

## **Towards a Kabbalistic Psychology: C. G. Jung and the Jewish Foundations of Alchemy**

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In October 1935, over a year after Erich Neumann had emigrated from Germany to Palestine, Neumann wrote Jung about his fear that his absorption in Jungian psychology would place him in "danger of betrayal to [his] own Jewish foundations." Neumann further wrote of his realization that analytical psychology "stands on its own ground...Switzerland, Germany, the West, Christianity," and that Jewish individuation must be based "on our own archetypal collective foundations which are different because we are Jews" (Neumann, M., 1991, p. 280). Jung in his response wrote that analytical psychology "has its roots deep in Europe, in the Christian Middle Ages, and ultimately in Greek philosophy," adding, "the connecting-link I was missing for so long has now been found, and it is alchemy" (Jung, 1973, vol. 1, p. 206). Neither Neumann nor Jung would allow that analytical psychology as it then stood was rooted in anything Jewish, a fact that was troubling to Neumann, who had thought of Jung as his spiritual teacher (Neumann, M., 1991, p. 279), but who chided Jung for "lacking knowledge and understanding of Judaism."

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Although later in his life Jung was more than happy to acknowledge Jewish, specifically Jewish-mystical, precursors to his own work (Jung, 1977, pp. 271-2), during the 1930s, at a time when he sought to distinguish analytical psychology from the “Jewish” psychologies of Freud and Adler, Jung was unlikely to acknowledge any Jewish sources of his own thinking. There is a certain irony here, because what Jung failed to realize, or mention, at the time of his letter to Neumann (though he would later openly acknowledge it) was that alchemy, the “connecting-link” to analytical psychology, was itself imbued with Jewish mystical symbols and ideas.

Around the time of his letter to Neumann, Jung was speaking pejoratively about Freud and Adler’s “Jewish” psychologies, which on Jung’s view were inapplicable to the “Aryan” mind. In 1934 Jung wrote, “It has been a grave error in medical psychology up till now to apply Jewish categories... indiscriminately to Germanic and Slavic Christendom” (1970/1934, p. 165). In that same year in a letter to Kranefeldt, Jung wrote, “The Arian [*sic*] people can point out that with Freud and Adler specifically Jewish points of view were publicly preached, and, as can be proven likewise, points of view that have an essentially corrosive [*zersetzend*] character” (Maidenbaum & Martin, 1991, p. 377).<sup>1</sup> Earlier Jung had argued that Freud and Adler reduce the psyche to the sexual and power drives and that while such reductions give a certain (compensatory) satisfaction to the Jew, “these specifically Jewish doctrines are totally unsatisfactory to the Germanic mentality” (1964/1918, pp. 14-15).<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I argue that at a time when he was railing against “Jewish psychology,” Jung, by uncovering the psychological “gold” that lay buried in the pseudochemical formulations of the alchemists, was actually reconstituting the Jewish mystical themes that served as the spiritual foundation for alchemy. This is one reason why when Jung turned directly to the Kabbalistic sources, he found an important precursor and support for his own thoughts (Jung, 1973, vol. 2, p. 157). In making my argument I will appeal directly to Jung’s own writings but also to those of such scholars as Patai (1994) and Suler (1972), who have painstakingly demonstrated the Jewish-mystical sources of alchemical ideas.

I have argued elsewhere (Drob, 1999, 2000a) that prior to and even after World War II Jung suppressed the Jewish-mystical roots of much of his thinking, claiming to have first *discovered* the very significant correspondence between his views and those of the Kabbalah in 1954 (Jung, 1973, vol. 2, p. 157). In spite of a pretense to have been largely ignorant of Jewish mysticism prior to the 1950s, Jung had considerable familiarity with the Kabbalah prior to and during World War II, and this familiarity, particularly with Knorr von Rosenroth's 3000-page Latin compilation of Kabbalistic texts, impacted significantly on his thinking at a time when he would have been embarrassed by any connection to Judaism. Here I will extend my argument by demonstrating that in extracting the psychological core of alchemy, Jung was in effect reconstituting Jewish-mystical ideas that had earlier been assimilated by the alchemists themselves.

### **Jung's Understanding of the Impact of Kabbalah on Alchemy**

It is well known that Jung's interest in alchemy consumed him for the last thirty years of his life. Most of his writings in the 1940s and 1950s are concerned, in one way or another, with alchemical themes, and it is fair to say that the most mature developments in his thinking regarding such topics as the Self, the coincidence of opposites, and the archetypes of the collective unconscious came about as a result of meditations upon alchemical texts and ideas. Jung held that the pseudo-chemical language and goals of the alchemists concealed, and were indeed symbolic of, spiritual and, moreover, depth-psychological principles and themes. In his investigations of alchemical texts, Jung sought to uncover what he understood to be the psychological principles that the alchemists projected into their chemical and metallurgical formulas.

By the time Jung wrote *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, he was well aware of the strong relationship that had developed between the Kabbalah and later alchemy, and he often spoke of specific Kabbalistic influences upon the alchemists. "Directly or indirectly," Jung writes, "the Cabala [Jung's spelling] was assimilated into alchemy. Relationships must have existed between them at a very early date, though it is difficult to trace

them in the sources" (1963/1955-6, p. 24). Further, in a discussion of the symbol of the "Primordial Man," Jung tells us that "traces of cabalistic tradition are frequently noticeable in the alchemical treatises from the sixteenth century on" (pp. 384-5). Jung informs us that by that time the alchemists began making direct quotations from the classic Kabbalistic text, the *Zohar*. For example, Jung quotes the alchemist Blasius Vigenerus (1523-1596) who had borrowed the *Zohar*'s comparison of the feminine *Sefirah Malchut* with the moon turning its face from the intelligible things of heaven (p. 24). Jung notes that the alchemists Vigenerus and Knorr von Rosenroth had related the alchemical notion of the *lapis* or philosopher's stone to certain passages in the *Zohar* which had interpreted verses in the books of Genesis (28:22), Job (38:6), and Isaiah (28:16) as referring to a stone with essential, divine, and transformative powers (pp. 446-7).

Jung takes an interest in the Kabbalistic symbol of Adam Kadmon (Primordial Man), and references a number of alchemists, who made extensive use of this symbol (1963/1955-6, pp. 50, 383, 394, 411, 420, 424, 431; 1968/1944, p. 319). Jung points out that in these texts "the alchemists...equate Mercurius and the Philosopher's Stone with the Primordial Man of the Kabbalah" (1963/1955-6, p. 383). It is significant that in exploring the Primal Anthropos, which he calls "the essential core of the great religions," Jung works his way through its material representation in alchemy as the "stone," to the quasi-physical spiritual entity "Mercurius," to its purely spiritual and, moreover, psychological representation in the Kabbalah as Adam Kadmon. This is an example of what I mean by Jung extracting the spiritual/Kabbalistic "gold" out of the material practice of alchemy. In this context, we should note that Jung references Isaac Luria's view that every psychic quality is attributable to Adam (1963/1955-6, p. 390), quoting Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin translation of Luria's text and stating that he is indebted to Gershom Scholem for an "interpretive translation," presumably from the Hebrew (p. 390n).

Jung notes that Paracelsus had introduced the sapphire as an "arcanum" into alchemy from the Kabbalah (1963/1955-6, p. 448). Jung took a lively interest in two Kabbalists, Knorr

von Rosenroth and Khunrath, who composed entire treatises on the Kabbala, as well as on other alchemists, e.g., Dorn Lully, who had been heavily influenced by Kabbalistic ideas (1963/1955-6, 1968, 1968/1944). The symbol of the “sparks” (or “scintillae”), which was to become a key element in the Lurianic Kabbalah, is present in their work, where it is provided a this-worldly Kabbalistic (as opposed to other-worldly or Gnostic) interpretation. Jung (1963/1955-6) points out, for example, that Dorn held that wisdom is an awareness of the “spark of (God’s) light,” which is an “invisible sun” (p. 54), the equivalent to the image of God within man. Khunrath, who wrote at a time when the Lurianic Kabbalah was rapidly spreading across Europe, held that “there are...fiery sparks of the World-Soul...dispersed or scattered at God’s command in and through the fabric of the great world into all fruits of the elements everywhere” (p. 55), a quintessentially Kabbalistic idea that Jung interpreted as a “projection of the multiple luminosity of the unconscious” (p. 55n).

### **Kabbalah as the Spiritual Foundation of Alchemy**

While Jung was clearly aware of the impact of Kabbalah upon alchemy, more recent scholarship has provided further support for the idea that the spiritual aspects of alchemy, those which interested Jung, were to a very large extent Jewish in origin (Patai, 1994; cf. Suler, 1972). In this regard, Raphael Patai has provided an invaluable service in collating and presenting many of the Jewish alchemical sources and in tracing the influence of Jewish alchemy amongst the Christian alchemists.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, Jung’s own view that alchemy is essentially a spiritual/psychological, rather than a purely material, discipline appears to have originated in Jewish sources. The Egyptian Hellenistic Jewess, Maria the Prophetess, who is regarded by Zosimos (third century) to be the founder of alchemy (and by modern scholarship to be amongst its earliest practitioners), viewed the alchemical work as fundamentally a process through which the adept attains spiritual perfection (Patai, 1994, p. 3; cf. Idel, 2000).<sup>4</sup> According to Maria, the various metals in the alchemical work are symbols of aspects of humanity. Her famous maxim “Join the male and the female and you

will find what is sought" (Patai, 1994, p. 66), anticipates Jung's interpretation that alchemy provides the feminine background of the masculine psyche. Later we will see that this very "Jungian" view of the human psyche is deeply Kabbalistic.

Centuries later, Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1601), an alchemist who is cited in many of Jung's works, was influenced deeply by the Kabbalah in his view that the alchemical opus reflects a mystical transformation within the adept's soul (Patai, 1994, p. 3). Khunrath, whose highly influential compendium, *Amphiteatrum sapientiae* (1602), is illustrated with Kabbalistic symbols, including an elaborate depiction of the ten *Sefirot*, held that the alchemical "philosopher's stone" is equivalent to the spirit of God, *ha-Ruach Elohim*, that hovered over the waters at the time of creation (Patai, 1994, p. 157). According to Patai, "Under the impact of the Kabbalah and its gematria the medieval alchemical tradition underwent a noticeable change, and became during the Renaissance a more mystically and religiously oriented discipline" (p. 522).

We are only now becoming aware of the extensive influence of Jewish mystical sources on the history and direction of alchemy. Indeed, alchemy was already linked to the Kabbalah in the Middle Ages, and Jewish mystical ideas are evident in an alchemical manuscript dating from the eleventh-century, *Solomon's Labyrinth* (Suler, 1972, p. 546). Patai marshals evidence that the alchemical works attributed to the theologian and missionary Raymund Lully (ca. 1234-1315), who is often quoted by Jung, were actually composed by a Marrano Jew, Raymond De Tarregga, probably several decades after Lully's death (Patai, 1994, pp. 175ff.).<sup>5</sup> Tarregga, like other Jewish alchemists, maintained a special interest in the medical applications of his art, and applied alchemical principles to the cure of melancholy and possession, taking a rather psychological view of these afflictions. In his work on demonology Tarregga held that demons come to possess men because they are attracted to their ill humour, melancholy, and their "horrible images in fantasy." According to Tarregga, by treating the possessed's melancholy with the alchemical *quinta essentia* (the fifth essence) and other medicines the patient will be freed from the demons because he no longer provides a psychological envi-

ronment hospitable to them (Patai, 1994, p. 201). Interestingly, Tarregga was accused by the ecclesiastical authorities of holding the heretical belief that the sinner conforms to the will of God, for "good and evil please God equally" (p. 186).

Paracelsus (1493-1541), an alchemist whom Jung held in high regard, and about whom Jung devoted an entire work ("Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," CW 13) was of the opinion that expert knowledge of the Kabbalah was a prerequisite for the study of alchemy (Suler, 1972, p. 544). His teacher Solomon Trismosin, six of whose alchemical illustrations adorn Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (1968/1944, figs. 32, 95, 112, 134, 166, 219), claimed that he drew his teachings from Kabbalistic sources which had been translated into Arabic, and which he had acquired during his travels to the south and east (Suler, 1972, p. 544; Patai, 1994, p. 268).

By the close of the fifteenth century a number of Christian scholars had written works in Latin which made the doctrines of the Kabbalah readily accessible to the Christian alchemists (Patai, 1994, p. 154). Amongst these scholars were Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522; see Reuchlin, 1993/1577), Pietro Galatinus (1460-1540), and Pico della Mirandola (1463-1522) (cf. Jung, 1963/1955-6, p. 411). Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo (ca. 1465-1532) translated significant portions of the Zohar and other Kabbalistic works into Latin and even composed his own work on the *Sefirot*. While Jung (1963/1955-6) had noted that Reuchlin and Mirandola had made the Kabbalah accessible in Latin translation, Phillip Beitchman (1998) has recently documented the wide impact and prevalence of the Kabbalah on thought during the Renaissance and later, and has collated numerous works in Latin and several European languages through which the alchemists and others not versed in Hebrew and Aramaic were able to absorb Kabbalistic ideas. The Kabbalistic writings of the sixteenth-century monk Giordano Bruno were particularly noteworthy in this regard (Silvia De Leon-Jones, 1997).

For the alchemists, the Kabbalistic doctrine of the *Sefirot* provided a theosophical justification for their belief in the infinite malleability and underlying unity of all things. In the Kabbalah, the *Sefirot*, the ten divine traits that serve as the

archetypes for, and thus bring a unity to, all things, are in constant flux, breaking apart, being emended and restored, all for the purpose of reestablishing divine unity. In the Kabbalistic doctrines of the *Sefirot* and *Gematria* (the view that words and thus things are transformable and equivalent by virtue of the arithmetical properties of their letters) the alchemists saw a vehicle for explaining and rationalizing such transformations (Patai, 1994, p. 154).<sup>6</sup>

The notion that Hebrew letters and words concealed within themselves an indefinite variety of secrets, meanings, and associations intrigued the alchemists, who saw in this aspect of the Kabbalah an underlying rationale for their own worldview. As a result, the Christian alchemists became intrigued with the Hebrew alphabet and, according to Patai (1994), "from about the fifteenth century on, there was scarcely an alchemical book or treatise written by Christian alchemists that did not display conspicuously some Hebrew power-words on the title page or inside the text" (p. 156). Patai points to Heinrich Khunrath as a striking example of this tendency. Khunrath, in his *Amphitheatrum sapientiae*, one of the most widely read alchemical compendiums, not only equates the alchemical philosophers' stone with the *Ruach Elohim* (Spirit of God) that hovered over the waters at creation but illustrates his volume with an impressive "World of the spheres" that encompasses not only the ten *Sefirot* and twenty-two Hebrew letters (which according to the Kabbalists are the primary elements of creation) but also a wide variety of other Hebrew inscriptions of Jewish religious significance (pp. 156-7).

We thus find that a "Kabbalistic alchemy" developed not amongst Jewish alchemists but among their non-Jewish counterparts (p. 155). The Christian alchemist-Kabbalists endeavoured to learn Hebrew, and they sought out Jewish spiritual mentors from whom they could learn the mysteries of Kabbalah and *Gematria* as a means of attaining the highest alchemical art and knowledge (p. 519).

The Kabbalah provided the alchemists with a spiritual and metaphysical foundation for their view that there was just one basic substance in the universe, the so-called *prima materia*, which took on a multitude of manifestations and forms. The



alchemists were intrigued by such Kabbalistic doctrines as the notion that *Ein-sof* inheres and sustains all things and that all the multifarious objects in the universe are comprised of the ten *Sefirot*, which are themselves comprised of one another. By joining itself to the Kabbalah, alchemy not only developed a rationale for its material enterprise but developed itself as spiritual discipline. It is this spiritual aspect which is exploited by Jung in his psychological interpretation of alchemy.

A review of Jung's works on alchemy reveals that many of the alchemists he discusses were Jews, Christians posing as Jews in order to give their works "authenticity," or Christians who openly acknowledged their debt to Kabbalistic sources. For example, Gerhard Dorn, whom Jung cites dozens of times throughout his later works, wrote an alchemical commentary on the opening verses of the Book of Genesis (Patai, 1994, p. 18), spoke of Adam as the "invisibilus homo maximus" (Jung, 1963/1955-6, p. 383n)—an allusion to the Kabbalistic doctrine of Adam Kadmon—and held that the legendary patriarch of alchemy, Hermes Trismegistus, though Egyptian, was taught by the "Genesis of the Hebrews" (Patai, 1994, p. 18).

Like many of the alchemists, Jung was aware of the correspondence between the alchemists' *chymical* marriage—of sun and moon, gold and silver, spirit and body, king and queen—and conjugal unifications of the various *Sefirot* and *Partzufim* that are central themes in the Kabbalah. Jung himself had Kabbalistic visions (Jung, 1961, p. 289) that illustrated these themes and that he interpreted as exemplifying the coincidence of opposites—e.g., animus and anima—which he held to be requisite for the unification and individuation of the self. Whether or not the alchemists actually derived their "wedding symbolism" from the Kabbalists, it is clear that in its encounter with the Kabbalah alchemy attained a new spiritual interpretation of these symbols. Alchemical metaphors with only latent spiritual and psychological overtones became rooted in an established spiritual/psychological discipline once alchemy had incorporated the Kabbalah. According to Patai (1994),

the Kabbalah supplied the alchemists with a quasi sanctification of their views by opening up to them the doctrine of the cosmological struc-

ture of the sefirot, which taught them that not only the hidden essence of materia but even the divine unity itself was expressed in multiple mystical manifestations. (p. 160)

Patai points out that amongst Jewish alchemists alchemy occupied a middle position between philosophy and medicine (p. 517), and the Jewish search for the philosopher's stone was often more closely associated with healing the sick than in obtaining earthly wealth (p. 520). In this sense the Jewish alchemists approximated Jung's therapeutic use of alchemical symbols and ideas.

### **The Jewish Alchemists: Abraham Eleazar and *Esh M'saref* (The Refiner's Fire)**

Patai describes the work of the Jewish alchemist, Abraham Eleazar, whose *Uraltes Chymisches Werck* (Age-Old Chymical Work) is referred to several times by Jung in the *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963/1955-6, pp. 157, 251, 410ff., 446, 451) and which Jung regarded as the work of a Christian posing as a Jew (Patai, 1994, p. 240). However, according to Patai, Eleazar's is the most "Jewish" alchemical treatise in existence (p. 239). The author is unknown except for this work, which was first printed in 1735. According to Patai, the content of the work likely goes back to an earlier Jewish thirteenth-century alchemist. Patai describes *Uraltes Chymisches Werck* as "mysticism clothed in alchemical garb" (p. 246). It is a work that essentially concerns itself with the healing and consolation of the Jewish people, and a fervent religious, nationalistic, and "Zionistic" spirit pervades the work. Eleazar focuses at length on the "supernal serpent," which signifies the *mundi universalem*, the universal world spirit, and which he describes as "the most lovely and also the most terrible, who makes everything live, and who also kills everything, and takes on all shapes of nature. In sum: he is everything, and also nothing" (p. 253). This description, which is remarkably similar to both Gnostic descriptions of the pleroma and Kabbalistic descriptions of the infinite godhead, Ein-sof, is an exceptional example of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, which, according to Jung, is the essential characteristic of the

human psyche. It is also an example of how Kabbalistic/mystical ideas came to permeate alchemical treatises.

Jung drew extensively from Eleazar's writings; twice in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* quoting a lengthy passage from the *Uraltes Chymisches* which makes reference to the Kabbalistic doctrine of the sparks (1963/1955-6, p. 50) and Adam Kadmon (p. 410ff.). Jung interprets Eleazar's account of the Talmudic story in which God prevents the mating of the Leviathan serpents (lest their union destroy the world) as symbolic of a premature, unconscious, and hence dangerous integration of the masculine and feminine aspects of the Self (p. 251 and note), and he refers to Eleazar's description of the "King and Queen perishing in the same bath" as an example of spirit and soul (*anima*) dissolving in the unity of the Self (p. 379).

Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) discussed the relationship between alchemy, astrology, and the Kabbalah in a work entitled *De Occulta Philosophia* (printed in 1533 but written ca. 1510). In this work Agrippa drew a connection first between the planets and the Kabbalistic *Sefirot*, and then between the planets and the astrologers' metals (Patai, 1994, p. 154). Shortly thereafter there appeared a work by an unknown Jewish alchemist which provided a direct one-to-one correspondence between the metals and the *Sefirot*. This work, entitled *Esh M'saref* (The Refiner's Fire), is known to us only through a Latin translation of major sections which Knorr von Ronsenroth included in the first volume of his *Kabbala denudata* (The Kabbalah Uncovered, 1677-84), a book with which Jung was quite familiar (Kirsch, 1991).<sup>7</sup>

Like other Jewish alchemists the author of *Esh M'saref* viewed alchemy on the analogy with medicine, as a process of healing degenerate or impure metallic substances. Further, the author held that the secrets of alchemy "do not differ from the supernal mysteries of the Kabbalah" (Patai, 1994, p. 323). The various metals, because they are essentially impure, correspond to the heavenly *Sefirot* as they are manifest in the lowest, and hence most degenerate, world of the Kabbalah, that of *Assiyah*, the world of "Action." *Keter*, the highest *Sefirah*, is regarded as the "Metallic Root," the origin of all other metals; lead is equivalent to the *Sefirah Chochmah* (Wisdom); tin to *Binah* (Intelligence);

silver to *Chesed* (Kindness); gold to *Gevurah* (Strength); iron to *Tiferet* (Beauty); down to quicksilver, which is said to be equivalent to the ninth *Sefirah*, *Yesod* (Foundation). The final *Sefirah*, *Malchut* (Kingdom) is “the true medicine of metals...it represents the rest of the natures under the metamorphosis of both gold and silver, right and left, judgment and mercy” (Patai, 1994, p. 324; cf. Schwartz, 2000, pp. 86-7). The transformation of metals is conceived in this work on the analogy of the Kabbalistic elevation of the *Sefirot*, and hence *Esh M'saref* provides a genuine theoretical blending of Kabbalistic and alchemical theory.

By the time Knorr von Rosenroth published selections from *Esh M'saref* in his Latin compendium of Kabbalistic texts in Sulzberg in 1677, alchemy had taken a Jewish mystical turn. For many alchemists of the seventeenth century and later, alchemy had actually become synonymous with the Kabbalah (Suler, 1972, p. 544). Many adopted the Kabbalistic theories of the *Sefirot*, *Gematria* (numerology), and letter combinations, inscribing Hebrew characters in their vessels, on the belief that such letters would facilitate the combining of metals (p. 545). In certain alchemical writings the transformative alchemist's stone (the lapis) is represented by a *Magen David* enclosed in a circle. For the alchemists, the two triangles comprising the *Magen David* represented the primal elements of fire and water (in Hebrew, *Esh* and *Mayim*), which when combined form the Hebrew word for heaven (*SheMayim*), and the circle alluded to Ein-sof (the Infinite God) (p. 546). The alchemists believed that by combining fire and water they could extract “Mercurius” and thereby obtain the mysterious spiritual substance which they believed to be equivalent to the prima materia, Adam and Christ, and which, for Jung (1968/1942/1948, p. 196) is the *principium individuationis* of the Self.

### Alchemical References in Kabbalistic Texts

Although the main direction of influence was from the Kabbalah to alchemy, certain Kabbalists took a lively interest in, and were influenced by, alchemy, and the Zohar and other Kabbalistic writings occasionally made reference to alchemical ideas in order to illustrate mystical, religious themes (Patai, 1994, pp. 161-9). For example, in the Zohar (2:23b-24a) we read:

The first four elements have a deep significance for the faithful: they are the progenitors of all the worlds, and symbolize the mystery of the Supernal Chariot of Holiness. Also [from] the four elements of fire, air, earth and water...come gold, silver, copper, and iron, and beneath these other metals of a like kind...North brings forth gold, which is produced by the side of fire-power...When water is united with earth, the cold and moist brings forth silver." (Sperling & Simon, 1931-34, vol. 3, pp. 79-80)

The presence of alchemical terminology in works of the Kabbalah, and the specific prescriptions for making gold in works of "practical Kabbalah," gave both Jewish and Christian alchemists a certain Jewish mystical warrant for alchemical beliefs and practices.

The Kabbalists' efforts to create a *Golem* (an artificial man, see Idel [1990]) can be understood as a parallel to the alchemists' efforts to derive Mercurius, and in so doing create a Primordial Adam. Interestingly, Paracelsus was himself concerned with the alchemical creation of a homunculus, which certain scholars equate with the Kabbalists' Golem (Suler, 1972, p. 543; however, Idel, 1990, p. 186, holds that the two notions are not historically or integrally connected). The creation of an artificial man, perhaps even more so than the alchemists' efforts to create gold, can be understood, in Jungian terms, as an attempt to forge a self, and is therefore deserving of close attention by Jungian psychologists. The fact that the Kabbalists conceived of the Golem as being created through the permutations and combinations of Hebrew letters reinforces the parallels between the Golem and the Self. This is because the Self, too, is on many levels a construction of language. Idel (1990), in his work on the Golem, goes too far when he says "it was the linguistic alchemy which interested the Jews, not the metallurgic or organic ones" (p. 186), but it is no exaggeration to hold that the letter combinations of the Kabbalah, no less than the chemical operations of alchemy, mirror important psychological dynamics.

Idel's view that Jews were not interested in "metallurgic" alchemy is belied by the fact that Chayyim Vital (1542-

1620), the foremost disciple of the Kabbalist Isaac Luria and the man to whom much of our knowledge of Luria's Kabbalistic system is due, was steeped in its study and wrote a manuscript with practical recipes involving the creation and improvement of gold (Patia, 1994, pp. 34-64). Vital was dissuaded from engaging in alchemy during the two years he had contact with Luria, but returned to it after Luria's death (p. 341). His interest in alchemy, however, was purely technical, and he wrote about alchemy without making the least reference to his mystical writings and ideas. Vital somehow managed to ignore or otherwise remain unconscious of the parallels between the earthly combinations and transformations of alchemy and the cosmic unifications and transformations amongst the *Sefirot* and worlds he was describing in his Kabbalistic texts. It is as if in his alchemical work Vital had an opportunity to unconsciously act out the very transformative forms of thought which occupied him in his study of the Kabbalah.

While Kabbalistic texts occasionally incorporated alchemical ideas, and certain Kabbalists engaged directly in alchemy, the main direction of influence was from the Kabbalah to alchemy, and this influence helped propel alchemy from being a protoscience to a spiritual (and psychological) discipline. Jung's interest in alchemy is, of course, in its mystical and psychological aspects, and he focused upon those of its elements that were most compatible and assimilable to Kabbalistic ideas: the alchemical unification of opposites, the divine wedding, Primordial Man (Adam Kadmon), the scintillae (or sparks), and *solve et coagula* (fragmentation and restoration). All of these ideas appears in the alchemical texts Jung studied, and all were either rooted in or assimilated to Kabbalistic equivalents, which provided their spiritual (and psychological) foundations.

### Kabbalah and the Coniunctio Symbolism

Here, I can only examine one of these symbols in any depth—the symbol of the “divine wedding”—which Jung developed as a major theme in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* and which, interestingly, formed the basis of certain visions that Jung experienced in 1944 and that he later described as “the most tremendous things I have ever experienced” (Jung 1961, p. 289).<sup>8</sup> An

examination of Jung's treatment of this theme will suggest how close Jung was to developing a Kabbalistic psychology.

Jung made prolific use of the alchemical symbols of the divine *coniunctio*, wedding, or sexual intercourse as a symbol of the coincidence or union of opposites (anima and animus, persona and shadow) that is necessary for the realization of a complete self. In "The Psychology of Transference" Jung (1966/1946) writes, "The *coniunctio* is an *a priori* image that occupies a prominent place in the history of man's mental development." According to Jung, "If we trace this idea back we find it has two sources in alchemy, one Christian, the other pagan. The Christian source is unmistakably the doctrine of Christ and the Church, sponsus and sponsa, where Christ takes the role of Sol and the Church that of Luna. The pagan source is on the one hand the hieros-gamos, on the other hand the marital union of the mystic with God" (p. 169).

No mention is made in this 1946 article of the profound impact that the Kabbalistic doctrines of the divine wedding and the dialectical coincidence of opposites, which are major themes in the Zohar, had upon alchemy. Interestingly, in the visions which Jung experienced after his near fatal heart attack in 1944, the Kabbalah *coniunctio* material is given priority:

Everything around me seemed enchanted. At this hour of the night the nurse brought me some food she had warmed...For a time it seemed to me that she was an old Jewish woman, much older than she actually was, and that she was preparing ritual kosher dishes for me. When I looked at her, she seemed to have a blue halo around her head. I myself was, so it seemed, in the Pardes Rimmonim, the garden of pomegranates, and the wedding of Tifereth with Malchuth<sup>9</sup> was taking place. Or else I was Rabbi Simon ben Jochai,<sup>10</sup> whose wedding in the afterlife was being celebrated. It was the mystic marriage as it appears in the Cabbalistic tradition. I cannot tell you how wonderful it was. I could only think continually, "Now this is the garden of pomegranates! Now this is the marriage of Malchuth with Tifereth!" I do not know exactly what part I

played in it. At bottom it was I myself: I was the marriage. And my beatitude was that of a blissful wedding. (Jung, 1961, p. 294)

In these visions, Jung *first* sees himself as the divine wedding between the Kabbalistic *Sefirot Tifereth* and *Malchuth*, and only *later* in Christian terms as “the Marriage of the Lamb” in Jerusalem and as “All-father Zeus consummated the mystic marriage, as it is described in the Iliad” (ibid.).

Later in his career, Jung openly acknowledged the importance of the sexual and gender symbolism in the Kabbalah (Jung, 1973, vol. 1, p. 356; vol. 2, p. 292), and he occasionally cited examples in which Kabbalistic symbols were quoted or adapted by the alchemists Knorr von Rosenroth (Jung, 1963/1955-6, p. 22) and Vignierius (pp. 24, 96). In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung (1963/1955-6) discusses at length an alchemical text by Abraham Eleazar in which Kabbalistic unifications are elucidated (pp. 432-45), and he even takes a lively interest in this Kabbalistic symbolism independent of any relationship to alchemy, citing the Mueller (German) translation of the Zohar (p. 23) quotations from the Zohar in Knorr’s *Kabbalah Denudata* (p. 442) and even the writings of Gershom Scholem (ibid.). For example, in discussing the *Sefirah Malchut*, which as the widow *shekhinah* was abandoned by the *Sefirah Tifereth*, Jung writes,

In this wicked world ruled by evil Tifereth is not united with Malchuth. But the coming Messiah will reunite the King with the Queen, and this mating will restore to God his original unity. ( p. 23)

Jung continues with further commentary and quotation from a German translation of the Zohar:

The Cabala develops an elaborate hierosgamos fantasy which expatiates on the union of the soul with the Sefiroth of the worlds of light and darkness, “for the desire of the upper world for the God-fearing man is as the loving desire of a man for his wife while he woos her.” (ibid.)



According to the Zohar and later Kabbalists, those unifications, such as incest, which are forbidden on earth are permitted, even necessary, on the cosmic level in order to restore the divine order. In *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* we read:

In the world above there is no “nakedness,” division, separation or disunion. Therefore in the world above there is union of brother and sister, son and daughter. (Tishby & Lachower, 1989, vol. 3, p. 1369)

A similar idea makes a later appearance in alchemy. Jung (1963/1955-6) notes that in contrast to Christianity, which allegorized or demonized sexuality, the alchemists

exalted the most heinous transgression of the law, namely incest, into a symbol of the union of opposites, hoping in this way to bring back the golden age. (p. 91)

According to Jung, incest has always been the prerogative of gods and kings and is an important archetype which for modern man has been forced out of consciousness into criminology and psychopathology. For Jung, the alchemical union of King and Queen, and Sun and Moon, are archetypal symbols which express the incestuous union of opposites. As Arturo Schwartz (2000) has observed, “The male-female polarity is the basic model for all other polarities” (p. 35), and the synthesis of this polarity is a metaphor not only for the creation but also for the completion and perfection of the world. The transgressive unification of the opposites that are forbidden as incest creates a second unity between good and evil, persona and shadow, which is obviously significant from a Jungian perspective.

A major theme of the Zohar is the notion that man must be completed by his feminine half, an idea that was adopted by the alchemists and emphasized by Jung (1963/1955-6), who held that it is the moral task of alchemy to bring “the feminine background of the masculine psyche, seething with passions, into harmony with the principle of the rational spirit” (p. 41). For Jung this is the deeper, psychological meaning of the

alchemical symbols uniting King and Queen, Adam and Eve, brother and sister.

For the Kabbalists, both the world and man can be made whole only through the harmonious integration of the masculine and feminine. According to the Zohar, man without woman is defective, a mere “half body” (Tishby & Lachower, 1989, vol. 1, p. 298). On occasion, the Zohar indicates that the female who completes “man” is an actual woman, but more often it suggests, as Jung later held regarding the anima archetype, that it is a female “image” that arises within a man’s soul as his spiritual counterpart or completion. The Zohar (1: 49b-50a) speaks of such a counterpart accompanying a man, and making him “male and female,” when, for example, he is on a journey away from his wife and home (Sperling & Simon, 1931-4, vol. 1, p. 158). The Hasidic rebbe Elimelekh of Lizhensk expands upon and psychologizes this theme when he writes:

A man has two wives. One is the woman whom God commanded him to marry to *be fruitful and multiply* (Gen.1:28). The second is his holy soul—the intellective soul—which God placed in man....Because of her, man can attain the level of unending greatness. (Lamm, 1999, p. 65)

In the Lurianic Kabbalah such coniunctio symbolism is used to express both the original unification of the cosmos in the Godhead and its *reunification* after it was rent apart as a result of the cosmic catastrophe known as the *Shevirat ha-kelim*, the “Breaking of the Vessels.” For the Lurianists, *Tikkun ha-Olam*, the restoration and emendation of the world, is brought about through the unification of the masculine and feminine aspects of the godhead, the latter often represented as the people of Israel. The unification of male and female is expressed in the Zohar (2:189b, 216b; Sperling & Simon, 1931-4, vol. 4, pp. 139, 235) and later Kabbalistic writings as the union of masculine and feminine *Sefirot*. One such pairing, between the *Sefirot Chochmah* (Wisdom) and *Binah* (Understanding), is personified as the union of celestial father (*Abba*) and mother (*Imma*); a second involves the incestuous passion between the *Sefirot Tiferet* (beauty) and *Malchut* (royalty), which are personified as the

*Partzufim* (divine visages or personas), *Zeir Anpin* (the short-faced one), and *Nukvah* (the daughter). This latter relationship is frequently described as the “unification of the Holy One Blessed Be He and His feminine presence (or consort, the *shekhinah*),” and it is this unification (which the Kabbalists closely identified with the world’s restoration and redemption) that later served as the basis for Jung’s 1944 Kabbalistic vision. Other cosmic sexual unions are expressed in the Kabbalah as the sexual influx from the *Sefirah Yesod* (identified with the phallus) into *Malchut*, often identified with the feminine, the earth, or the created world (see Drob, 2000b, pp. 366-8).

The unifications of male and female thus play a decisive role in the Lurianic conception of the “Breaking of the Vessels” and *Tikkun ha-Olam*, the restoration of the world, symbols which Jung (1969/1952) makes reference to in *Answer to Job*. The “vessels,” as described by Luria’s most important disciple, Chayyim Vital, are located in, and constitute, the womb of the Celestial Mother. As a result of the breaking of the vessels, the Celestial Mother and Father (i.e., the *Partzufim* Abba and Imma), which had hitherto been in a “face to face” sexual conjunction, turn their backs upon one another and become completely disjoined (Menzi & Padeh, 1999). The “chaos” brought about by the breaking of the vessels is one of sexual and erotic alienation, a condition which can only be remedied through a rejoining of opposites via a renewed coniunctio of the sexes. At the same time, like the water which breaks and signals the birth of a new human life, the Breaking of the Vessels heralds a new birth, that of a new personal and world order to be completed by humanity in the process of *Tikkun ha-Olam* (the restoration of the world). Vital’s description of this process illustrates the Jungian notion that the sexual can itself be symbolic of spiritual ideas,<sup>11</sup> and although Jung did not do so himself (stating that he first came across them in 1954; see Jung 1973, vol. 2, p. 157) these Lurianic symbols call out for explication within a Jungian framework.

Here we should note that Jung made some brief but important comments on the ultimate significance of the sexual symbolism in the Kabbalah (and, by extension, alchemy). In the course of a discussion of the sexual symbolism of the *Sefirah*

*Yesod*, which the Zohar and later Kabbalist understood as a metaphor for the phallus, Jung (1963/1955-6) writes:

Insofar as the Freudian School translates psychic contents into sexual terminology there is nothing left for it to do here, since the author of the Zohar has done it already. This school (Freud's) merely shows us all the things that a penis can be, but it never discovered what the phallus can symbolize. It was assumed that in such a case the censor had failed to do its work. As Scholem himself shows and emphasizes particularly, the sexuality of the Zohar, despite its crudity, should be understood as a symbol of the "foundation of the world." (p. 442)

### Jewish Mysticism and Jungian Psychology

Although Jung originally appealed to alchemy as the vehicle through which pagan, Greek, and Christian influences came to bear on his own psychology, his later writings suggest that he had become increasingly aware of the fact that, in uncovering the psychological roots of alchemy, he was, at least in part, reconstituting alchemy's Kabbalistic sources. I have attempted to show how this was the case for Jung's use of the divine "wedding" symbolism, but it was equally the case for Jung's understanding of the Primordial Man (the Kabbalists' Adam Kadmon), which became an important symbol around which Jung developed his notions of individuation, the Self, and psychotherapeutic change (See Jung, 1963/1955-6, pp. 16, 50, 390, 394, 407, 409, 415-17, 429). In addition, Jung recognized that several other Kabbalistic symbols and ideas informed the work of the alchemists, including the symbols of the *Sefirot* (divine archetypes), and the *scintillae* (or sparks), and to a lesser extent, the Breaking of the Vessels and *Tikkun* (*solve et coagulum* in alchemy), and the general notion of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Space prevents me from tracing the significance of these Kabbalistic ideas in Jung's work. However, the main point is clear: toward the end of his career, Jung began to realize that these Kabbalistic notions, which served as the spiritual foundation for alchemy, could serve as a valuable basis for his own psychology.

In 1958 Jung received a letter from a Ms. Edith Schroeder, who had inquired regarding "the significance of Freud's Jewish descent for the origin, content and acceptance of psychoanalysis." He replied that in order to answer this query "one would have to take a deep plunge into the history of the Jewish mind. This would carry us beyond Jewish Orthodoxy into the subterranean workings of Hasidism...and then into the intricacies of the Kabbalah, which still remains unexplored psychologically (Jung, 1973, vol. 2, pp. 358-9). Jung informed Ms. Schroeder that he himself could not perform such a task because he had no knowledge of Hebrew and was not acquainted with all the relevant sources. It is important to note that Jung had earlier concluded that *not only Freud's but his own* psychological theories were anticipated by the Jewish mystics. In an interview in 1955 on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, Jung (1977) remarked that "the Hasidic Rabbi Baer from Mesiritz, whom they called the Great Maggid...anticipated [my] entire psychology in the eighteenth century," calling the Maggid "a most impressive man" (pp. 271-2). It is not difficult to see how Jung could hold this view. The Hasidim were the direct heirs to the Jewish mystical tradition, had assimilated the main symbols of the Zohar and the Lurianic Kabbalah, and had converted them into a psychological view of the human soul (Jacobs, 1987; Idel, 1995; Drob 2000a, pp. 310-13). Jung, by extracting and psychologizing the Kabbalistic foundations of alchemy, performed essentially the same task that the Maggid and other Hasidim had done two centuries before. Ironically, the same Jung who was railing against the Jewish psychologies of Freud and Adler during the 1930s was at that very time immersed in the development of a "Jewish psychology" of his own.

Those who have been concerned about Jung's anti-Jewish writings and sentiments during the 1930s should take heart at this irony and be inspired by the task that Jung began but could not complete. With the proliferation of contemporary scholarship on the Kabbalah, we are now in a position to further the development of an archetypal psychology based upon Kabbalistic symbols and ideas. Such a psychology will not only complement the one Jung constructed on the basis of alchemy but actually bring us to the very fount of many Jungian ideas.

## Notes

1) Jung to W. M. Kranefeldt, February 9, 1934. Sections quoted from M. Vannoy Adams and J. Sherry, "Significant Words and Events," in Maidenbaum and Martin (1991), pp. 349-396.

2) Jung's motivations in speaking pejoratively about, and contrasting his own views with, "Jewish psychology" have been subject to several interpretations. Some (beginning with Jung himself) have argued that Jung's efforts were purely descriptive and bore no mark of anti-Semitic intent. Others have pointed to Jung's anger and competition with Freud, as opposed to anti-Semitism, as the source of Jung's apparently anti-Jewish polemic. Those a bit more cynical have argued that Jung opportunistically took advantage of the rise of National Socialism to contrast his psychology with those of Freud and Adler, in order to insinuate himself with the authorities. Finally, some have argued that Jung's remarks belied a conscious or unconscious anti-Semitism, which projected the worst aspects of his shadow into his thinking and writing. See Maidenbaum & Martin, 1991; Maidenbaum, 2002.

3) Patai holds that Jewish alchemy suffers from the same prejudice and consequent obscurity that the Kabbalah suffered from prior to the work of Gershom Scholem.

4) Idel provides a more complex argument for Zosimos's view that alchemy is fundamentally Jewish in origin.

5) Suler (1972, p. 545) had earlier pointed out that Lully's work, *Ars Magna*, makes use of Kabbalistic methodology.

6) Gematria is a name given to several hermeneutic techniques which rely on the fact that each letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a determinate numerical value. The letters of a word, or each word in a phrase, are provided their numerical equivalents, and the words and phrases are interpreted to be equivalent in meaning or significance to other words or phrases of equal "numerical value." Obviously, such techniques indefinitely multiply one's interpretive possibilities and lend themselves to the alchemist's "transformational" mentality.

7) James Kirsch (1991, p. 68), one of Jung's Jewish disciples, whose association with Jung dated back to the 1930s, wrote that Jung read the whole of Knorr's 3000-page treatise.

8) Jung's description is, of course, retrospective, and may not accurately reflect either the nature of his visions/dreams or his state of knowledge about the Kabbalah in 1944.

9) In the Kabbalistic sources, the union of these two *Sefirot* represents the union between the masculine and feminine aspects of God.

10) Held by tradition to be the author of the classic Kabbalistic text, the *Zohar*.

11) According to Vital, with the original emanation of the worlds, the *Sefirot Chochmah* and *Binah*, which ultimately come to represent the *Partzufim* Father and Mother, were in a state of erotic union, presenting themselves to one another, as it were, "face to face" (*panim a panim*). Male

and female were, as it were, in a state of continuous, harmonious union, and the facets of the ideal or intellective realm represented by the *Sefirot Chochmah* and *Binah* were unified as well. Vital describes how the face-to-face status of the Father and Mother visages was maintained by “feminine waters” (*mayim nukoim*) emanating from the interior of the Mother. However, with the Breaking of the Vessels, the cosmic Mother and Father turn their back upon one another. It is only with the advent of *Tikkun*, in which humanity, through his ethical and creative acts, provides the “masculine waters” for a renewed coniunctio between the feminine and masculine aspects of the cosmos, that the Father and Mother are renewed in their face-to-face relationship and the spiritual harmony of the cosmos restored (Vital, *Sefer Ez Chayyim*, 2:2).

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