their *homo totus* was one who had attained a higher wholeness beyond the carnal.

Celibacy as a monastic rule is neither new nor novel. The idea of sex as having the power to distract the aspirant from spiritual practice and potentially trap them in the fallen world of matter is a common characteristic of the major religions. Abstinence is believed to be essential to preserve the life-force, which is believed to dissipate through sexual emission, making the life-force available for use in higher practice. In alchemical literature, the alchemist is often portrayed as having to purify himself before undertaking the transmutation of metals so that no impurities from the outside world might affect the work. This extended to their laboratories, which were strictly off-limits to visitors because of the threat of contamination.

In all of the major world religions, women have been seen as inferior to men and the source of this inferiority is to be found in their bodies—in their sexual and procreative function. Menstrual blood has been seen to be both a dangerous and corrupting agent and women during their menses have been considered unclean, often being separated from the group. They have even been barred from participating at the highest levels of authority in religious institutions because they are more deeply linked to the corrupt forces of nature (Kristoff, 2010).

Simultaneously, alchemical symbolism is highly sexualized, and in Chinese (Needham, 1976) as well as in Indian alchemy (White, 1996) ritualized sex often played an important part in the mysteries of transmutation, generation, and regeneration.

Theon's Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, the occult organization with whom the Mother studied in the early 1900s, was influenced greatly by Jewish and kabbalistic ideas regarding sex as a sacrament (Godwin et al., 1995). Even in integral yoga, contra-sexual symbolism is present, though it has been sublimated.

Transgressing sexual norms has been seen as a way to consciously work with such energies in Tantra, but it is apparent that by the time they met, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had passed beyond any such practices ("we have gone beyond, or at any rate . . . are going beyond [sexuality]"; Alfassa, 2000, p. 136 [4 April 1970]). They stated that their yoga began where all others ended (Alfassa, 1976/2003c, p. 283 [30 September 1953]), and that the world it was intended to usher in would be free from the crudities of sexual reproduction or eating, the organs for which would become "forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs" (Ghose, 1998, p. 555; see also Alfassa, 1973/2003e, pp. 127–136 [26 June 1957]). The physical world was a snare not only to be overcome, but to be transformed.

To Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the world—although each separate object in existence contains within it a divine spark—is fallen, due to the inconscience that is the *sine qua non* of physicality. Integral yoga engages the higher masculine and feminine energies of the Godhead as a way of extracting the golden germ trapped in the heart of matter, thus effecting its redemption. Their relationship, however, began at the *anahata* (heart) or even the *ajna* (brow) chakra. Although the Mother's work was to descend into the lower centers, understanding that they saw themselves as beginning their work from above is essential to understanding their teaching.

The overcoming of the sex instinct and impulse is indeed binding on all who would attain to self-mastery and lead the spiritual life. A total mastery over it is essential for all spiritual seekers, the eradication of it for the complete ascetic. This much has to be recognised and not diminished in its obligatory importance and its principle. (Ghose, 1998, p. 543)

There is, however, a caveat. It is only at the lowest, "gross animal" (Ghose, 1998, p. 543) level that the sex impulse needs to be overcome. There are other levels at which the impulse toward union can be seen as a divine principle essential for the creation of the temporal field of transformation.

But all recognition of the sex principle, as apart from the gross physical indulgence of the sex impulse, could not be excluded from a divine life upon earth; it is there in life, plays a large part and has to be dealt with, it cannot simply be ignored, merely suppressed or held down or put away out of sight. In the first place, it is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation." (Ghose, 1998, p. 543)

So, there is most definitely a sexual component to the yoga, although it is not physical. This makes sense if it is remembered that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are considered twin-avatars of the supermind by their followers—two and yet one. In the language of Kabbalah, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be symbolized by the two *sefirot*, *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*—*Yahweh* (the creator) and *Shekinah* (the spirit of wisdom, responsible for the salvation of this world)—a lower *coniunctio*, or, perhaps more correctly they could be symbolized by the higher *sefirot*, *Hokhmah* and *Bina*, the principles of the Father and Mother transcending both the ideal and manifest worlds. This conception may be analogous to images of Shiva (Ishwara) and Shakti, Purusha and Prakriti, discussed by Sri Aurobindo in the above passage (Ghose, 1998, p. 543).

Alchemical literature seems at times to be concerned not only with the negative effects of lower energies but also on working with them to transmute them. As the spark of the divine is found in densest matter, it is said that the philosopher's stone is to be found in muck or dung—in *stercore invenitor*. There are even accounts in India of tantrikas allegedly transmuting base metals to gold by rubbing their own feces on them (Eliade, 1969b, p. 130). As Jung (1916/1991) pointed out, "according

to the principle of the least resistance, expressions are taken from the nearest source available" (p. 182 [para. 298]). This earthy emphasis changed over time, yet as is often the case, the old was retained, at least symbolically, in the new. The changes seem to have occurred gradually with the rise of cities and the movement away from a more earth-based life. Technological advancements brought with them new ways of symbolizing the old issues of human origins and destiny. Yet in myths and the dreams of his patients and clients, such imagery was often present. There is an "intimate connection [between] faeces and gold" (p. 183 [para. 299]), which connects the lowest with the highest.

Jung (1948/1967c) felt that alchemy evolved out of Gnosticism. "In East and West alike," he wrote, "alchemy contains as its core the Gnostic doctrine of the Anthropos and by its very nature has the character of a peculiar doctrine of redemption" (p. 205 [para. 252]). The principal tenet of Gnosticism is the idea that the true being is trapped or lost in physical manifestation—the world of decay, death, and putrefaction (see Mirecki & Beduhn, 2001, p. 9, on Manichaeism; Williams, 1996, Ch. 6, on gnostic ideas on the body). In this way, Gnosticism bears comparison to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's teaching, and to the Mother's injunctions regarding sexuality. As mentioned earlier, the Anthropos is the image of the divine human living in seed form within each one of us. He is the "man of light" (Jung, 1940/1968e, p. 370 [para. 458]) who must somehow be awakened and freed from his prison in Nature.

In Indian alchemy the "mercurial seed" (White, 1996, p. 271), which is the light-filled semen of the Lord Shiva, is the arcane substance, the hermaphrodite, the lapis. The Anthropos as *mercurial seed* is both a unity and a duality. As a unity, it is a symbol for the higher Self. As Jung (1948/1967c) noted, "The Anthropos idea coincides with the psychological concept of the self. The atman and purusha doctrine as well as alchemy give clear proof of this"—(p. 220 [para. 268]). As a duality, it is a *coniunctio oppositorum*—a divine union of masculine and feminine energies in the golden germ or egg that exists both in the body of the practitioner and in the body of the universe. In Tantra, at least until the time of Abhinavagupta (ca.

950–1016 C.E.), the symbolism and the practice were sexualized (White, 1996). Mercury, the transformative substance *par excellence*, is also the archetypal creative substance.

The two principles exist at the root or *muladhara* chakra in seed form, but divide, making their way up the twin *naḍis* or subtle channels within the body, *ida* and *pingala*, before reuniting with the central, *suṣumṇa naḍi* at the *ajna*, or brow chakra. The chakras are a part of the system of kundalini yoga, which, as a tantric practice, is very much part of Indian alchemy (White, 1996, 2003, 2009), although analogous structures have been described in many traditions, going back to the caduceus (Jung, 1937/1968f, p. 294 [fig. 148], p. 326 [fig. 165]), the brazen serpent of Moses (Jung, 1937/1968f, p. 400 [fig. 217], p. 434 [fig. 238]), and even further back to ancient shamanic images of the cosmic tree (Eliade, 1964/1992, 1969b). But while the symbolism is implicit in the *sadhana* of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Indian alchemy is a complicated, multifarious, and highly detailed set of practices that differs markedly from integral yoga. In terms of at least symbolic resonances, one can note that in both Tantra and Western esoteric sexual practices the idea of retention and sublimation of semen is present (Deveney, 1997). As the Mother and Sri Aurobindo saw their yoga beginning beyond the discipline that accomplishes this retention, it makes symbolic sense that their yoga would be seen as beginning beyond any need for such practices as it is already beyond sexuality (see Alfassa, 2000, p. 136 [4 April 1970]). The cosmogonic symbolism, however, remained.

### **Solve et Coagula**

The title of this paper was taken from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993, p. 340). *Savitri* is a tale from the Mahabharata, which tells the story of the death of one woman's husband, just one year after their marriage, and her journey to the underworld to plead with the Lord of Death for him to release her husband's soul to her. Sri Aurobindo wrote his version as a symbol of his and the Mother's yoga. The line, "an alchemy of heaven on nature's base," comes from the narrative of the yoga of Ashwapathy, father of *Savitri* and devotee of the Divine Mother. Ashwapathy's yoga is the subject of

the first three books of the poem and constitutes one half of the yoga. Ashwapathy stands in the poem for Sri Aurobindo, and his yoga for Sri Aurobindo's yoga of ascent to draw down the supermind into the upper threshold of matter. Savitri stands for the Mother and her attempt to further draw the supermind down to the roots of matter. The full quatrain containing the line in question reads, "In him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change / Foreshadowed in her dumb and fiery depths, / A godhead drawn from her transmuted limbs, / An alchemy of heaven on nature's base" (Ghose, 1993, p. 340). Here, some of the themes already discussed in this paper appear: the earth as mother and womb, the transformative fire in the depths, the equivalence of the transmuted substance with the Godhead.

The goal of this alchemical and transformative process is the supermind. Supermind in integral yoga is understood to be a transitional stage in the evolution of consciousness between the level of mind and the Absolute. To be one with the Absolute is to be united with the Source. Supermind is the child of "the poise of the Brahman" (Ghose, 2005, p. 134) as it is in turn the parent of the awareness of the Mind. It is a partial realization of that perfect identity, which will nevertheless change the nature of physical manifestation forever. The solid and intransigent quality of nature will give way to one that is more fluid and motile. Eating and procreating will no longer be necessities. Life will renew itself in an infinite variety of forms through the free play of consciousness. This is the transformation promised by integral yoga (see Ghose, 1998, p. 544ff).

It is the lens of Jungian thought that allows this path of integral yoga to be compared fruitfully with alchemy. Alchemy, as discussed here, is a stepwise process of transmuting substance through the use of inner or outer fire. The culmination of one specific stage of the work is the *coniunctio* or syzygy. In some systems (e.g., Hauck, 2008) this stage occurs midway in the alchemical process, in others (e.g., Edinger, 1994) it is the goal of the work. Here there is also a parallel with integral yoga, in that the supermind is both a culmination of the current stage of evolution out of the level of mind and a midpoint between where humans are now and the Supreme.

If alchemy were to be reduced to one essential statement it would most probably be *solve et coagula*—dissolve and coagulate. This is the process of breaking down the *prima materia*, purifying it, and consciously remaking it in a higher or perfected form. In mythological terms, this process is one of death, transfiguration, and resurrection. The syzygy can be seen as the stage of reunification that leads to a higher unity, although it conversely leads to death through the act of coitus, where the planted seed must die in the earth to be reborn anew. This process of death, transformation, resurrection could be seen as symbolic of both nature and the work of the alchemist. In nature, the *solve* is the transition from unity consciousness to differentiated (and increasingly fragmented) mind, which, as Sri Aurobindo stated, has the quality of "awareness by distinction" (Ghose, 2005, p. 69). The development of mind required a long process of evolution, and its transmutation an equally long evolution. It is foundational to alchemical understanding that the history of the world is one where nature, as God's creative force, will in-time fulfill God's plan. As nature moves slowly, however, the alchemist takes it upon her or himself to quicken the process.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother intended to speed up the process through their yoga. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo wrote that "the aim set before our yoga is nothing less than to hasten this supreme object of our existence here" (Ghose, 1999, p. 90). The Mother echoed this, tying the yoga to the alchemical process.

If the divine consciousness and divine force could work directly from the place or state of their perfection, if they could work directly on matter and transform it, there would be no need to take a body like man's. It would have been enough to act from the world of Truth with the perfect consciousness and upon consciousness. In fact that acts perhaps but so slowly that when there is this effort to make the world progress, make it go forward more rapidly, well, it is necessary to take on human nature. By taking the human body, one is obliged to take on human nature, partially. Only, instead of losing one's consciousness and losing contact with the Truth,

one keeps this consciousness and this Truth, and it is by joining the two that one can create exactly this kind of *alchemy of transformation*. But if one did not touch matter, one could do nothing for it." (Alfassa, 1976/ 2003c, p. 389 [9 December 1953]; emphasis added)

Although the Mother spoke of nature as a separate entity, it is also an aspect of the larger field of the divine Mother. This seems implicit in Sri Aurobindo's statement that: "The One whom we adore as the Mother is the Divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and the most vast intelligence" (Ghose, 2002, p. 17). The Mother is seen as the *yoga-shakti*, the energy or light of Creation, who descends from the Absolute and is responsible for the creation and redemption of the manifest world. Hers is the force through which God operates in nature. Simultaneously, she is nature itself—at once generative, regenerative, and redemptive.

Sri Aurobindo's idea of cosmic history is one of descent and separation, then ascent and union—what he and the Mother (borrowing terminology from Theon) called involution and evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's diagram *The Absolute and the Manifestation* (Kazlev, 2009; see also Ghose, 2001b), qualities or levels of being are hierarchically arranged. At the very top is *the Supreme*, followed, in descending order, by *the Mother* and then *Sachchidananda*. The levels continue down through the subtle planes, spirit, the *temporal manifestation*, the levels of mind and body, and eventually into the deepest *inconscious*. The Supreme is beyond manifestation. Because of this it cannot be said to have any qualities (which would limit it). As stated above, the very first level to become manifest (in the ideal world, at first) is that of the Mother, although simultaneous to her manifestation appears her opposite. But it is the feminine, as the generative principle, that first manifests out of the Supreme Creator. I see a bilateral symmetry here, with the split of masculine and feminine that occurs on the return from the root, where the seed form in both *Malkhut* (Kabbalah) and the *muladhara* (kundalini tantra) divides into contra-sexual opposites as it

moves upward through manifestation and towards its ultimate goal.

In Jung's psychology, when something comes into existence it appears simultaneously with its opposite. Thus, when the feminine comes into being, it is immediately balanced by its opposite—the masculine (as both the child and father of the feminine). The feminine energy is associated with the Mother, and the masculine with the Father and son. The Mother must actually give birth to the Father for the Father to exist. This is one way to understand Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: he as the symbolic father, whose position is transcendent, and she as the symbolic Mother, who moves towards the immanent. As stated, Sri Aurobindo's main yoga was that of ascent to the Supermind to draw it down while hers was descent with the supermind into matter. In a way, what was being drawn down into matter was the seed-form of Sri Aurobindo. Therefore, when Sri Aurobindo stated that he would return as the first supramental being, he was echoing this mythological motif of the father reborn as the son through the mother.

The Supreme, in its pristine state, is one without a second. It is, in Sanskrit, *nirguna-* or *para-brahman*. The father god is *saguna-brahman*, *saguna* meaning qualified or having qualities. There are traditions where the opposites remain eternally separate, such as in Samkhya, Taoism, and early Zoroastrianism, but in integral yoga, as in alchemy, Kabbalah, and hermetic and gnostic traditions generally, all things that precede from the One return to the One. Oppositions are characteristic of the period between the two unities, when the world is manifest and all things appear separated. So, male and female separate, as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother appear in this world as separate individualities. This separation is necessary for the evolution of consciousness to take place.

Sri Aurobindo, speaking of the Absolute as *brahman*, asked the question: "Why should brahman, perfect, absolute, infinite, needing nothing, desiring nothing at all, throw out force of consciousness to create in itself these worlds of forms?" (Ghose 2005, p. 98). His answer: For the "delight" of it (Ghose, 2005, p. 98). This is similar to the *felix culpa* of Christianity, the happy fault of the

Fall that led to the necessity of the Father's descent to earth as the Son to take on human form and thus redeem Creation (John 3:16). I would suggest here that the image of Eve being drawn from Adam's side, whose actions precipitate humanity's exile from the garden, contains within it not only the Fall, but the promise of redemption. Her creation represents the step from unconscious unity to duality. This is the first step in the cosmic alchemical process, the *separatio* that will lead to the eventual transmutation of creation and the higher union of heaven and earth.

Eve, as the engendering mother, is the principal of life itself. It is through her that the entire chain of being descends. In Sri Aurobindo's cosmology, the first born out of the Mother from the Supreme is *sachchidananda*—the child of the divine parents. Consider the myths of Jesus and Krishna in this regard, where the respective fathers of the divine children are Yahweh and Vishnu. In both cases the child is an independent and unique being and also the father reborn. The same could be said for each individual ("Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"?'"; John 10:34). As everyone is genetically united with the parents in a line of descent leading back beyond the human, to the animal, plant, mineral, chemical, atomic, quantum, presumably all the way to the Big Bang, symbolically each person is a child of the original divine impulse or afflux of libido (Jung, 1916/1991, p. 196 [para. 316]); however, the limitations of human consciousness and materiality act as a veil. This is the myth, in essence.

Sri Aurobindo said of *sachchidananda* that it is a trinity. The fourth term, which balances the trinity, is *Shakti* or *Adishakti*. This also has a parallel in Jung's view of the Christian Trinity, which in his estimation is completed through the Papal dogma of the *Assumption of the Virgin*, where Mary became the fourth term to balance the masculine Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Catholicism, it is said that Mary is the new Eve. As Eve was the catalyst for the descent of the human being into manifestation, so Mary was the return bridge between God and humanity.

This might perhaps be understood better from the gnostic perspective, where the divine Sophia is the single entity who both separates and

unites the Father-Creator with the world. In each tradition, she is the bridge between and intercessor on behalf of a fallen creation. In integral yoga, the same can be said of the Mother—Sri Aurobindo constantly directed his students to surrender to her—and this is nowhere more evident than in *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), where it is Savitri herself who travels from the Absolute to the deepest inconscient in order to unite the two through the defeat of Death and the redemption of Satyavan, the representative of the human soul. The Mother (1981) said of Sri Aurobindo's poem that it was a record of her yoga, and the figure of Savitri was very much modeled after her (p. 38 [22 January 1961]).

The union of the upper and lower worlds as the union of the masculine father and feminine mother is the syzygy, which is originally a word from the Greek meaning to yoke together. The symbol of the syzygy also appears to pertain to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Evidence for this can be seen in their united symbol, the double triangle of the *sri yantra* of Sri Aurobindo, superimposed over the Mother's circle divided into twelve sections or petals. The hexagram circumscribed by a circle is a symbol for the syzygy, and for the imperishable philosopher's stone, which is a union of all opposites. The *sri yantra* of Sri Aurobindo is the *Magen David*, or *Seal of Solomon* of Judaism, with one triangle pointing upward to heaven and the other to earth representing the dual nature of existence. This same image in alchemy represents the union of fire and water, the two paths of alchemical work; fire representing the work of the masculine alchemist, water that of feminine nature.

The syzygy is symbolized in various ways in alchemical literature: as a spiritual union, a carnal union, a psychological union, a combat, and as an embrace. There is an interesting midrash from Jewish lore that sheds light on the alchemical image of the syzygy (Schneider, 2007, Ch. 2), which comes from Genesis 1:16: "And God made two lights—the great light to rule by day, and the small light to rule by night." These lights (the sun and moon) were originally joined together back-to-back as a single entity sharing a single crown. It is the moon who questions the Creator, saying it would not be right that two kings should share one crown. God

agrees and, splitting them, tells the moon that she shall become the lesser of the two lights. The moon protests, asking why she should be punished for being the one to speak up, but God tells her that her fate is to be the principle of diminishment and return, transformation, and resurrection. As the moon, she is the principle of becoming. Her consort, the sun, which neither diminishes nor transforms, is the principle of being. In the fullness of time, after her long sojourn in the field of space-time, the moon will no longer stand back-to-back with or beneath the sun, but face to face as an equal. In fact, she will be more than equal, because she will have undergone what he has not. Her transformation will make her the crown of Creation.

I mention this to illustrate the principles of union, division, and higher union in alchemy and integral yoga. The story deals with the two lights in the sky. In alchemy, the goal is symbolized by light—the transmuted gold of laboratory alchemy and the transmuted Self of spiritual alchemy. Gold, Self, and light are analogous. Symbolically, gold, as is the Self in analytic psychology, is the light of divinity trapped in matter. This light is spoken of in diverse traditions as residing within or behind the human heart. In the Mother's yoga, the light is there at the heart of each cell of the body. The release of the inner light is called either rebirth or new birth and presages the radical transformation that is called in alchemy the glorified body and in integral yoga the gnostic being. Both are beings of light.

Further evidence of the alchemy implicit in Sri Aurobindo's yoga can be found in this quote from a letter of 1934 to a sadhak, where Sri Aurobindo (2012b) speaks directly of the syzygy of himself and the Mother:

The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play. Nothing can be done without her knowledge and force, without her consciousness—if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers. (p. 79)

The syzygy unites the masculine void with the feminine cosmos. In hermetic teachings, this is

the above and the below, symbolized as heaven and earth. This symbolism is also inherent in the Matrimandir, the Mother's temple in Pondicherry, where a shaft of light emerges from a small aperture in the ceiling and extends to another aperture in the floor, passing through the body of the temple to a pool of water that sits below. The symbolism, from an analytic standpoint, would be that the supernal light, which transcends this world in both directions, links the triple worlds in the embryo of creation. It is through consciousness (Sri Aurobindo's knowledge through identity) that the light is not trapped but left free to transmute the material substance.

The light that illuminates the meditation chamber of the Matrimandir can perhaps be seen as symbolizing the portion of the psyche known to humanity—what in integral yoga is understood to be the various levels of mind. The crystal sitting at the center of the chamber, and through which the light passes, is the symbolic womb where the supramental embryo gestates, waiting to be born. That embryo is the child of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—the two united as the germ of the supramental or gnostic being. In this account, when Sri Aurobindo returns, reborn as the first supramental being, heaven and earth will be united, and the father will be reborn as the son through the womb of the Mother.

### **Alchemy and the Monomyth in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri***

A spirit symbol environing a soul  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 293)

An important idea from hermetic teaching, in relation to integral yoga, is the dictum *as above, so below*, which could also be written: *as within so without*. This is the idea that the upper and lower, the inner and outer are not only analogous, but are in fact one and the same, although this fact might be veiled to the mind. This appears as one of the more salient points the Mother made (see her *Prayers and Meditations*, Alfassa, 1979/2003a; also, Alfassa, 1998, p. 434 [November 19, 1969])—that there is, in truth, nothing but the One. All separation is illusory.

The paradox is that while all may be One, the world and everything in it are simultaneously

separate from everything else and especially from any creator. God and world, as with light and dark, form an oppositional pair. In traditions where God is masculine, transcendent, heavenly, God's counterpart is feminine, immanent, earthly. But the objects of the world, far from being entirely separate from God are often if not usually seen in these systems of thought to be a mirror in this world of the eternal truths of the other. To know that world, one must learn to read the signs in this world, and to know this one, one must experience and study the other.

Jung (1944/1968d) argued that proof of this correspondence could be found in the affinity of the soul for God, made evident by "the archetype of the God-image" (p. 11 [para. 11]) within each human being, which draws the individual towards the supreme value, howsoever it is imagined. Because "every archetype is capable of endless development and differentiation" (p. 13 [para. 14]) the images and systems that stem from them are as varied as the people who developed them. Because each one's vision of ultimate truth is unique (unless, as Jung put it, one abdicates one's responsibility to one's own soul and accepts another's vision for one's own), "it is much more needful to teach people the art of seeing" (p. 13 [para. 14]).

The journey one undertakes to the center of their true nature in order to find wholeness can be likened to the hero's journey or *monomyth* (Campbell, 1972). In the hero's journey, the main protagonist is either called or chooses to leave the known world for an alternate reality in search of a boon that will either fundamentally alter their character, heal a loved one, or transform their society or the world. In Jung's (1911–1912/1967b) psychology, the original daylight world represents the world of ego consciousness, while the world into which the hero travels represents the unconscious. The ego must consciously move into the world of the non-ego, there to undergo transformation. It is in the unconscious that the goal of the journey is to be found—the *highest value* that unites the upper and lower worlds. In Sri Aurobindo's system that treasure is the spark of divine light (gold) which is hidden deep in matter (or in the Mother's yoga, the cells of the body). It is the secret unity between human and Divine shown at the climax of *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993).

Before looking more closely at the parallels between the monomyth and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's yoga, it may be helpful to consider some of the more frequently appearing symbols in alchemy, as they illustrate the principle of the complementarity of symbols in this and the other world—the above and below. This important notion in alchemy may have been already present in ancient shamanic systems of practice (Eliade, 1978, 1964/1992). The objects and events encountered in normal consciousness are assumed to have a secret double life. What is experienced here in this reality is reflected in the higher (or under-) world in the way an image is reflected in a mirror. This symmetry works two ways. It enables the many to know the One through its myriad reflections in manifestation, and it enables the One to experience itself in its infinite expressions. To paraphrase Ramana Maharshi, as it is only when one gazes in a mirror that the eye can see itself, so creation is the mirror in which God, or the "I," sees itself (as cited in Subbramayya, n.d., para. 10). This is the essence of *as above, so below*.

The most important aspect of earth-based religion for the purposes of this discussion is the way in which the biological environment of the natural world becomes the basis for all metaphors regarding the divine. It is easy to forget, living in a highly technological and urban society, how tied to the earth human societies were until only recently. Even today most of the world's population lives in developing rather than industrialized nations (Daurey, 2015). Preeminent among the symbols of nature is that of the divine parents. In many creation myths, the hero descends from a primary pair—sometimes both parents are divine, sometimes one is divine and the other mortal. This is present in myths in ancient Africa, China, India, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. That myths of divine parentage and divine birth are central to mythic notions of the origin of humanity and of humanity's higher destiny.

Many metaphysical systems are arranged hierarchically or in ascending or descending levels. In myth, this hierarchical arrangement is often depicted in the image of a ladder or tree. The tree is one of the oldest nature-symbols, and abounds in alchemical iconography, being a natural symbol of

the uniting of heaven and earth—the *axis mundi*. In shamanic cultures is found the motif of the shaman climbing the cosmic ladder or tree to the spirit world (“an ecstatic journey to the center”; Eliade, 1964/1992, p. 120) to gather information from her or his spirit helpers for healing or information that will benefit the community. The tree symbol appears in Christian iconography as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Eden, and as the cross of Christ. The tree symbol appears in Norse mythology as Yggdrasil, the Babylonian Ea, and the Tamarisk of Osiris.

The tree has both branches and roots; the shaman can journey either up towards the transcendent spheres or down into the underworld. In some myths, such as found in Judaism and Hinduism, the tree is visualized upside down. Here, the roots are in Eternity and the branches in this world. Oriented upright, among the roots of the tree lives the serpent—the representative of the cthonic, subterranean forces of the unconscious. The serpent’s element is earth, which is the seedbed of creation. Often associated with the feminine, it was the serpent who gave the fruit of knowledge to Eve in the Jewish myth, a cosmogonic act that caused the expulsion of the first couple from the garden and set human history in motion. The Mother told a story of her peculiar power over snakes (Alfassa, 1981 [February 4, 1961]), which may bring to mind images of the Virgin Mary depicted with one foot pressing down the head of a serpent, perhaps in this context a symbol of her ability to root the cosmic forces into the earth. As mentioned above, the serpent itself can be the main symbol of the mystery which unites the above and below. The serpent is often associated with both light and the feminine as a channel for that light.

In some myths, in the branches of the tree sits a bird. Birds represent spirit in many religions, as their natural element is the air, uniting the upper world with earth as the serpent unites the lower world with the earth. The two are in eternal enmity with one another, a relationship symbolizing the tension between spirit and matter and also between the masculine and feminine. In Christianity, the bird is often associated with the holy spirit, who in the shape of a dove descended upon Mary at

the Annunciation and upon Jesus at his baptism in the river Jordan. The Mother (1987) saw the dove of the New Testament as a symbol of “a collective transformation” catalyzed by the descent of “the Universal” to resuscitate “the Divine in man” (p. 153 [May 25, 1963]). As the divine breaks through the transcendent into this world, the alchemist, as does the shaman and the magician, stands midway between the upper and lower worlds, uniting the two poles through the will.

Trees are also symbols of life, death, and rebirth, as they undergo a yearly cycle of sprouting leaves, flourishing, losing leaves, lying fallow, and returning to life. In the ashram in Pondicherry sits the *samadhi* (from the Sanskrit root meaning to join together, integrate, establish) of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. There a great tree grows out of the ground where the two are buried, the image of which, upon entering the courtyard of the ashram, evokes this verse from *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993): “When all thy work in human time is done / The mind of earth shall be a home of light, / The life of the earth a tree growing towards heaven, / The body of the earth a tabernacle of God” (p. 699).

The main symbol of alchemy, however, is metal. Metallurgy developed independently in numerous cultures, but its first appearance may have been among the shamanic cultures of Siberia (Eliade, 1978). The main idea inherited by alchemy from metallurgy has to do with the correspondence between the metals in the earth and the planets in the heavens (Read, 1961/1995, pp. 41–44). As the tree’s roots dig into the earth and branches into the heavens, thus uniting the two, so the metals in the earth are united with the upper world through sympathy. Saturn is associated with lead, the most primitive and unformed of metals, as gold is associated with the sun. It was believed by the alchemists that every metal begins in the earth as lead, and over time slowly transforms into gold. All metals will transform finally according to the laws of nature, but, as already mentioned, the alchemists felt, much as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother felt concerning human evolution, that nature takes too long to do her work and is too wasteful. They took it upon themselves to accelerate the process. This is an idea also found in Kabbalah in the doctrine of

*tikkun ha olam* or repair of the world (Drob, 2001), where human participation is an essential element in the work of redeeming creation.

The metallic ore within the earth is called an *embryo* by the alchemists, and the smelting process is its gestation (Eliade, 1978, p. 51). In alchemy, this embryo is the light of God trapped in matter. The work of the alchemist releases the trapped light in the transmutation process. The ore originally found its way to earth from the sky. Eliade (1978) began his book on alchemy by describing how the light that fell to earth was thought to have been carried by meteors or shooting stars (p. 19). Through returning the ore to its native element of fire it could be manipulated by the smith, as if through subjecting the raw ore within the body to the flames of spiritual practice the baser material of the soul could be purified and refined. Just as the alchemist worked with the substance of metals to transmute them, the Mother worked with the cells of her own body. She once had a vision of herself as being sent into the depths of the carnal world to awaken the deity slumbering in matter (Alfassa 1981, p. 278 [28 July, 1961]), highlighting once more integral yoga's gnostic character. When the light of God descends to become trapped in matter it becomes the task of the divine Mother in both Gnosticism and integral yoga to descend into the depths of creation to redeem it.

In gnostic systems, redemption is achieved through the progressive reunification of what has been divided. This happens through the recursive process of syzygy. The motif of separation and reunion can also be found in Kabbalah (Dan, 2006, p. 76; see also Scholem, 1987, for a discussion of the possible gnostic roots of Kabbalah). Kabbalah does not contain a chemical element in the way alchemy does, nor is it concerned with achieving immortality for its practitioner, but rather the completion and perfection of God's universe, and the reunion of the opposites, which is the root of the problem of manifestation. Where in Gnosticism the feminine principle is Sophia, in Kabbalah she is known as *Shekinah*—the aspect of divinity closest to the manifest world and the feminine counterpart of the Creator (Dan, 2006, p. 45ff). In both traditions, her work is to unite the upper and lower worlds and act as a bridge or intercessor between them.

I have mentioned the quest for immortality and have pointed out that it is not emphasized in integral yoga, although it is most definitely present. In fact, the death of Sri Aurobindo caused genuine despair among the disciples due to the belief of many of them that the yoga he had undertaken would lead to his immortality (and, presumably, their own). Immortality as a goal is there in most alchemical systems. In the Abrahamic traditions, the ideal of immortality was muted, but the quest was very much present, although it is much more important an idea in India, Tibet, and China. Still, there are numerous Western legends of those who supposedly have completed the synthesis of the stone and now live forever, though out of sight of humanity (e.g., Nicolas Flamel). In all of these paths, the completed process leads to the joining of opposites, the manufacture of the stone, and the birth of the body of light, which is the divine child born from the union of the Mother and the Father. This archetypal quest for the defeat of the forces of death bears symbolic resemblance to the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as envisaged in both *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993) and in their biographies (see especially Satprem, 1996, 2002), and is typical of the hero's journey, or monomyth.

### **The Monomyth as Alchemical Transformation**

Monomyth is the term borrowed by mythographer Joseph Campbell (2004) from James Joyce to describe the arc of the transformative journey undertaken by the mythic hero (pp. 112–113). As in all transformational systems, there are stages. Not all stories include all of the stages, however—there are many permutations. Stripped down, the monomyth moves from the birth of the hero, to his or her call to adventure, a journey in an alternate reality, often pictured as a descent into the underworld, or as Jung (1946/1966c) put it, a *descensus ad infernos* (pp. 245–246 [para455]), where various adventures and trials are undertaken, the winning of a special boon or knowledge accomplished, and the eventual re-ascent back to ordinary reality completed. The journey need not always be downward, however, and can lead the hero upward to transcendental realms. Both of these motifs are present in *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993).

Campbell's (1972) schema for the monomyth was taken from Jung's (1911–1912/1967b) work,

*Symbols of Transformation* (Campbell, 2004, pp. 112-113; see also Rensma, 2009, p. 150). Jung's (2009) *Red Book*, written in the wake of *Symbols of Transformation*, is structured on the monomyth. *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993) is also a prime example of the monomyth. In both *The Red Book* and *Savitri*, the main protagonists (in *The Red Book* this is Jung, in *Savitri* it is mainly Savitri, but her father, the yogi Ashwapathy, undertakes a journey that follows the same pattern of separation and return) travel into an alternate dimension in search of what Jung (2009) called the *supreme meaning* (p. 236). In Jung's case, this is the alchemical secret of wholeness, and in *Savitri's*, the higher union of spirit and matter—"a godhead drawn from . . . [the] transmuted limbs" of the Earth-Mother (Ghose, 1993, p. 340).

Previously, I discussed the image of the divine tree as the *axis mundi*, the bridge uniting the upper and lower worlds. This tree is a symbol for both the cosmic hierarchy or chain of being, as well as the body of the practitioner. In integral yoga, it is associated not only with the upward journey of Ashwapathy, but with the journey of Savitri into the underworld to combat the Lord of Death. This can be extended to the Mother herself, who fought that battle within the unconscious matter of her own body. As the shaman climbs the cosmic tree, ascending to the upper world or descending to the lower world, so the yogi ascends and descends the cosmic tree of the subtle body, which stretches from crown to root and beyond both. In the monomyth, the reception of the boon takes place at the nadir of the journey—the turning point where the hero undergoes a ritual death and resurrection. In *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), it is at the nadir of Savitri's journey to reclaim the soul of her beloved that Death is unmasked and the boon is won, although in terms of Ashwapathy, it is at the highest extent of his yoga that the boon is given that will lead to the birth of the Divine Mother in the body of his daughter, Savitri, and the eventual uniting of the upper and lower worlds through her actions. So, although the traditional monomyth moves downward into the underworld, in many tales there is an ascent, as in the story of the *Sidrat al-Muntaha*, or *Lote Tree of the furthest boundary*, which marks the border of the 7th heaven visited by the prophet Muhammad on his *Mi'raj*, or *Night Journey*. This

boundary is considered to be "the absolute limit of the created intellect" (Kabbani, 1995, p. 106). The motif of ascent is also present in apocryphal stories of Elijah, a figure idealized by alchemists for his incorruptible body (Jung, 1956/1976c, pp. 673–678 [para. 1518–1531]). According to Jung (1956/1976c), Elijah also reputedly had the ability to transform from a man to a woman, and so symbolizes the paradox of true higher union (p. 677 [para. 1529]).

Removal from this world, whether it entails a death and resurrection or not, is the alchemical symbol for isolation, dissolution, and transformation of one substance into another. One could argue, then, that in *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), Satyavan's death was not only inevitable, it was necessary in order that the transformation from man to superman could take place. It is the divine Mother in the form of Savitri who must ensure the process is accomplished through journeying with the soul into the underworld.

The monomyth is a model of alchemical transformation in the guise of a myth of separation, initiation, and reunification. This could be considered the case also when the myth pertains to the story of Christ or any other dying and resurrected god, has astronomical significance, relates to the death and resurrection of nature in the yearly cycle, or the passage of the sun on its underworld journey every night. As noted, death and resurrection can be seen as a symbol for the forgetting and remembering (or returning to conscious awareness) of the individual or the god, as in the idea from Sri Aurobindo that

in order that this evolution might be, an implacable plunge of supreme Consciousness and Being into an apparent void of insentience, inconscience, non-existence was inevitable; for without that plunge, immergence, seeming yet effective annihilation [in] its opposite the creation of that phenomenon of cosmic Energy which we call Matter would have been impossible. (Ghose, 1997a, p. 224)

The separation and transformation that attends the journey constitutes a ritual death and resurrection wherein a new individuality is shaped out of the ashes of the old. Returning to ordinary reality, the hero has been changed, carrying into

this world a new dispensation. In this way, the monomyth can be interpreted as a symbol of a particular stage of the evolution of consciousness, which teaches that transformation requires the separation and dissolution of what has come before. In *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), the death and resurrection of Satyavan portends the transformation of the cosmos.

### **The Evolution of Consciousness and the Creation of the Light Body in Integral Yoga and Analytical Psychology**

A greater harmony from the stillness born  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 712)

To Jung, the language of the psyche is the symbol—"the best possible statement or expression for something that is either essentially unknowable or not yet knowable given the present state of consciousness" (Stein, 1998, p. 82). Symbols are perceptible images of archetypes: "archaic thought patterns still present in each one of us. These patterns arise out of transcendental principles that manifest in the psyche, though they are not, at root, psychic, having their genesis in the mystery that extends beyond it" (Jung, 1954/1969d, p. 216 [para. 420]). In their purest state, archetypes exist beyond the psyche's reach in both spirit and matter and are ultimately beyond comprehension. The transcendent realm of the archetypes, which encircles and unifies the totality, Jung (1963/1970), following Dorn, called *unus mundus* (p. 462 [para 659]). Gnosticism, alchemy, Tantra—Jung might say that these are all symbolic systems tapping into the same archetypal root. The rhizome is one, though its expressions are myriad.

David Johnston (2014b), a Jungian analyst and devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, has suggested that the alchemical *unus mundus* and the supermind are analogous (p. 22). If this is the case, then these two systems of thought, despite the many nuanced differences, could be situated within similar realities. The Mother, in a less pluralistic spirit, stated that "There is only one truth, one reality; but the forms through which it may be expressed are many" (Alfassa, 1977/2003b, p. 17 [21 April 1929]). Perhaps the great difference between Jung's work and that of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is that Jung, who

worked his entire professional life in the field of psychology, attempted to use the language of science ("the language of the spirit of the times"; Jung, 2009, p. 229) to describe what he was witnessing in his and his clients' psychic lives, eschewing metaphysical statements, which he considered undemonstrable. He would likely not have been able to support Sri Aurobindo in the idea of supramental transformation of the body into a higher, supraphysical entity—even if he might have been sympathetic to the idea. But his private correspondences (Jung, 1973, 1979), and *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) show that he was intimately concerned with the future evolution of humanity and the relationship of humanity to God.

To Jung (1963/1970), the very fact that God cannot be grasped with the mind means there is no way to objectively prove its existence (pp. 546–547 [para. 779–780]). He would grant that inner experience constituted a psychic fact, but could not accept assertions made from that standpoint to be automatically true. In the final pages of *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung (1963/1970) gave one of his most trenchant criticisms of those who have claimed to have direct knowledge of God. This seems consistent with the fact that Jung's psychology begins and ends with the unresolved tension of opposites. Jung explored possibilities as thoroughly as he was capable, steadfastly refusing to make final determinations regarding ultimate things beyond his grasp. One of the topics this was especially true of was the idea of the *god-man*. As early as the lectures he gave to the Zofingia Society at the University of Basel in the mid 1890s, Jung (1983) was fascinated with the idea of the one who lived a life outside or at least not determined by history: "strange figures who appear to belong to a different order: alien, almost super mundane beings who relate to the historical conditions just enough to be understood, but who essentially represent a new species of man"; and that "the world does not give birth to them, but rather they create a world, a new heaven and a new earth" (pp. 93–94 [para. 243]). Jung was alluding to figures such as Christ and Buddha but his words could be applied to any number of individuals throughout history who have been seen in such a light. It could be argued that both Jung and Sri Aurobindo were such individuals.

Jung's use of the phrase "A new heaven and a new earth" is striking—it's taken from the Book of Revelations 21:1. Theon used the expression "New Creation on Earth" (Alfassa, 1981, p. 375), or "new heavens and a new earth" (p. 152 [May 25, 1963]) to signify the coming world in which heaven and earth will be united and "death will be no more" (Revelation 21: 4). This is the promise of the god-man, who comes to effect the transformation that will lead to the kingdom of heaven on earth. Yet at the end of his life, Jung remained unconvinced that such a being could ever be more than symbolic. Jung (2009) struggled and overcame his own urge to proclaim his revelation and declare himself a prophet of a new dispensation. How then would he view someone such as Sri Aurobindo, thought by many of his followers to be an avatar of the next evolutionary stage of consciousness?

Jung (1963/1970) argued that just because the existence of God or an Absolute can be postulated does not automatically mean that this postulate points to something actually existing (p. 548 [para. 781]). This was not a sign of disbelief, but rather an assertion that there is no way either for the experiencer or the onlooker to tell what the experience of transcendent reality is in its most fundamental essence. This has been alluded to as Jung's Kantianism—a stance for which he has been often criticized. My reading of Jung, however, is that he himself had direct experience of these transcendent realities—what he called "the relation or identity of the personal with the suprapersonal atman, and the individual tao with the universal tao" (p. 535 [para. 762]). He challenged his "critical reader to put aside his prejudices and . . . try to experience on himself the effects of the process[es]" he described in his writings (p. 535 [para. 762]). Yet he refrained from any dogmatic assertion of transcendent truth.

Jung (1989) claimed that, for him, God "was one of the most certain and immediate of experiences" (p. 62), though he also said that anyone hearing such an assertion should remain suspicious. He did claim that, for him, the "dividing walls" between this world and the Absolute were "transparent" (p. 355); but, although Jung (1963/1970) understood his own revelations to be irruptions of

the unconscious into consciousness, he could not, as a scientist concerned with objective proof, assert that such breakthroughs were signs that God spoke to or through him. He suggested that Jesus himself was ridiculed by many for his teachings, and gave this warning:

The wise man who is not heeded is counted a fool, and the fool who proclaims the general folly first and loudest passes for a prophet and Führer, and sometimes it is luckily the other way round as well, or else mankind would long since have perished of stupidity. (p. 549 [para. 782–783])

In his years at the Burghölzli Clinic, Jung had extensive experience with patients who had no way of stopping the flow of unconscious material that poured through their troubled minds and could often overwhelm them. Many of those he treated believed they were inspired by God. It is possible that this experience jaded him, but between the work he did with psychotics and schizophrenics and the years he worked through his own spiritual emergence he developed his ideas on the difficulties of communicating such knowledge. Of the one who felt the presence of God speaking directly to him, Jung (1963/1970) said:

A will transcending his consciousness seized hold of him, which he was quite unable to resist. Naturally enough he feels this overwhelming power as "divine." I have nothing against this word, but with the best will in the world I cannot see that it proves the existence of a transcendent God. Suppose a benevolent Deity did in fact inspire a salutary truth, what about all those cases where a halftruth or unholy nonsense was inspired and accepted by an eager following? Here the devil would be a better bet or—on the principle "omne malum ab homine"—man himself. This metaphysical either-or explanation is rather difficult to apply in practice because most inspirations fall between the two extremes, being neither wholly true nor wholly false. . . .

It therefore seems to me, on the most conservative estimate, to be wiser not to drag the supreme metaphysical factor into our

calculations, at all events not at once, but, more modestly, to make an unknown psychic or perhaps psychoid factor in the human realm responsible for inspirations and suchlike happenings. (Jung, 1963/1970, pp. 550–551 [para. 785-786])

As “psychoid” (Sharp, 1991e) phenomena cannot be experienced directly, but only through their symbolic effect on behaviors and thoughts, Jung (1954/1969d, p. 213 [para. 417]) was not arguing against the existence of such experiences, or of God, but rather for a more conservative way of interpreting the data. In fact, Jung (1963/1970) argued:

That the world inside and outside ourselves rests on a transcendental background is as certain as our own existence, but it is equally certain that the direct perception of the archetypal world inside us is just as doubtfully correct as that of the physical world outside us. If we are convinced that we know the ultimate truth concerning metaphysical things, this means nothing more than that archetypal images have taken possession of our powers of thought and feeling, so that these lose their quality as functions at our disposal. (pp. 551–552 [para. 787])

In other words, we become possessed by them and no longer see objectively.

Jung never doubted that religious figures throughout history had remarkable, numinous, and transformative experiences—he himself had them. However, he could never allow himself to make professional pronouncements regarding the true nature of these experiences. The most he would say was that all explanations were of the mind, and therefore mediated. Unfettered by the restrictions of scientific discourse, Sri Aurobindo (2005) argued from a more spiritual and expansive perspective:

The gnosis is the effective principle of the Spirit, a highest dynamis of the spiritual existence. The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living, acting would be governed by

the power of a vast universal spirituality. All the trinities of the Spirit would be real to his self-awareness and realised in his inner life. All his existence would be fused into oneness with the transcendent and universal Self and Spirit; all his action would originate from and obey the supreme Self and Spirit's divine governance of Nature. All life would have to him the sense of the Conscious Being, the Purusha within, finding its self-expression in Nature; his life and all its thoughts, feelings, acts would be filled for him with that significance and built upon that foundation of its reality. He would feel the presence of the Divine in every centre of his consciousness, in every vibration of his life-force, in every cell of his body. In all the workings of his force of Nature he would be aware of the workings of the supreme World-Mother, the Supernature; he would see his natural being as the becoming and manifestation of the power of the World-Mother. In this consciousness he would live and act in an entire transcendent freedom, a complete joy of the spirit, an entire identity with the cosmic self and a spontaneous sympathy with all in the universe. All beings would be to him his own selves, all ways and powers of consciousness would be felt as the ways and powers of his own universality. But in that inclusive universality there would be no bondage to inferior forces, no deflection from his own highest truth: for this truth would envelop all truth of things and keep each in its own place, in a relation of diversified harmony, it would not admit any confusion, clash, infringing of boundaries, any distortion of the different harmonies that constitute the total harmony. His own life and the world life would be to him like a perfect work of art; it would be as if the creation of a cosmic and spontaneous genius infallible in its working out of a multitudinous order. (pp. 1007–1008)

### **Toward the Gnostic Being**

At the beginning of the paper I quoted Jung (1976a) regarding the science of analytical psychology: “As a medical art, equipped only with human tools, our psychotherapy does not presume

to preach salvation or a way thereto, for that does not lie within its power" (p. 819 [para. 1817]). In a letter dated 15 June 1955, however, Jung (1975) also argued "that analytical psychology teaches us that attitude which meets transcendent reality halfway" (p. 265).

By meeting "transcendent reality halfway," Jung (1975) was alluding to the psyche, which figuratively stands midway between spirit and matter, uniting the two, although it is ultimately transcended by both (p. 265). But although Jung was reluctant to give a blanket acceptance to religious statements that claimed knowledge of the mind of God, von Franz (1972/1995), who knew him perhaps better than any of his colleagues, asserted that he "was utterly convinced that there really is an overwhelming, mysterious, unknowable hidden God, who speaks to the single individual from the depths of his soul and who reveals himself in forms which he himself chooses" (p. 26). My own reading of Jung's work, most especially *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009), has convinced me that his knowledge was first-hand, although he was equally convinced that consciousness of the ultimate mystery remains mediated, limited, and incomplete.

The alchemists believed there was an end to history and took it upon themselves to complete the work of God to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. They saw nature as too wasteful and slow to leave the process to her alone, a position shared by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Over eons, all metals will find their way to becoming gold; all souls in creation will find their way to perfection. The European alchemists took the imperfect ore from the earth in order to quicken God's work and transmute it in their alembics and athanors. The Indian *siddhas* took in hand the imperfect ore of their bodies and purified it. The Mother sought to transmute the fabric of reality through transmuting the cells of her body.

According to Sri Aurobindo, over time the evolutionary path from physical inconscience to gnostic being would complete itself (Ghose, 1999). He is reported to have stated that the process could be accomplished by a single individual in 300 years (Sethna, 1995; 2000). Accepting the fact that Sri Aurobindo was not speaking of the precession

of equinoxes but the lifespan of a single person, if the Mother had been able to sustain her body for 300 years to complete the yoga, the transformation would have been completed around the time of the precession predicted by Jung. As Kiran argued, "the change has certainly to be gradual if it is not to be a temporary miraculous imposition of Supernature upon Nature but a lasting wonderful growth of Nature into Supernature" (Sethna, 2000, p. 126). Predictions concerning the next evolutionary epoch of humanity vary widely but often revolve around ideas of a new epoch and an evolutionary step for humanity. These include transformation of the physical constitution of the body (Besant & Leadbeater, 1947, p. 329–340; Heindel, 2011, p. 110ff; Prokofiev, 1993, p. 20).

Jung (1952/1969e) spoke of this gradual transition in terms of the alchemical *Axiom of Maria*: "Out of the Third comes the One as the Fourth" (p. 513 [para. 962]), suggesting that, as Pisces was the sign of three dimensions, so Aquarius will be "the sign of the man whose ideal is the union, the oneness, of animal and divine" (Jung, 1997, p. 733), which is the fourth. Jung (1952/1969e) discussed this problem in terms of his concept of *synchronicity*, or acausal orderedness, "the meaningful coincidence or equivalence of a psychic and a physical state that have no causal relationship to one another" (p. 516 [para. 965]). The relationship is archetypal, transcending the mind's reach, and the archetypal image "the introspectively recognizable form of a priori psychic orderedness" (p. 516 [para. 965]). But although "introspectively recognizable," synchronicity is, he argued, at present "irrepresentable."

Just as the introduction of time as the fourth dimension in modern physics postulates an irrepresentable space-time continuum, so the idea of synchronicity with its inherent quality of meaning produces a picture of the world so irrepresentable as to be completely baffling. (p. 513 [para. 962])

Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 1999), in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, also wrote about the fourth dimension. Speaking of the development of "spiritual sight" that would come with the "supramentalizing of the physical sense" (p. 868) he said:

There is at the same time a subtle change which makes the sight see in a sort of fourth dimension, the character of which is a certain internality, the seeing not only of the superficies and the outward form but of that which informs it and subtly extends around it. The material object becomes to this sight something different from what we now see, not a separate object on the background or in the environment of the rest of Nature, but an indivisible part and even in a subtle way an expression of the unity of all that we see. And this unity that we see becomes not only to the subtler consciousness but to the mere sense, to the illumined physical sight itself, that of the identity of the Eternal, the unity of the Brahman. (p. 869)

This, which Sri Aurobindo saw as an evolutionary step from relating through the physical body alone to relating as well through the vital sheath, may be an apt description of synchronicity consciousness. Where Sri Aurobindo saw the character of fourth dimensional consciousness as “a certain internality,” Jung (1952/1969e) saw synchronicity as “introspectively recognizable” (p. 516 [para. 965]). As Jung wrote:

Synchronicity is no more baffling or mysterious than the discontinuities of physics. It is only the ingrained belief in the sovereign power of causality that creates intellectual difficulties and makes it appear unthinkable that causeless events exist or could ever occur. But if they do, then we must regard them as creative acts, as the continuous creation of a pattern that exists from all eternity, repeats itself sporadically, and is not derivable from any known antecedents. (p. 518 [para. 967])

By “continuous creation,” Jung (1952/1969e) meant “the eternal presence of the one creative act” (p. 518, fn17) of the Absolute—an insight fully congruent with Sri Aurobindo’s assertion of the unity of the Brahman (Ghose, 199, p. 869) and the Mother’s of the unity of the Supreme (Alfassa, 1998, p. 434 [November 19, 1969]). As God is completely involved in matter, then it is only the perception of this truth that is veiled.

What if one individual with enough focus and surrender could succeed in turning the base metal of her body-mind into spiritual gold? If only one individual could accomplish this—to raise the frequency of her body beyond the physical so that it rested on a foundation of life and extended through mind to supermind, then perhaps it would pull the entirety of Creation up with it, and the suffering caused by inconscient embodiment would cease. I suspect that Jung would argue that the ideal of perfection is symbolic and unrealizable as a transphysical reality—or at least that suffering would cease. As the Church refused to see the god born in the first half of the Piscean age as anything but light, the god that wills itself to be born here at the end of the second half could be a dark god. Jung sought wholeness, as a state that balances light and dark.

In 1954, in response to a letter from Arwind Vasavada in which Vasavada compared Jung’s notion of individuation with the Vedantic goal of the dissolution of the ego in the Self, Jung (1975) wrote that he felt the task was not to dissolve the ego, but to live fully in the world as both ego and Self. Only by living fully in the world and forgetting the Self does one “get properly into the mill of the opposites,” he wrote. Further,

Although the self is my origin, it is also the goal of my quest. When it was my origin, I did not know myself, and when I did learn about myself, I did not know the self. I have to discover it in my actions, where first it reappears under strange masks. That is one of the reasons I must study symbolism, otherwise I risk not recognizing my own father and mother when I meet them again after many years of my absence. (pp. 195–196)

To Jung, to be one with the original unity is to be unaware of the separate personality. To be aware of the separate personality is to lose awareness of the unity. This is the dilemma of the opposites in a nutshell.

Sri Aurobindo was also wary of spiritual traditions whose focus was other worldly. His goal was to unite heaven and earth in the transformed, or supramentalized body. This is what the self wishes one will achieve in the world (Ghose, 2005). Concerning this goal of transformation, he wrote:

The gnostic individual would be in the world and of the world, but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his self of transcendence above it; he would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality. The true Person is not an isolated entity, his individuality is universal; for he individualises the universe: it is at the same time divinely emergent in a spiritual air of transcendental infinity, like a high cloud-surpassing summit; for he individualises the divine Transcendence. (Ghose, 2005, pp. 1007–1008)

Individualization of the divine transcendence may be analogous here to the unity of the universal and the particular, the transcendent and the immanent. The one who completes the yoga is at once wholly spirit and wholly matter, and yet, simultaneously, beyond both.

### **The Light Body**

It has long since been accepted by most scholars that no real gold was ever actually synthesized by alchemists (there are some apocryphal stories, none of which have much substantive evidence). I must agree with Jung's assessment that although the alchemists were undoubtedly working with chemicals and were definitely seeking the secrets of the transformation of physical substance, they also projected their psychological processes onto the unknown, barely understood matter of their experiments, effecting powerful symbolic transformations, but never synthesizing gold from base metals.

Alchemists were on a continuum that was moving towards a disenchanting materialism that subsequently came to dominate Western modes of knowledge. They saw the material world as a mirror image of the spiritual world, and their work as that of quickening God's work of redeeming matter through its sublimation and transformation. They sought mastery over the natural world in order to liberate the divine light buried deep within all material things. I would suggest, following Jung, that this attempt to redeem nature continues in the sciences, albeit symbolically, and as with the alchemists, perhaps unconsciously. Humans still tend to believe

in humanity's importance and centrality in nature, and the ability to guide, and even control it. It is a dangerous belief. We understand very little, no matter how many bombs we can build. But the attempts are symbolically aligned with the desire to draw consciousness down into matter or to raise up the material world and so unite the two.

It could be argued that science is a process of analysis and synthesis. These opposing actions outline the basic procedure of alchemy, *solve et coagula* or dissolve and conjoin. Division proceeds from breaking things down into oppositions and their eventual re-uniting through chemical dissolution and reconstitution. The syzygy is the alchemical symbol that points to the ultimate union of opposites formed through the act of Creation. These opposites, spirit and matter, light and darkness, masculine and feminine, were seen as the byproduct of the Creator's desire to know itself. Jung looked at this situation and saw in it the process of individuation—both human and divine. For those who are safely held within an undisturbed worldview, individuation is limited and happens naturally, but for one who has lost her or his connection to the containing myth of their culture, individuation must be engaged consciously, as the symbols provided within a given religion are absent or no longer accepted. The consciously adopted task of individuation is a path of dismemberment and reconstitution, and there are no guarantees that the undertaking will be successful.

The chemical processes alchemists performed in their labs were physical. They experimented with the transmutation of substance, but more importantly they undertook symbolic acts intended to draw the force of God down into matter to transmute and transform the world. How would a transformed and transmuted world appear? The transformed universe is one in which darkness is turned to light. So too the transformed human body is one in which the opaque physical substance is transformed into a body of light. The name for this light-body in the Christian tradition is *corpus glorificationis*—glorious body (Jung, 1963/1970, p. 535 [para. 763]). This term is derived from the vision of Ezekiel from the Tanakh (Ezekiel 1), who saw the appearance of God clothed in white light sitting upon a chariot in the heavens. In Medieval Jewish

Hekhalot and Merkavah literature, and in the later Kabbalah, this figure is identified as Metatron, the ascended form of Enoch, whom God transformed into an archangel clothed in a body of celestial fire, and who, in effect, became God's image in the manifest cosmos (Meiliken, 2010, para. 1).

The Tanakh or Jewish scriptures, and the Christian Bible, contain numerous allusions to light filling or surrounding the body of the one favored by God. But the metaphor of the light-body is not restricted to these traditions. Similar images appear in Islam in the idea of the *Man of Light* (Corbin, 1978), in the figure of Amitaba Buddha in Pureland Buddhism, the *rainbow body* of Tibetan Buddhism, the light of *brahman* or the *prakash* of Shivaite Hinduism.

Light plays an important role in Sri Aurobindo's theology, too, where it is "a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality illuminative and creative" (Ghose, 2005, p. 979), and a manifestation of "the Mother's powers—many in number" (Ghose, 2012b, p. 263). The vision of light within and around the body is a sign of higher vision. Jungian analyst, Anne Baring (n.d.) wrote of the history of the idea of the illumined body:

Many writers of earlier cultures speak variously of a 'subtle' body, a 'resurrection' body (St. Paul), a 'celestial' body, a 'shining' body, a 'radiant' body and an 'ethereal' or 'starry' body. In the sixteenth century, an alchemist who goes by the unforgettable name of Ruland the Lexicographer, identifies the faculty of the imagination itself with the subtle body when he writes "Imagination is the star in man; the celestial and super-celestial body." This 'body' was thought by some to be located in some part of the physical body but was also described as something that surrounds or enfolds the physical body and acts as a vehicle for consciousness when it is incarnated in this earthly dimension. When we discard the body it, so to speak, comes into its own and we discover to our surprise that we are not dead but very much alive in a new 'body'. As the great early Christian theologian, Origen (c.182–c.251 AD.), pointed out, we do not need the same kind of body we have on earth as we no longer need to eat, to excrete etc. (section 5, para. 4)

The Mother also spoke about the transcendence of bodily needs and the organs of digestion and reproduction in the supramental (Alfassa, 2000, p. 361 [31 October 1970]). The light around the head played a prominent role in the Mother's (Alfassa, 1979) vision of the *supramental ship*, which she narrated to her disciple, Satprem. In this vision, she sailed across a great body of water with travelers bound for the supramental world. She could see not only others' bodies but her own, as radiant with light, although each was of differing hues and intensities. The bodies were clothed "by an inner working" (p. 139). "Life created its own forms" (p. 139). Pointing directly at the unification of spirit and matter she said that "There was ONE SINGLE substance in all things; it changed the nature of its vibration according to the needs or uses" (p. 139; emphasis in original). She went on to describe her own body as seen in the vision:

I was a mixture of what these tall beings were and the beings aboard the ship. The top part of myself, especially my head, was a mere silhouette of a whitish color with an orange fringe. The more it approached the feet, the more the color resembled that of the people on the ship, or in other words, orange; the more it went up towards the top, the more translucent and white it was, and the red faded. The head was only a silhouette with a brilliant sun at its center; from it issued rays of light which were the action of the will. (p. 140)

The Mother here stressed the light that infused and even replaced her physical form, emanating from her head in myriad rays. This notion that the physical body is dissolved, sublimated, purified and resurrected in a new or renewed form that is filled with radiant light is central to the alchemical myth.

In von Franz's (1986) view, the creation of the purified or light body is the secret to overcoming death. She said, "the adept in the alchemical work, the *opus* (which can admittedly only succeed through God's grace), creates his own resurrected body during his lifetime" (p. xi). There is perhaps a further similarity here between Jung and integral yoga. According to Sri Aurobindo, the doctrine of reincarnation teaches that surviving one's death "is

already given to every creature born with a mind" (p. 62); however, it is "not the survival of the mental personality, but the waking possession of the unborn and deathless Self" (Ghose, 1997a, p. 424).

Awakening to the Self is a matter of grace. In both the integral and alchemical views, God's grace comes through complete fidelity and surrender to the Divine, and both traditions stress the discipline necessary to be conscious enough to achieve the result. So, it is only through the development of a particular form of consciousness that one can become immortal.

In *The Psychology of the Transference*, Jung (1946/1966c) described the alchemical text, *Rosarium Philosophorum*, in which the separation, dissolution, and reunification of the masculine and feminine principles leads to the unified being, pictured as the resurrected Christ. At one point in the process, the sublimed soul rains down on the vestiges of the united bodies of the king and queen as dew, which represents the essence of the soul transformed by spirit. This process is a mystery, and cannot be described adequately in words, but must be experienced directly. When the mother and the father unite above the level of the mind, what is born from their union is the higher human being, what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother called the supramental or gnostic being. Writing of it in terms of the *puer aeternus*, the eternal child, Jung (1984) said that

through individuation you create something timeless and eternal, which carries the quality of immortality. That is what the East seeks, and it is amply confirmed in their texts. You can take it or leave it as you like. So the Puer Aeternus created thus has the quality of eternity. (p. 284)

Jung consistently argued throughout his career that humans can never see beyond the limits of the mind, as the mind interprets through words. In this vein, Jung (1931/1969a) argued against the blind acceptance of descriptions of that which transcends mind or psyche. This even extended to such notions as matter and spirit, which he argued are transcendental realities (p. 344 [para. 661]). This did not mean, however, that neither matter nor spirit in their pure state exist. As noted, while Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could speak

unconditionally about their inner experiences as certain truths, Jung, constrained by the dictates of the sciences felt he could not claim his subjective experiences were scientifically provable. Still, if his writings are read carefully, it is evident that his personal conviction was born through a direct experience of the mystery.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taught that such absolute knowledge, or knowledge by identity was not only possible, but the goal (see Ghose, 2005, pp. 543–572). In the Indian tradition, the adept can and does come to understand that their consciousness is in actuality the consciousness of *brahman*—the Divine Totality. In this sense, there is in truth no transformation, but merely a rending of the veil.

### Conclusion

The mind of earth shall be a home of light  
(Ghose, 1993, p. 699)

Jung's (1959/1968a) conception of the Aquarian individual bears some similarity to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's conception of the supramental being, except concerning the nature of physical transformation. If Ostrowski-Sachs' (1971) record of her conversations with Jung (p. 63) are accurate, however, he at least considered the possibility of transformation beyond the physical body to a subtle one. Jung even tentatively speculated on possible further transformations in the aeon of Capricorn, but although he said he had some intuitions about the Aquarian Age (Hannah & von Franz, 2004, p. 133), concerning the Capricorn Age he said "there is silence within me" (p. 340). The empirical data at his disposal was too scant to warrant an attempt at conceptualizing it.

I find the thought of supramental transformation fascinating, although I have no direct knowledge of such an evolutionary possibility. I know that it is the greater part of wisdom to accept that my body will one day die, and despite my best effort to know otherwise, what will happen to my specific awareness is a mystery to me. It brings little solace that Jung argued that the final stage of the alchemical opus requires death, as in the biblical injunction that only when a seed dies into the earth

can it be reborn (John 12:24). In alchemy, it is only through death and decay that new life comes: *in stercore invenitur*. As von Franz (1975/1998) wrote, "Death is the last great union of the inner world-opposites, the sacred marriage of resurrection" (p. 286). Nolini suggested that with her death, the Mother's body became the foundation for the supramental body to come (as cited in Alfassa, 1983, p.147 [6 April 1972]). This is a beautiful sentiment that is certainly beyond my competency to judge.

My relationship with the Mother is devotional and, I would argue, archetypal. When I look at Sri Aurobindo and her I see my own father and mother, and my wife's. I see Adam and Eve, Zeus and Hera, Shiva and Shakti, P'an Ku and Nü Kwa—all the divine couples ever imagined. Beyond them, I see the multiplicity: whirling spindrift galaxies born from the furnace of Creation, the birth and proliferation of microbial universes that could dance on the head of a pin, the golden child infinitely expressed and eternally born from the womb of every mother, and the silence that encompasses the whole. Through them I see myself, and the world I inhabit, so much more richly.

But although Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision is, for me, one of the more beautiful I have encountered, and although it seems unarguable to me that humanity will eventually give way to further evolutionary forms, I remain unconvinced (though not convinced otherwise) that humanity's future destiny is the sublimation (lifting) of the physical into an actual substance that transcends death and unites spirit and matter. Surely, the evolutionary record shows that dominant forms, rather than evolving further, tend to decline and even disappear in the face of new forms arising (Christian, 2004). If it is consciousness that is evolving, it seems that it should neither depend upon nor require humans to be its carriers.

I am not happy that my faculties are slowly leaving me or that I will soon go the way of my ancestors. "Death," as Jung (1989) wrote, "is indeed a fearful piece of brutality" (p. 314). The thought of immortality or some magical change in my own particular body that would rise it above or beyond death is an enticing thought. Yet it seems to me that the purpose of existence—if there could possibly

be any—has little to do with my temporal survival, and I am not sure that the goal I seek is linked to it. Humans evolved from mammals only after the catastrophic extinction of the dinosaurs. By accident or by divine plan, it might require the disappearance of humanity for the next stage of evolution to take place. Perhaps this is the *solve* (dissolution) needed for the next great *coagulo*. If substance evolves to be able to contain greater and greater levels of consciousness I have no doubt that future forms of life beyond the human will have greater capacity and reach. But, the total transformation of the physical universe? The end of death? About this, as did Jung, I can only say: "There is silence within me" (as cited in Hannah & von Franz, 2004, p. 340).

### **Seedtime and Harvest**

Although Sri Aurobindo (2006) said that "the ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity" he also felt that Spirit's descent into matter gave "a divine purpose to the creation" (p. 553). Jung apparently shared this vision, as one of the great insights of alchemical philosophy. It is the goal that remains in question. While Sri Aurobindo thought that the transmutation of the prison of physicality into a new form that unified spirit and matter at a higher level was inevitable, Jung would most probably say that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of the supramental being was an archetypal intuition of the unified Self, analogous to the cosmic Krishna or Christ, the angel Metatron, or other such light beings. What this image might point to—some ultimate destiny—must remain a mystery, as the actual archetype remains hidden to sight.

While Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's eyes were trained on the Absolute, Jung's were trained on its reflection in the endlessly transforming mandala of the psychic image. Both sought the union of spirit and matter. Their separate visions, although at times appearing to have been spoken in different tongues, seem equally well articulated.

As for the supramental transformation, I cannot make claims about that of which I have no direct knowledge. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's conception remains for me an aesthetic experience—one which fills me with wonder, but which I can neither believe nor disbelieve. I see them

as representatives of the deepest understanding of the processes of my own existence projected symbolically. Through studying them as symbols of a greater reality I hope I have grown wiser, but I cannot profess to know the truth of their particular vision of a coming evolutionary change.

This special issue of the journal is on integral yoga, so it might seem strange that I would close with Jung. But in its cryptic way, this passage from a late letter of his, written in response to a dream sent to him by an acquaintance, speaks to my own deepest and most personal experience of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, of my inner awareness of what Jung (1952/1969e), citing the Medieval natural philosophers, called: “the sympathy of all things” (p. 489 [para. 924]). It serves to remind me that in the end perhaps the only thing that truly matters—as another great soul once said—is to “let the beauty you love be what you do” (Rumi, 1995, p. 36).

I was drawn into the dream which oneself is, and in which there is no I and no You any more. It begins with the great parents, the King and Queen, who own many forests, fields, meadows, and vineyards. Late in life someone finds his inheritance, a tiny little bit of land, where he grows his vine and tree of life (vita = life, vitis = vine, vinum = wine). He has to acquire it for himself because he has been expelled from paradise and has nothing more, or rather he has but doesn't know it. It is walled round like a holy place. There he sees everything that has ever happened to him: sun and rain, heat and cold, sickness, wounds, tears and pain, but also fruitfulness and increase, sweetness and drunkenness, and therewith access to the All, the Whole. Though he doesn't know it, somebody else is there, an old man who knows but doesn't tell. When one has looked and laboured for a long time, one knows oneself and has grown old.—The “secret of life” is my life, which is enacted round about me, my life and my death; for when the vine has grown old it is torn up by the roots. All the tendrils that would not bear grapes are pruned away. Its life is remorselessly cut down to its essence, and the sweetness of the grape is turned into wine, dry and heady,

a son of the earth who serves his blood to the multitude and causes the drunkenness which unites the divided and brings back the memory of possessing all and of the kingship, a time of loosening, and a time of peace.

There is much more to follow, but it can no longer be told.

Ever yours, C. G. (Jung, 1975, pp. 514–515 [August, 1959])

### Notes

1. This is a complex matter. Jung (1963/1970) did see the material and psychic operations as twin components of alchemy, writing “there can be no doubt that the *chrysopoieia* (gold making) was thought of as a psychic operation running parallel to the physical process and, as it were, independent of it.” However, as he stressed, “The moral and spiritual transformation was not only independent of the physical procedure but actually seemed to be its *causa efficiens*” (p. 263 [para. 354]). On the projection of psychological processes into matter and the description of alchemical instruments in anatomical terms, Jung (1938/1967d) wrote: “These ideas go back to the head symbolism in Zosimos, but at the same time they are an intimation that the transformation takes place in the head and is a psychic process. This realization was not something that was clumsily disguised afterwards; the laborious way in which it was formulated proves how obstinately it was projected into matter” (pp. 88–89 [para. 117]).
2. For example, in *Psychological Types* (Jung, 1921/1976e), where he discussed higher- or God-consciousness in relation to his type theory (see especially, Chs II and V).
3. Banerji (2013) enumerated four: a non-dual realization similar to the Buddhist or Advaitic, a realization of the static and dynamic *brahman*, similar to the tantric and *vashishtavaitic*, a realization of the *purushottama*, as described in the Bhagavat Gita, and, in Sri Aurobindo's words, “the higher planes of consciousness leading to Supermind” (p. 104).

4. He continued: "The work could hardly end in any other way, since the *complexio oppositorum* cannot lead to anything but a baffling paradox. Psychologically, this means that human wholeness can only be described in antinomies, which is always the case when dealing with a transcendental idea" (p. 314 [para. 532]).
5. Jung's (1996) conception here (p. 103), following Hauer, is not strictly correct, but as Eliade (1969) argued, these practices are of a transphysiological or mystical nature (p. 234), and should not be concretized overly. It is the overall symbolism that is most important. Sri Aurobindo discussed three *coniunctios*, the highest being above the *sahasrara* chakra. Jung (1996) also discussed a higher *coniunctio* (pp. 47, 57), but as it is transcendent, the contrasexual symbolism present in kundalini tantra is absent.
6. There is a Talmudic teaching about Abraham having sent the children of his concubines East with esoteric knowledge. Kaplan (1990), in relating this story, argued that the mystical teachings of the Middle East were more highly developed earlier on than those in India (p. xiv).
7. Sri Aurobindo continued: "In what we call existence, the highest knowledge can be no more than the highest relation between that which seeks and that which is sought, and it consists in a modified identity through which we may pass beyond knowledge to the absolute identity. This metaphysical distinction is of importance because it prevents us from mistaking any relation in knowledge for the absolute and from becoming so bound by our experience as to lose or miss the fundamental awareness of the absolute which is beyond all possible description and behind all formulated experience" (Ghose, 2001a, p. 44).
8. There might be a correlate between the Mother's yoga and the Assumption of the Virgin as discussed by Jung (1937/1968f, p. 420 [para. 500]; see Jung 1979, p. 430, for a full list of references), which could be argued to extend Christ's transformation further into the human realm through the body of the fully human Mary. But this would be an interpolation.
9. There are actually two transformative catalysts in alchemy: the *dry* way uses fire, and the *wet* way uses water. The union of fire and water is symbolized by the hexagram—also the symbol of Sri Aurobindo, repurposed by The Mother from an earlier one used by Theon.
10. In contradistinction to Freud's concept of sublimation as repression, Jung (1946/1966c), quoting from the alchemical *Rosarium Philosophorum*, wrote that he saw it as a subtilization or spiritualization of substance: "Sublimation is twofold: The first is the removal of the superfluous so that the purest parts shall remain, free from elementary dregs, and shall possess the quality of the quintessence. The other sublimation is the reduction of the bodies to spirit, i.e., when the corporeal density is transformed into a spiritual subtlety" (p. 278 [para. 486n]).
11. Jung (1996) pointed out the connection between the *soter* serpent of Gnosticism and the *kundalini* serpent, both of whom unite the upper and lower worlds through imparting knowledge of eternal life (p. 69).
12. At the end of *Savitri* (Ghose, 1993), the return of Savitri to the world is pictured in the image of a falling star (p. 711).
13. The Hebrew root of the word for the work that is the blueprint for redemption and the actual body of God in manifestation, the *Torah*—*ohr*—is actually "light."
14. "A concept applicable to virtually any archetype, expressing the essentially unknown but experienceable connection between psyche and matter" (Sharp, 1991e).

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The *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic journal in print since 1981. It is sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies, published by Floraglates Foundation, and serves as the official publication of the International Transpersonal Association. The journal is available online at [www.transpersonalstudies.org](http://www.transpersonalstudies.org), and in print through [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) (search for IJTS).