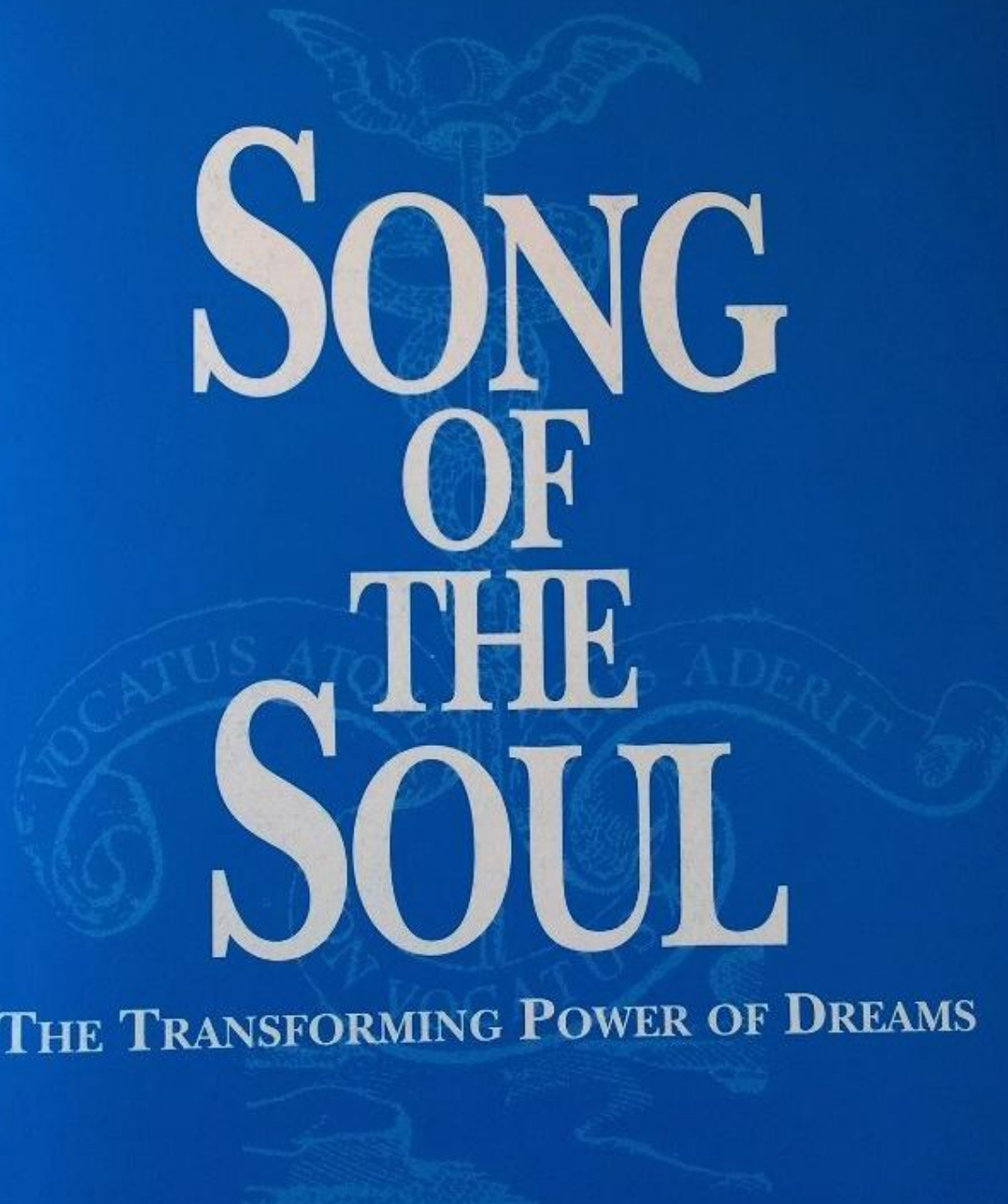


BASICS OF ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY

SONG OF THE SOUL



THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF DREAMS

JASBINDER GARNERMANN

C.G.JUNG SOCIETY OF IRELAND
PATRON: SIR LAURENS VAN DER POST

Basics of Analytical Psychology
Song of the Soul
The Transforming Power of Dreams
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INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of booklets which set out, in an original and straight-forward way, the basics of analytical psychology. Analytical psychology was the term used by Carl Jung to describe his psychological method which could guide the individual to the depths of the psyche. Jung found that dreams were the clearest and most detailed statements available to us of the state of the psyche at that particular moment. Understanding how dreams work and they mean is essential to understanding the Jungian approach to psychotherapy and it is for that reason that we are starting the series with this topic.

Dream work is simple but the ego makes it complicated; so this booklet, written from the heart, will make easy reading. Each phrase and each word is loaded with significance. Rather than narrowing and closing opportunities it is to be hoped that every idea in the booklet will open up endless possibilities.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our patron Sir Laurens van der Post for his support and guidance since the foundation of the Jung Society. It is undoubtedly due to his encouragement that we have found the strength to continue to make Jung's work known in Ireland.

William Garnermann
(Secretary, C.G. Jung Society)

THE PURPOSE OF DREAMS

Dreams have been known since ancient times to be our entry into another dimension. Mysterious, strange and fascinating, they were for centuries thought to have come from the supernatural world, messages from the gods to guide us in the significant moments of our lives.

Today, this other-world is called the unconscious, and dreams are widely acknowledged to be the most accurate means of gaining access to it. In 1900 Freud published “The Interpretation of Dreams”, by using dream- analysis as an integral part of psychoanalysis, he established its scientific respectability. Jung initially worked with Freudian dream theory, but discovered the existence of the collective unconscious, and this led to his break with Freud in 1914.

Freud believed that the unconscious was a repository of all the instinctual contents which had been repressed because they were unacceptable to civilized behaviour. Instincts were seen as dangerous, disturbing and chaotic, threatening to undermine the status quo of the ego. In normal waking life, the ego censored the expression of these unconscious urges (which Freud termed the “Id”). But in dreams they erupted in greater or lesser degree of intensity and distortion. Dreams could therefore trace back the cause of the adult neurosis to its origins in childhood when there was a failure to deal with the particular instincts. The value of dream- analysis inspired Freud to describe dreams as “the royal road to the unconscious”.

Jung diverged from Freud when he discovered the existence of a deeper layer of the unconscious which he termed the *collective unconscious*. In a pioneering approach to the treatment of schizophrenia, Jung discovered that the bizarre visions and hallucinations of the insane were in fact deeply symbolic and contained material that the patients could not have possibly have had access to in their personal lives, and yet had been part of the myths and rituals of distant or ancient cultures. Jung realized that because of their low ego- threshold these patients were tapping into a layer of the psyche which was common to all races and times.

Most of us cannot experience this collective unconscious in waking life because of the primacy of the ego. But in our dreams when the ego loses its place, we enter the realm not only of the repressed material of our personal lives, but also this suprapersonal realm. The contents that we encounter here have never been known to us. There is nothing we have experienced or felt personally that can explain them. But they are part of our common heritage of life.

The collective unconscious connects us to experiences, feelings, insights and values that have been acquired over aeons of the life- experiment of human evolution. Through our dreams we can reconnect to this source of wisdom. This can happen particularly at those times when our lives have reached such a crossroads that a personal solution is not forthcoming. A dilemma over a relationship, a career, a life- attitude, or a mid-life crisis, a bereavement, a trauma, can call for such a complete revision of our values that we simply do not have the personal resources for this task of transformation.

At these times of transition, our dreams will be particularly active and powerful. They will contain images, symbols and dramas that open up new ways of looking at the problem, highlighting different aspects of the cause, and enabling us to see it in a new light. These

dreams will also point to strength and capabilities in us that we had neglected or never known existed. We might then dream of finding forgotten rooms in a house, with dusty neglected furniture and cobwebs on the ceilings. Or we might dream of moving into a new house with larger spaces or a special room. This indicates an enlargement of consciousness due to the integration of previously unconscious attitudes.

Dreams inform us of the unknown factors in a situation that our ego- consciousness is missing out on. When we need to take a crucial step in our lives, we can no longer rely solely on our usual way of seeing things. Our ego- attitude becomes inadequate because in the process of adapting, we have to sacrifice parts of our self, our instinctual needs. We acquire a goal -oriented, one -sided attitude that helps us to develop certain talents and abilities in order to get on in life. For instance, a lawyer will need a logical mind, and have to repress feelings. An engineer will have to relate well to matter, and have to repress intuition. A mother might have so many demands on her emotions, she has no time for thinking. As we get on with the daily business of living, we develop a particular way of seeing reality, a structure which contains ideas, feelings, values that fit in. In order to preserve this structure, we have to reject all those contents that contradict our structure or question it. Soon our *weltanschauung* can become a neurotic bundle of personal, parental and cultural biases.

The more rigid our conscious structure becomes, the more we can experience a sense of futility and depression. The needs of the psyche as a whole are being ignored and these will demand a hearing. Our dreams will now introduce characters who act in a manner that is outside our pale of values. These characters can appear immoral, aggressive, dishonest, sexual, depraved, ugly, silly, threatening. They all represent parts of ourselves that we have ignored, and have therefore fallen into the *shadow*.

Shadow dreams restore those character traits which we had repressed because they were the complete opposite of our ego ideal. Because they have been ignored they have gained in energy in the unconscious and can erupt in our lives in the form of acting out (e.g. sexuality), of addictions, aggression, projections or impulsive actions. Through our dreams, we have the opportunity of becoming aware of these parts of ourselves, so that we no longer dangerously act on them, but can harness some of their more positive aspects. Every shadow -trait has a positive aspect. Aggression contains the assertiveness that we need for autonomy that would be lacking in a timid person, sexuality contains passion, laziness can also mean a more easy-going outlook on life for a workaholic, depravity is a hint for a puritan to loosen up.

Jung believed that the psyche was a self--regulating system. This means that the psyche is interested in being healthy, and provides us with checks and balances whenever we are getting too one--sided and extreme in our lives. We might be obsessed with work, or not do enough work, we might be too dependent or not trusting enough in a relationship, we might idolise or denigrate a parent, friend or partner, we might be too extraverted, or too introverted. If we persist in our one--sidedness, the psyche's frustration will convey itself in dreams that force us to consider the opposite of the conscious attitude. Jung termed these dreams *compensation dreams*.

Every dream performs the function of compensating our conscious blind-spots. If too high an opinion of our father has given us an authority complex, then we will have dreams which show up the father or a father--figure as perhaps drunk or disorderly. If we have too low an opinion of for example a partner or a friend, the dream will show them in a very

flattering light, perhaps as beautiful and wise. If a woman is neglecting her sexual needs, she might dream of a prostitute; a man might be told to belt his sexuality.

In dreams we can also experience all the feelings that are missing from our habitual existence. Anger, passion, love, tenderness, guilt, all affects that would have been appropriate in a situation but which were denied, are restored to us in our dream images. This is termed the *feeling -tone* of dreams. Depending on how much denial there is in conscious life, our dreams will vary in their intensity.

Our dreams perform a seismographic function. Sensitive to every nuance of our needs and imbalances, there are an early warning- system of psychic dysfunction. By paying attention to them, we can make the necessary changes and prevent the psychological conflict from externalizing itself in the form of disruptions, illnesses, or tragedies.

The function of dreams is above all to put us in touch with the needs of the real self. The *real self* is the part of ourselves that has been buried since childhood. Parental demands and inhibitions, peer pressure at school, the demands of society mean that we develop a false self to comply with the expectations of others. Parents who cannot give unconditional love to their children, will make them feel that they cannot be loved for who they really are. If children are rejected when they are dirty, smelly or noisy, and accepted only if they are clean, good and obedient, the child, desperate for parental love, will also reject his real self. Parents often use their children for their own narcissistic needs. Because of their own feelings of inadequacy, they use their children as show-pieces. The child has the right to be perfect, bright, beautiful and successful. The child might end up as just that, except that it will be a performance. Inside he will feel worthless, unloved and rejected because the success is not on the terms of the real self. The actual talent might lie in a completely unexpected area, one that would not meet the parents' fantasies.

Other children might react to the destruction of the real self through depression, rebellion, addictions, self--destructive activities, or hopelessness as adults. Whether the adult is reaching the dizzy heights of a false ambition, or is totally incapacitated by failure, in either case they are not living on their true level. Their dreams will first attempt to show them the reality of their situation, by graphically depicting the full horror of what has happened. Starved and mutilated animals and babies, animals and children with their guts torn out, abandoned animals and children, imprisonment, butchery, kidnap, torture and rape in dreams are all accurate portrayals of how the psyche experiences the murder of the real self.

By restoring these feelings, the dreams will facilitate of necessary mourning and grief for what has taken place. The dreamer will then be set for the happy task of rediscovering what was most authentically his or hers. Lost and forgotten feelings, intuitions, sensations, and potential now surface in our dreams. We might dream of a long--forgotten childhood friend or relative who cherished us, a dog or cat or other childhood pet who gave us unconditional love, an activity or hobby long forgotten, a landscape full of sun-lit memories. Gently, our dreams highlight the different areas where our real self was present and by restoring these feelings also restore to us some of the magic, freshness and wholeness that before seemed irretrievably lost. We can then begin to translate this vision into conscious life, freeing more and more areas to which we can bring the spirit of play and experimentation.

Differentiating the real self from the *false self* also means being able to differentiate our

own psychic reality for the reality of others. Most of us dwell in a state of neurotic entanglement with the world around us. Although we may be conscious we do not really know what belongs to us and what does not. In a sense, we all hear voices, of parents, teachers, society. Jung calls this state of entanglement *participation mystique*. Like the primitive who projected his soul onto the world around him, and is in turn possessed, we too project and identify with what does not belong to us.

Projection is the process where we split off the unacceptable parts of ourselves, and see them in others, so that we can disown them. When we have an extreme and unwarranted reaction to a person, when we cannot stand somebody because of their laziness, dishonesty, beliefs, politics, we are making a projection. Dreams force us to own these parts that we have deposited onto other people, through characters who personify those qualities. By realizing that these characters are parts of our own psyches, we are free of the compulsion to project.

Dreams can also pinpoint the areas in our psyches that have been unduly influenced by others. This can happen in the case of a strong mother or father complex. A son might be so ruled by dominating father's values that he is afraid to live life on his own terms. He might take a job because the father approves, but is stifling for his own potential, he might consciously feel that these values are his own, but his dreams will begin to show the full extent of his father's domination through showing the different areas in his life where the father rules. The father can appear in many guises, to bring different facets of his influence to the dreamer's attention. He might appear as another authority figure, a giant policeman, a particular room where the dreamer was chastised, it might be walking stick that the father used, a piece of music the father liked, a religious figure, a fierce animal, thunder and lightning. All these images help connect the way the father was experienced in childhood; to the way the dreamer is terrorized by the introjected father in his present life.

The mother's influence in our lives is even more pervasive. Dream- images of the mother are correspondingly profuse. Oceans, ships, nature, tigresses, cows, womb-like spaces like valleys and caves, kitchens and ovens, witches, hags, pigs, matrons, the family home, back gardens are only some of the common dream symbols of the maternal. When we can begin to realize through our dreams the extent of our identification with the parents, we can begin to disidentify from them. In conscious life this enables us to form relationships that are free of our projections of the mother or father complex. Other people no longer have to be the mother or father who we idolize or hate or expect everything from.

Jung believed that dreams did not just have a reductive function, i.e. to explain the causes of our problems. He believed that dreams could free us from complexes, so that we could live more creatively in the present, offer us solutions to our dilemmas by alerting us to unknown factor in the situation. He also believed that dreams could heal, inspire and guide us. All these functions led Jung to regard dreams as being *purposive* i.e. meaningfully moving towards the goal of wholeness.

In moments of intense crisis, our unconscious draws upon the deepest layer of the psyche, the archetype of wholeness called the **Self**. The Self is the blueprint of the realization of our unique individuality, guiding us towards the road of optimum fulfillment of our natures. It is also our link to the transpersonal source of wisdom and wholeness that we call God. Jung described the Self as the *God image within*. It can therefore give us access to wisdom, strength and healing that is beyond the reach of personal self. This

suprapersonal force in our lives becomes activated during the dark night of the soul, when no human agency can provide the solutions to our problems. “When the ego gives up, the self steps in” wrote Jung.

When we have been devastated by a tragedy, or when our psychic equilibrium is otherwise destroyed, the Self manifests in our dreams to enable us to make the paradigm shift that alone can guarantee the way forward. The annihilation of the ego is heralded in dreams of cataclysmic disasters, earthquakes, floods, nuclear explosions and other end-of-the-world imagery. The dreamer has to be prepared to let go of the former persona and ego values. This constellates the self, bringing with it immense powers of healing and wholeness to compensate for the disintegration of the conscious attitude.

The dreams we have now are **big dreams**, easily recognizable because they are startlingly vivid, in luminous colours, with symbols that are so clear and meaningful that they fascinate us for decades to come. Often a big dream will have a voice, calm yet compelling, or will point to a text or a letter with an important message. The power of these images penetrates our despair, and can save us from the brink of suicide. Big dreams leave us feeling utterly safe, at peace, redeemed and blest, a glimpse of Heaven that is enough to carry us through the painful journey towards wholeness.

The self can be symbolized in dreams as a numinous object, a beautiful jewel, a rare flower, harmonious music, gold, diamonds, a royal crown, a king or a queen, a stone, a ceremonial dance, the birth of the divine child, a fish, a golden castle, an enlightened person, Buddha, Krishna, Christ, the divine Mother, a unicorn, a radiant lion, a chalice. Jung described these dreams as “the richest jewels in the treasure-house of the psyche”.

THE LANGUAGE OF DREAMS

We might think that dreams are nonsensical and meaningless because of the way they jump about irrationally. But dreams only appear bizarre to the conscious way of thinking. The unconscious is not bound by the same physical laws so in dreams we have the freedom to transcend space and time. In an instant we can move from China to Ireland, back to medieval times or forward into the future. We can fly, glide, shoot off into space, live underwater, and perform astonishing feats. We can meet old friends, long-dead relatives, heroes, gods, witches, and saviours.

This is because in dreams we enter another reality - an imaginative reality that allows us the freedom to explore unknown psychological possibilities. Like the world of fairy-tales, dreams only appear irrational and bizarre in the context of rational every-day thinking. But if we can suspend our disbelief, we see that dreams have an inherent logic of their own. The plot holds together, characters and objects have a symbolic meaning and there is a definite message. Moreover, the events and symbols have a meaning that is personal and unique to the dreamer. The dream is a fairy-tale written exclusively for the dreamer.

In order to understand the language of dreams we need to think metaphorically, not literally. For example, we see a fox in a dream, we should recall all the qualities we personally as well as culturally associate with foxes. These might be cunning, instinct for survival, the victim of cruel hunting, furtiveness, helplessness etc. depending on what is meaningful for the dreamer. The fox in the dream is a metaphor for the qualities that are latent in the dreamer.

Journeys are a common metaphor for one's journey through life. Trains, buses, planes, ships are all indicative of the particular way in which we are undertaking this journey. Trains can often mean a rigid progress bound by collective norms. To amplify the meaning of this metaphor, we should take an imaginary train journey, and take note of all that it employs. A train travels on a set track, the only way a train can leave the track is to be derailed, one is travelling with hundreds of other passengers, with no control over the route, not only are we not in the driving seat, we cannot even see the driver, we can only get on or off at predetermined stations along the way. It is a journey that has little flexibility and over which we have minimal control.

Now consider what happens when we are walking. We are not dependent on anyone else, we walk on our own two feet, we have complete flexibility, we don't have to stick to the main roads, we can wander off into the woods and by-ways, we can stop and start when we want, we are in touch with the earth, grounded, completely independent.

Every component of the dream should be treated with the same detailed amplification. What is the landscape like, what associations do you have to it, is it lush and green, arid and dry, uphill or downhill, safe or unsafe? This is our psychological landscape at present, and the dream is depicting the true state of affairs of how we are experiencing our lives. The time of day too is significant. Night and darkness imply that we are still fairly unconscious of the situation or complex that the dream is highlighting, daytime implies more consciousness. When we have managed to bring a content to consciousness we might dream of a glorious sunrise, the breakthrough of daylight after the dark night of the soul. Rainbows have the same significance, with their promise of healing after the deluge.

It is also important to note our clothing and the shoes we are wearing. Are our clothes

appropriate to the situation, are we taking a country walk in evening clothes and stiletto heels, are we too exposed, or too wrapped up? Clothes represent our *personas*. This is the mask that we present to the world, the role we have in society. A doctor, lawyer, a banker, a singer all have to behave in a way that is in keeping with their occupation. When a person becomes their job or their public face then they are identified with their persona. Their existence can become increasingly artificial, because they are ignoring the rest of their psychic needs. They might now have dreams of being naked in public, to compensate for the fact that they have hidden their true self.

Personas can however also be necessary protection for us when we are feeling too exposed in a situation. Then our dreams might indicate that we need to wear a nice warm coat to protect us from catching a chill by over-exposure.

The personal context of the dreamer's life is crucial to the interpretation of every dream. The unconscious is responding to a particular set of circumstances, situation, relationship, or dilemma. No two lives are the same, but each life has a wealth of concerns, day-to-day variations, tasks in the home and outside. Each psyche too is unique, the sum of the dreamer's personal, ancestral and cultural history. The relationship between the unconscious and the conscious life of an individual is mind-boggling in its quantum complexity. We can honour this richness by continually returning to the personal meaning of the image. Who does a character remind us of? Maybe the clue lies in an item of clothing that we associate with somebody from our past. That person might have held a value for us that we have forgotten. Maybe we left something of ourselves behind at that stage of our lives. Now that attitude can help us to get out of a tricky situation.

The dream is a unique answer to a unique question. Maybe I had fooled myself into a perfectionist way of life. What happened to the part that I have rejected? Maybe the hag in the dream with crooked teeth is the part of myself I ostracized in order to pursue a career, femininity condemned to live outside the pale, grown haggard through neglect. By being embraced, she might turn back into a queen and transform my life.

SYMBOLS IN DREAMS

The images in our dreams exert a magnetic power on our conscious minds. They draw us back again and again, forcing us to immerse ourselves in the image, promising ever -deeper revelations. Dream- images have this fascination because they are symbolic. Jung wrote about symbols:

“I do not mean an allegory or a sign, but an image that describes in the best possible way the dimly discerned nature of the spirit. A symbol does not define or explain; it points beyond itself to a meaning that is darkly divined yet still beyond our grasp, and cannot be adequately expressed in the familiar words of our language”

(Collected Works Volume 8)

Symbols are the best containers of meaning that goes beyond the rational. Rational consciousness can only explore one state or concept at a time, because it is based on an either / or perception. Something is either good or evil, either spiritual or sensuous, either black or white. In our lives, this perception translates into conflicts such as either motherhood or a career, either God or sexuality, either money or creativity, either etc. We are so used to this way of looking at reality that we take it for granted as being the only accurate way. Because of the compensatory nature of the psyche, we find that identification with one extreme or the other eventually lead to an impasse or an intervention of fate which forces us to consider the value of the polar opposite. Then we either try to rigidly protect our habitual way of life, desperately trying to suppress the opposite, or we swing to the other extreme.

For the psyche however, the highest good is wholeness. Gently, it leads us to this end through a transformation of one-sidedness into an ability to take in an increasing amount of opposing values. The more we can be aware of the opposite state to the one that we are in; the more consciousness we can hold. This is because the opposite state does not need to be repressed i.e. become unconscious. Then we are no longer in the grip of complexes that force us to deny one side of our reality. The tremendous energy that that we had needed for this neurotic denial now becomes available for authentic creative activity. In dreams, this release is experienced as healing rainfall on dry land, fountains gushing up, burdens lifting off our backs, the discovery of majestic buildings and new worlds.

The symbols in our dreams are the psyche's tool of transformation. This is because, like the Self, symbols are able to contain opposites. They transcend the either / or dichotomy to an either / and wholeness. The capacity for paradoxical expression gives symbols their richness. Spirituality becomes incarnate in radiant human form; beauty is enlivened by spirituality. A good example would be the Indian god of dance, Shiva Nataraj, whose divine powers of creation incarnate in perfect bodily grace.

Poetry is our best guide in the world of symbols. The best poets use the medium of symbols to explore, define and enlarge consciousness for the same reason that our psyche does.

“The intellect of man is forced to choose” wrote Yeats

“Perfection of the life, or of the work,

And if it take the second must refuse

A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark”.

Yeats' poetry contains some of the finest use of symbols to resolve the conflict of

opposites. Youth and age, reality and artifice, sexuality and God, soul and body were all paradoxes that Yeats was increasingly able to resolve through symbolic expression. The ever-greater depth and intensity that this later poetry acquired is the result of the greater tension of opposites that Yeats was able to hold through increasingly masterful and precise use of symbols. Paradoxically it was precisely the perfection of the work that built for Yeats his heavenly mansion raging in the dark. In "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop" Yeats wrote:

"A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent".

(Collected Poems of W.B Yeats, Macmillan)

Symbols allow poets to juxtapose opposites in a way that surprises us. This element of surprise is crucial to the way symbols work. It is surprise that shocks us out of our state of perceptions into sudden illumination. In dreams this happens when we are skirting around a symbol, drawing on many layers of association that seem fairly predictable. Then suddenly, there is something, so seemingly insignificant that we could have easily have overlooked it. It is the opposite meaning to that we had consciously associated with the symbol. This forgotten aspect of a conflict is the key to transformation. Jung called it the *transcendent function* because it leads us into an absolutely authentic wholeness that is founded on the unique and truthful resolution of a conflict.

THE INTERPRETATION OF A DREAM

To illustrate how symbols work, I would like to use the example of the symbol of the lion as it appeared in a woman's dreams over the course of several years.

Before she entered therapy and since the beginning of her adolescence the dreamer had had the following recurring nightmare:

"I am being chased by a ferocious, growling tiger on the rooftop of the house where I live. I try to flee over the neighbouring rooftops, but I cannot shake the tiger off".

The adolescent dreamer was being pursued by the tremendous instinctual energies of her newly maturing psyche. This energy was so primitive and powerful that her ego (the dream-ego that was fleeing) was no match for it. Consequently, her conscious attitude (the rooftops) was in danger of being devoured. But when the dreamer was asked to describe the condition of the tiger, she described it as "healthy, strong, magnificent", an indication of her healthy instincts. Because the tiger's mouth had been open she was asked about its teeth. She described them as "gleaming fangs". It was these fangs that were the first carriers of the transcendent function for this woman. A detail that she would have preferred to have overlooked because it seemed terrifying, turned out to be the best feature of the tiger. The fangs that could have devoured her were also clean, beautiful and effective - a natural cutting weapon that might one day save her life.

Several years later in the course of her analysis this woman had the following dream:

"I am following a little girl who is skipping along the road to the National Concert Hall. Then I go into my mother's house. The house is empty except for an abandoned little dragon. I take pity on the little dragon and decide I should take it along with me. Then there is a detour and the little girl leads me behind a big building. A huge lion, basking in the sun is lying on the pavement. I realize that in order to get the little girl safely past the lion I have to subdue it. I try to take on an intense leonine energy, growling and snarling at the lion. But I cannot get the better of the lion. Suddenly, I realize that I have to feed the dragon to the lion. I feel desperately sorry for the dragon, but there is no other way. I throw the dragon to the lion, and he begins to slice it into little bits. It is very gruesome and I can hardly bear to watch. But then I realize that the dragon has transformed into a small furry animal, half cat and half owl who sits on a wall in the sunlight happily grooming itself. The lion is content and the little girl and I resume our journey to the National Concert Hall."

The happily skipping little girl is the real self, still young and fragile, but well on her way to wholeness (the National Concert Hall, the place where the nation, the whole of the psyche, can realize the harmonious expression of its spirit). The dream-ego however goes into her mother's house, the mother complex. The tiny dragon is all that remains of the original negative mother-complex. But the dreamer feels sorry for this part of the complex. In fact, she had been constantly seduced into feeling sorry for her mother as a child, for the abandonment that in fact she had experienced, and which led her to a symbolic identification with her mother which was highly destructive because it allowed her mother's psychotic aspect entry into her life.

When a complex manifests as a dragon in a dream it means that it is dangerously unconscious and can swallow us up in external reality too. Other dragon-like and reptilian

creatures have the same psychological significance. Lizards, crocodiles, alligators and snakes often appear in our dreams when an unconscious complex is leading into external danger. Instincts in the grip of complex go wrong. This could be in situations in which we blindly take risks such as in compulsive sexuality. Snakes often represent dangerous oral addictions that would over-power the dreamer such as drugs or alcohol. We might derive a lot of comfort from these but it is an autistic kind of comfort one that leads nowhere, that keeps our psychic energy tied up in a self--enclosed system. This is the meaning of the famous symbol of unconsciousness the uroboros - the energy that feeds upon itself.

But the lion, symbol of the dreamer's instincts is waiting. Jung believed that our instincts when undamaged were our most powerful allies in the process of self--realization or individuation. Animals in our dreams always portray the conditions of our instincts. If the animal is friendly, healthy and well-nourished, it means that our instincts are in a similar state. These instincts have the capacity to restore our real self to us. But if the animal is mutilated, starved or neglected, then we need to see where our unconscious attitudes are damaging our instinctual life. As mentioned in the above paragraph, reptiles symbolize instincts that are very unconscious. The higher up on the evolutionary ladder the animal is, the more available that instinct is to us in a positive way, because we can form a relationship with it and harness its energies.

Gambolling puppies, playful kittens, loving dogs, and leaping dolphins in our dreams by inviting to share their spontaneous energies, leave us healed and refreshed. Cows, and elephants help us to contact the gentle, nurturing, maternal matrix of the unconscious. Horses have been our friends for centuries, putting their tremendous strength and vitality at our disposal. When our way forward in life requires a superhuman effort, our psyche will connect us to the deepest sources of instinctual energy, by manifesting it in our dreams as magnificent horses, champing at the bit.

The lion in the woman's dream is strong and healthy, a symbol of her sound instincts. Previously, her negative mother complex had contaminated her instincts to such an extent that they were merged into one symbol - the tiger with gleaming fangs was also how she experienced her mother's devouring, possessive nature. The dreamer is afraid that this is still the case. But in fact through her psychological work, she has managed to separate the complex from the instincts, and the complex now appears distinct from the lion. This painstaking disentanglement of complexes from instincts Jung termed the *process of differentiation*.

The instincts, free of the complex, are now in the service of the dreamer's psyche. The lion still appears fierce and antagonistic to the dreamer, but only because their communication is still crude. This means that the lion still has to bully and subdue in order to get its needs met. But as their relationship improves, the ego will be more attuned, and the lion less of a brute!

Finally, the dream -ego understands what the lion demands - the sacrifice of the baby dragon, the last bit of the mother -complex. By sacrificing the last of her symbiotic attachment to her mother, the dreamer in fact saves herself from the danger of psychosis (as the raging lion also signifies). Instead of being devoured herself, she is able, through her work on the complex, to save herself and the little girl, and to feed the lion too into the bargain!

Feeding the dragon to the lion means having to make a conscious sacrifice of our

complexes in the external level. Our complexes can manifest in our lives as addictions, compulsions, inertia, or monotonous day-dreaming. Or we might have to relinquish a close parental bond that prevents us from being independent, the sacrifice of an easy-going bachelor existence that encourages rigidity of routine and feeling, the sacrifice of ambition if that ambition is a defence against the messy world of feeling, or a narcissistic lifestyle dedicated to the cult of the beautiful because we cannot bear very much reality.

The lion by slicing up the dragon frees it and creates the transcendent function in this dream this where the transcendent function is to be found in an action that appears bloody and revolting, but in fact was performed voluntarily (i.e. consciously) and will therefore lead to transformation.

The sacrifice of a compulsive attitude is often bloody, in the sense that it releases the effects that were suppressed. But blood is also the stuff of life, just as our psychic blood - our affects and emotions - are. One carries our physical life- force, and the other our psychic one. This is why blood- sacrifices in ancient times were divested with so much meaning. Fortunately, we do not have to act out these sacrifices any more, but can perform them symbolically.

The lion's energy now in the service of the psyche efficiently cuts through the dreamer's negative mother complex and transforms the femininity that the dreamer had experienced as a dragon - cold-blooded, devouring, and scaly, into a femininity that is warm-blooded, furry and mammalian.

Half owl, half cat, the dreamer now has access to these aspects of the feminine in herself. The owl has traditionally been associated with female wisdom, often portrayed perched on the shoulder of a witch. Moreover, it is a bird that piercing vision in the dark i.e. the unconscious, where it swiftly hunts rodents and keeps the fields clear of contamination. The cat has for centuries been worshipped or persecuted, because it holds the meaning of an independent femininity at one with its instinctual roots. Cats have always retained their ability to survive in the wild, and the relationship they have with the man-made world is very much on their own terms. This is the reason why cats make people uneasy. When we say that cats are selfish and unloving we are really saying that we cannot bear our lack of control over them. It is precisely the qualities which the cat represents that a woman needs in order to live a life grounded in an authentic feminine identity.

The big cat in the dream is one of the richest symbols to be found in world culture. It holds together the opposites of masculine and feminine energies, of conscious and unconscious. That is why it is king of the jungle, ruling over all animals because of its superior strength, courages and most of all because of its own confidence in its own regality. Master of the natural world as well as its own nature, for thousands of years' lions have been the chosen symbols of kings and princes.

For the dreamer this archetypal symbol affirms that she has the inner strength for tackling a dangerous complex. Due to outer and inner necessity, we do not always have the resources for this task. The psyche is so delicate and complex a matter that we can easily injure it if we prematurely engage the unconscious. For this reason, artificial techniques of opening the psyche are highly destructive to its balance. Dreams are our most infallible guide in the work of transformation - they respect our subjective reality, allow us to progress at our own pace, and employ a whole system of reality checks and balances for the therapist and client. Jung wrote:

“Together the patient and I address ourselves to the 2,000,000--year--old man that is in all of us. In the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, with the age-old unforgotten wisdom stored up in us. And where do we make contact with this old man in us? In our dreams.”

(Collected Works, Volume 10)

Dream- images of wrong turnings, going the wrong way on the streets, dangerous crashes warn the therapist that the psychic journey too might be heading in the wrong direction. Devastated buildings, houses with no centre, people with missing organs, and explosions signify that the dreamer is not capable of facing the unconscious and the therapist should then quickly seal off that area. Only when an equally powerful positive symbol appears do we know that the psyche can provide the necessary antidote to the danger.

Like our relationship to external reality, our relationship to the unconscious can be either destructive or creative. Jung stressed that in order to individuate we need to disidentify both from the collective conscious and the collective unconscious. Blindly identifying with the world or with the unconscious can propel us towards disaster. It is only when we can make a conscious relationship with the unconscious that we can safely something its treasures. This means constantly having to hold an objective standpoint outside the unconscious, creating a point of reference that is outside the complexes we are trying to explore.

Creating this objective space outside ourselves is like being handed the shield of Perseus. Perseus undertook to slay the Gorgon, the goddess who was so terrifying to behold that her gaze turned people to stone. He was aided by Athene, the goddess of wisdom who gave him a shield, instructing Perseus not to look at the Gorgon, but to see only her reflection in his bright shield. Perseus was now able to outwit the gorgon and cut off her head. The shield is a symbol of our capacity for objective self--reflection, with which we can free ourselves from the petrifying spell of our complexes.

This capacity for consciousness has to be painfully won by owning our conflicts and shadow -areas instead of denying them and projecting them outside. This requires engagement with that which is darkest and most hidden in ourselves. We first encounter this engagement through our dreams, but then the insights we gain through dreams have to be honoured in reality. This would mean consciously supporting an insight in our day to day existence, by giving it time, attention and by ringing the changes.

Conversely, the unconscious benefits by having a relationship with reality. By constantly having this external touchstone, the psyche is able to modify and balance its needs in terms of outer reality. Outer reality is then able to provide a dynamic structure within which the unconscious can safely function. It does this by making us aware that we are not an island but share the human condition, that others have legitimate demands on us, by setting boundaries through realistic acceptance of our limitations. This guards us from dangerous inflations which identification with unconscious contents leads to such as mis-guided Messiah or Saviour-complex. In this way reality too keeps us sane.

This creative interplay between the demands of our outer reality and the inner psyche slowly builds an ethical container for our psyches and lives. Unlike attitudes and values based on the collective, this personal container allows to hold our unique conflicts and paradoxes, to endure the creative tension of opposites in ourselves without recourse to

denial or projection. Our dreams give us symbols of containers as a heartening acknowledgement of the hard work accomplished on the conscious level. Vases, purses, bags, jugs, underwear, chests of drawers, goblets, chalices, cooking pots, small boats, are all symbols of new personal containers.

Like the horn of a unicorn, our psychic containers can absorb all our poisons, keeping us uncontaminated because the poisoned feelings and attitudes are constantly processed. When we can process our poison we no longer need to project it, and this acceptance of individual responsibility Jung regarded as the basis for true morality. This morality does not leave black holes of denial through which evil is sucked into our world, but through leonine engagement with our own evil, helps to create a psychic space where God can enter. This psychic space is symbolized in in our dreams through images of wholeness - beautiful gardens, glorious gems, flowers, fish, the divine child, the coniunctio (the royal marriage) of sun and moon and the king and queen, the heavenly city, patterns and spaces in which order radiates out in perfect symmetry from the core. These images are mandalas symbols of the Self, the God -Image within us all.

As well as numinous archetypal symbols, the self can also manifest in our dreams through personal symbols, which can be even more meaningful to the dreamer because of their poignancy: a sparrow, a robin red-breast, a daisy, a cornflower, a beetle, a piece of bread, a clay figurine in our dreams all move us because they express the struggle of the fledgling soul to incarnate its Godhead in daily, humble existence.

Patrick Kavanagh celebrated this beautifully when he wrote in “Kerr’s Ass” about the “world (that) comes to life:

Morning, the silent bog,
And the God of imagination waking
In a Mucker fog.”

(from Collected Poems, by Patrick Kavanagh published by Martin, Brian and O’Keeffe, London).

Perhaps our dreams too capture that moment of supreme poetry when the soul first awakens to the miracle of its own creation.