COUNTING TO FOUR: ASSESSING THE QUATERNITY OF C.G. JUNG IN THE LIGHT OF LACAN AND SOPHIOLOGY

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by
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This thesis is a critical examination of the question of the fourfold, or quaternities, in the thought of C.G. Jung, as well as an in-depth comparison with the four-fold structures of Jacques Lacan and Sergius Bulgakov. I define quaternities as visual or structural formations conceived in four parts, and I center this study on Jung because I see him as the first thinker to seriously examine the place of quaternity in psychology and modern thought. Part of the work of this thesis will be to give a clear view of Jung’s quaternal theories, distinguishing the novelty and authenticity of his work from what has been made of it by subsequent New Age and Jungian thinkers. Jacques Lacan, who uses the term “quadrilateral” to describe his formations, will be contrasted with Jung on several counts. First of all, whereas the Jungian quaternity aims to perfectly integrate its various elements, especially when viewed from the perspective of the fourth element of the quaternity, the Lacanian fourth works in the opposite direction, putting into question any reading of the structure which demands resolution and integration. Lacan’s quadrilaterals also avoid the complementarity which is always an important aspect of Jungian quaternity, instead opting for a supplementary logic. Sergius Bulgakov avoids, at least in his later work, referring to quaternities, but, in his reading of Sophia (Wisdom), she clearly functions as something of a fourth within the Christian Trinity. Bulgakov’s
primary contribution is to provide an answer to Jung’s complaint that the Christian
Trinity has suppressed its fourth and become unbalanced. The fourth that Bulgakov
articulates in the form of Sophia is very different from what Jung had argued for. That is,
instead of changing the Trinity into a Quaternity Bulgakov maintains that Sophia
underlines the “tri-unity” of the Trinity, and functions not a fourth amidst its members,
but as a necessary element in order to both bring out the distinctiveness of each person of
the Trinity as well as communicate their common identity.
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INTRODUCTION

“I am accustoming myself to regarding every sexual act as an event between four individuals.”

--Sigmund Freud

This thesis is an examination of quaternity, that is, visual or structural formations conceived in four parts. We will take as our paradigm the quaternities of C.G Jung, but not without first examining certain important precursors to him, which will allow us to situate the quaternities that come in his wake, some accepting the title of “Jungian” and others rejecting it. Not all of the quaternities we will examine are known by that name; for instance, Jacques Lacan will use the term quadrilateral, and the Pythagorean tradition refers to the Tetractys. But they all place special importance on four-part structuring and they all address a certain finite constellation of themes, the most important of which is the unification of diverse elements. The simplest way to effect this gathering is to simply draw a circle around the elements that are to be brought together. Hence, the majority of quaternal images (as opposed to structural quaternities) appear to us bounded by circles, such as the Irish cross shown below.

While the unification of diverse elements is the strongest note sounded by the theme of quaternity, there are several other aspects which are congregated around this unity, namely, the nature of evil, the place of the feminine, and the status of earthly matter. It will perhaps be helpful to examine, in this regard, a piece of Roman Catholic dogma that became a touchstone for Jung. I refer to the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, proclaimed in 1950 with the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. This dogma, in which Mary takes her rightful place as queen of heaven, often depicted in representation in a central position surrounded by the members of the Trinity, was received by Jung as something of a personal victory, as if his emphasis on the importance of quaternity and the number four was finally having an effect in the broader world. Though Jung claimed that his own work as well as this statement by pope Pius XII were simply expressions of a quaternal archetype whose influence was being felt throughout the world, it is instructive to understand his emphasis on the number four as a corrective to what he saw as the unbalanced view of the church with its Trinity that was deficient in three aspects: it lacked an explicit feminine element; it was unrealistic as concerned the
nature of evil (for instead of affirming the relative nature of good and evil, it had elevated and substantialized the good while looking to cut off evil completely); and finally, it was too dismissive of both matter and secular life. These issues dominate Jung’s thought concerning quaternities, and they all express the meta-theme of unity of the whole, and integration of any rejected elements back into the whole—concisely portrayed by the Jungian thinker Edward Edinger when he says, concerning the archetype of the Self, that “The Self as the center and totality of the psyche which is able to reconcile all opposites can be considered as the organ of acceptance par excellence. Since it includes the totality, it must be able to accept all elements of psychic life no matter how antithetical they may be.”

While Jung himself is not discussed much in the academy today, these issues, the nature of evil, the place of the feminine, the status of matter, and the theme of integration and unity clearly are prevalent not only in the academy but in many other forums as well. I would like to claim that, when these issues are discussed, it is often the question of quaternity that is at stake, and very often there is a tension between trinity and quaternity, whether one should be discussing things in terms of threes or fours. Slavoj Zizek’s discussion of the Hegelian dialectic in For They Know not What They do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor, where he argues that the dialectic has to be understood as having four moments as opposed to the usual three, is one example, as is the issue of Sophiology

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finally just now receiving attention in the world outside of Eastern Orthodox theological discussion.

In the first chapter we will look at quaternities from three historical sources: the medicine wheel of the North American Plains Indians, the various quaternities in Hindu religion, and the Tetractys of the Pythagoreans. The medicine wheel of the Plains Indians, which I call the traditional quaternity, is both an image of the earth but also of every person, and functions to heal differences within the community, and ultimately the entire world. Connected to the earth and the animals which roam that earth, the four colors of the medicine wheel are also the colors that the coat of the buffalo progresses through as he ages; black as a youth, red as he ages, yellow as he mellsows, and white when ready to sleep in the earth.

In Hindu quaternities the homogeneity that we find in the traditional quaternity, in which every element is more or less equal to every other element, has started to fade, due to the fact that with the Hindus there is born an intuition of an escape from this world, *moksha*, and the fourth now concerns not so much a return to the earth, as in the buffalo dying, but an escape from it. This is not to say that there isn’t a traditional four still operating here, for the function of the escape is still to complete and harmonize the cycle of existence, but the direction of this harmonization, this drive to wholeness, has clearly changed.

For the Pythagoreans, the number four and the figure of the Tetractys connected with it were examples of a mystical truth and reality which found its form most clearly in the abstract disciplines of music and mathematics. We are quite far here from the nature
bound expression of the medicine wheel, as well as the practical concerns of the Hindu quaternities, but nonetheless, the themes of universalization and of harmony with the all still dominate, for it is only by being aligned with the *harmonia* of the cosmos, expressed in their number mysticism, that one could be saved from that which was merely temporal and earthly.

Our second chapter will focus directly on the thought of Jung, who believed he saw in his patients precisely the *loss* of this whole-ness and harmony, in being cut off from nature thanks to a culture obsessed with technological advance, in being cut off from society and tradition in a time of cultural and political revolution, and in conceiving of spiritual truth and scientific truth as mutually exclusive realms. In Jung’s opinion, the West had a Trinity (in the Christian God) but had excluded the fourth at every level—psychologically, spiritually, and culturally. When the Assumption of Mary was proclaimed Dogma in 1950 Jung hailed this as a step in the right direction, for Mary, according to Jung, stood for all that the trinity had excluded, or better yet, merely attempted to repress. We will examine many of the different quaternities which Jung focused on, looking especially at the quaternal aspect of his theories of personality and of individuation.

Chapter three will look at the fate of quaternity in the hands of those who have identified as Jungians, people like Marie-Louise von Franz, Edward Edinger, Joseph Campbell, and others. I will interrogate their writings to see whether the concerns which motivated Jung are still present, and whether they have maintained the structural importance of quaternity. For the most part I will conclude that there has been a decline
in the importance of quaternity, and that the reduction of the quaternity of Jung to the
more dualistic setups of thinkers like James Hillman and Edward Edinger has been
harmful to the cause of psychoanalysis and the scholarship that goes under the name of
Jungian. I will also point out how the reduction can be traced to many of the problems
latent in the thought of Jung himself, one example being that in the background of many
of his quaternities there was often a strong dualism between the conscious and the
unconscious functions, and when the quaternities drop out in his followers what we see
come to the fore is this deep structural dualism. And though one might expect the
opposite, the result of this dualism is actually a valorization of the conscious function
which, especially in Jung’s American successors, is too easily co-opted into a facile New
Age jargon. This mode of thought, instead of discussing the integration of a feminine
element into the Godhead, such as Jung did, would simply replace God with Goddess,
retaining, in an inverted form, all the misunderstandings which Jung’s quaternities were
in the first place designed to address.

In chapter four I will look at a thinker who in many ways has constructed his
quaternities (though he calls them quadrilaterals) precisely in order to fend off the kinds
of interpretations that have plagued Jung. But unlike Jung, who demands that the fourth
be integrated in order that a whole might be achieved, the French psychoanalyst Jacques
Lacan emphasizes that the truth is never whole, that it can always be only *mi-dire*, half
said. This is not to say that he disregards the place of the whole or the desire for it; rather,
he identifies this desire as having a large fantasy component. Wholeness, in fact, is
always what is attractive in the realm of the Imaginary, from the very first glimpses of the
child into the mirror. I think Lacan’s voice is absolutely crucial not only in the conversation concerning the fate of quaternity, but more generally in how we examine the larger themes I outlined above: the role of the feminine in psychic life, the ethical discussion of evil, and the manner in which we articulate the spirit/matter dialectic. Though we will see many similarities between the two psychoanalysts, ultimately I will argue that the quadrilaterals of Lacan operate in the opposite direction from Jung’s quaternities. They work to break open heuristic structures that, when closed in on themselves, result in dualisms and even monisms (in the case of Jungian quaternities, into a kind of monism of consciousness). Instead of using a language of complementarity (especially concerning sexuality) Lacan’s quaternities are asymmetrical and allow for sexual relationship only in the sense of supplementarity, of lack and a simultaneous surplus. While this does complicate the discussion concerning relations between the sexes, it does so in a way that allows a much more nuanced discussion of sexuality and sexual identity. As some feminists like Demaris Wehr have pointed out Jung’s monism of consciousness can at times become male dominated and thus partake in much of the traditional misogyny which I think Jung was honestly trying to avoid.3

In the final chapter we will look at the themes surrounding quaternity from a very different perspective, that of Eastern Orthodox theology. The Russian Orthodox priest and philosopher Sergius Bulgakov approaches the topics of the feminine, the nature of evil, and the status of matter from the standpoint of his own fourth, Sophia, or, simply, Wisdom. At one point accused of attempting to make the Trinity into a Quaternity by his

inclusion of this figure, he ultimately wants to preserve both the Trinity while simultaneously addressing the concerns of many theologians, alchemists, and scholars over the centuries who have championed Sophia or some sort of feminine element within or related to the Godhead. I will emphasize the way in which Bulgakov’s work gives a powerful new reading to concerns which have long been labeled heretical, such as the feminine aspect of God, the possibility of universal salvation, and mythical/alchemical themes, such as the Holy Grail. With Bulgakov we come, in a way, full circle, for though we do not call his association of Sophia with the Trinity an example of quaternity, the most central themes of all quaternities (even Lacan’s, in a negative way)—wholeness, integration, and universality—are all articulated here, with the difference that Bulgakov wants to win these terms for Christian (and not just Eastern) Orthodoxy.

There are a few works in the scholarly literature on Jung which focus specifically on the quaternal aspects of his thought. In *Joyce and Jung: The “Four Stages of Eroticism” in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*4 Hiromi Yoshida applies Jung’s four stages of anima development to Joyce’s classic work. This work is interesting not just because of its focus on this four-stage development, but also because it provides an enlightening discussion of Sophia, the figure that Jung identified with the final stage of anima development. Ann Bugliani gives a similar treatment to the dramatic works of Paul Claudel in her book, *Women and the Feminine Principle in the Works of Paul Claudel*,5

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in which she draws some very interesting parallels between Jung’s quaternities and the French master’s plays, often in four acts and often organized around four central characters. Robert Berner’s *The Rule of Four: Four Essays on the Principle of Quaternity* uses Jung’s theories to criticize Dumézil’s thesis of the all-importance of the number three for Indo-European culture. Berner instead argues that Indo-European culture is no different from other cultures around the world (he discusses the Lakota people, different Buddhist cultures, the Italian Renaissance, and more), which, he argues, are fundamentally oriented around quaternity, in their societal structures, myths, and religious beliefs. Finally, Louis Armand’s online article “Symptom in the Machine: Lacan, Joyce, Sollers,”7 has some very insightful comments on the quaternal question between Jung and Lacan.

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CHAPTER 1
QUATERNITY IN THREE TYPES

Introduction

In this chapter I will give examples of three types of quaternity in order to provide a context in which to understand Jung’s thought on this subject. It is not my intention here to give a comprehensive picture of quaternity in world religions or to even claim that I am covering the most important representative quaternities. Quaternal expression in religion and philosophy is so varied and often so ancient that to even give a framework for a comprehensive study would require a book in itself. In looking at the medicine wheel of the Plains Indians, the various quaternal formulations in Hinduism, and the number mysticism of the Pythagoreans, I am touching on traditions which Jung knew well and which definitely colored his own thought on quaternity. I must emphasize the point that, ultimately, my concern is psychoanalytic, rather than historical; that is, I am looking at these examples not so much to recreate them in all their detail or to ascertain historical accuracy, but to attempt to find what psychological presuppositions are present in these symbols and concepts, not only for the people who made them, but also for us.

One example of this orientation is the way in which I realized, in the process of my research into the medicine wheels of the Plains Indians, how difficult it is to determine the status of the medicine wheel “before contact,” that is, before the arrival of
Europeans to North America. It seems that once the medicine wheel had to be described to the outside world it was irrevocably changed. To try and find the “real” medicine wheel, as noble an academic endeavor as that might be, is not one of my concerns. The psychoanalytic approach is very aware of the fact that an unmediated access to history is not granted us, that we must approach our subject through the difficult medium of language, and that this is made especially complicated in situations where the language of description is so very different from the language of origin—in the case of medicine wheels not only are we dealing with different languages, but different mediums of communication, for the medicine wheel is really more ritual and action than it is verbal language.

I am not saying here that contact has destroyed the original medicine wheel, nor am I saying that European influence on Native Americans is without its counterpart: It is a very interesting and mostly untapped field to ponder the influence of Native American perspective on European thought, especially prior to the 20th century. My point is simply that the medicine wheels I am describing are a mixture of two worlds and that my goal is not to define the “original” medicine wheel, but to examine the medicine wheel in its current form and to place it within the field of discourse on quaternity and psychoanalytic theory as it presently stands.

**Traditional Quaternity: The Medicine Wheel of the Plains Indians**

The medicine wheel is a good example of what I call a traditional quaternity. By traditional I refer in a general way to the perspective of people groups whose spiritual
expression is closely tied to the rhythms of nature and in which a written scripture and historical founders do not play a large role. Most Native American peoples would fall into this category, as would, for the most part, Shinto, and also elements of Daoism and Chinese religion, as well as indigenous African religions. It is not my purpose to prove that quaternity plays a major role in all these traditions, or that they all have something analogous to the medicine wheel in their societies. Rather, I see the medicine wheel as a concrete example speaking of things that are often the main focus in traditional religions—such things as wholeness, the relation between the sexes, fertility, growth in wisdom, and the microcosmic/macrocosmic relationship between the universe and man.

Figure 2 Big Horn Medicine Wheel

The term "medicine wheel" was apparently first applied to the Big Horn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming, shown in the picture. It is one of the largest medicine wheels in existence. Alberta has about 66% of all known Medicine wheels which suggests that Southern Alberta was a central meeting place for many Plains tribes who followed Medicine Wheel ceremonies (usually on the Summer Solstice - June 21st).\(^1\)

\(^1\) http://www.medicinewheel.com/
What are the most fundamental, or most universal, characteristics of the quaternity? First of all we see most clearly the characteristic of wholeness, unity, and harmony within the all—fundamentally: the ability to unify disparate and even contradictory elements in a harmonious whole. The medicine wheel, as a circle, is a representation of the earth, which in its roundness holds together all the diverse elements which teem upon it, and especially the different tribes and people, who so often find themselves at odds with each other. The shape of the medicine wheel points to this earth which all peoples, no matter how set against each other they may be, must call home.

In the book *Seven Arrows* by Hyemeyohsts Storm the Medicine Wheel is the center of life for the Plains Indian People which includes the Cheyenne, the Crow, and the Sioux: “The Story of the People has at its center and all around it the story of the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel is the very Way of Life of the People. It is an understanding of the Universe.”\(^2\) The medicine wheel is not just the earth but it is also the reflection of the earth in the whole Universe as well as the reflection in man: “The Universe is the Mirror of the People,” the old Teachers tell us, “and each person is a Mirror to every other person.”\(^3\) The circularity and encompassing nature of the medicine wheel grounds the stories which are told in Seven Arrows, and the four corners of the medicine wheel give direction to the journeys which are undertaken.

In the first story we will look at we see the importance of traveling the Wheel, that is, undertaking a voyage of discovery by moving from the place on the Medicine

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3. Ibid.
Wheel where one was born, or where one feels most secure, and experiencing all four elements of the medicine wheel:

Any Person who perceives from only one of the Four Great Directions will remain just a partial man. For example, a man who possesses only the Gift of the North will be wise. But he will be a cold man, a man without feeling. And the man who lives only in the East will have the clear, far-sighted vision of the Eagle, but he will never be close to things. This man will feel separated, high above life, and will never understand or believe that he can be touched by anything.  

The first story which Storm tells illustrates the necessity of touching all the four corners, of universality, and the necessity to incorporate all the most fundamental modes of perception and being. This story, Storm relates, was told him by his Grandfathers, an “Old Story which is also a New Story.”

The story begins with the people “scattered over the earth.” Everyone had heard about a “Powerful Person” who lived in the River and who could “settle all problems,” so folks went down to the river but no one wanted to admit it, telling no one when they went to consult this Powerful Person. One day a little boy and a little girl go down to the river, but when they come back to their people they start talking about it and are surprised that no one else admits that they also go down to the river to see the Powerful Person. The people, even their own parents, are angry with them and abandon them, leaving the two children alone on the prairie. The boy and girl are frightened but are soon surprised by two visitors who claim to be many beings—their grandmother and grandfather, Old Man

4. Ibid., 6.

5. Ibid.
and Old Woman Coyote, as well as the Powerful Person at the River. When the children exclaim that they saw only themselves at the River (the “Strange thing” which they wanted to talk to their people about) the two figures explain that this is how it is with everybody who goes to the river: “[Everyone else] Saw Only themselves, just as you Did.” The two figures give gifts, two robes of coyote pelt, to the children, which they tell them must be given to the people who had abandoned them because if they put them on they will never be hungry. So the children do as they’re told but their people laugh at them saying, “What we need are buffalo.” But a man and a woman believe the children, put on the robes, and all of a sudden can see buffalo in “all four directions.” The others then can also see them, but immediately start to argue about which direction they should go to hunt them. The children and the man and woman who had put on the robes plead with the people to quit fighting, but, “the people were Very Angry and would not come together in a Circle Counsel.” Instead they rushed upon the four figures who stood in their midst, but when they went to grab them found that the children had become a “Flowering Forked tree,” and the man and woman had become “Two Mountain Lions” and had left only their tracks, which pointed towards the North. The People took off following the tracks but eventually exhausted themselves and returned to the Flowering Forked Tree where they finally asked each other what they were doing, not remembering what they were so worked up about.

Then the People All Heard Singing, and They Looked Up. There sitting in the North, they Saw a White Coyote and he was Singing. They also Looked to the South, and Sitting there was a Green Coyote. She too was Singing. Then they Looked to the West, and Sitting there was a Black Coyote and he was Singing. Finally they looked to the East, and Sitting there was a Gold Coyote and she was Singing. The People Sat there
Quietly All Together and Learned these Four Beautiful Songs. They were the Songs of the Four Lions. Then the People Looked All Around and Saw that Each of them was Wearing a Coyote Robe. They put their Arms Around Each Other and Began to Dance Toward the Flowering Tree Together in a Great Circle. The People were Happy.  

The first thing I would like to point out about this story is that it starts with the people in disarray; they are “scattered,” and it is only by the action of the four people, the boy, the girl, the man, and the woman, that unity is achieved. Four, here, functions as the first number which we can call a number of unity, for that which precedes the four is not in harmony. Secondly, the quaternal aspects of the story are connected with nature and the elements, such that the boy and girl become a tree, the man and woman become lions, and at the end of the tale there are four songs of four coyotes. That the people are led into a circle, marked by four coyotes, is a sign of the peace that they have learned, in that the circle signifies a coming together around a shared purpose, as the spokes of a wheel radiate out from the hub. The action of the quaternal circle is to take a scattered people, whose attitude is centrifugal, and make it come together, to make it centripetal, oriented around a “Circle of Counsel.”

There is also clearly a sense of narration and of process, for it is only after the people have been tricked into exhausting themselves (the coyote is a classic trickster animal) do they see the truth. We might notice that at the beginning the people were scattered internally, and it is the children who simply bring the truth to light, that is, show how scattered the members of the community truly are; and yet by sending them out, acting out their internal divisions, they are then coaxed back together. The fact that they

6. Ibid., 16.
are led out to the four quarters, the four directions, before they can be harmonized, is a constant theme in Storm’s book and it signifies the need to enact a narrative, to leave one’s place of birth, which, though safe, is not whole and conceals latent and toxic divisions. By externalizing these divisions one suffers, yet one also gives oneself the ability to cover other perspectives and to return as a whole being.  

In another story that Storm tells this aspect of covering the other perspectives is brought out more explicitly. In this story a young man approaches his grandfather and asks about a “singing stone” that holds “great medicine for its finder.” The grandfather tells him it is in the north so the boy journeys there and finds a healing lake as well as his grandfather, who cuts off his white braids and gives them to the boy, but also tells him that the stone is not in the North but in the South. But when he gets to the South, he finds a dragonfly that tells him the stone is not in the South but in the West. The boy goes there, but he is told by a mouse that the stone is actually in the East. When he gets to the East he is greeted again by his grandfather and other relatives who say to him, “Welcome to our Counsel Fire, Singing Stone.” At various parts in the story the young man feels for sure he is being tricked, but in the end all is for the best, for it was necessary for him to  

7. Joseph Campbell’s image of the hero’s quest should be understood as modeled on the medicine wheel or something very much like it. It also demands that the hero leave a place of safety and set out on a journey that is, though dangerous, necessary for the welfare of the community. By covering the four points of the compass (symbolizing the three main alternate perspectives) in his circular journey he gets an experience of the all, and of the ability of the all to encompass that which is partial and imperfect, that which can only see a part.
travel to all these different places in order to come back to the place where he originally was, for he himself was the singing stone.⁸

In the traditional quaternity each element of the quaternity is more or less equal to all the others. What is important is not any one of the elements but rather the necessity to hold them all as a unity, to travel to each of the four corners, to take into account each of the four perspectives (which symbolize all perspectives). This is also how Ed McGaa (a member of the Sioux peoples) explains the significance of the four in his book Mother Earth Spirituality:

There are four faces, or four ages: the face of the child, the face of the adolescent, the face of the adult, the face of the aged.
There are four directions or four winds, four seasons, four quarters of the universe, four races of man and woman—red, yellow, black, and white.
There are four things that breathe: those that crawl, those that fly, those that are two-legged, those that are four-legged.
There are four things above the earth: sun, moon, starts, planets.
There are four parts to the green things: roots, stem, leaves, fruit.
There are four divisions of time: day, night, moon, year.
There are four elements: fire, water, air, earth.
Even the human heart is divided into four compartments.
Since the Creator has made so many things in four, the Indian therefore strives to express, in ceremony and in symbology, a reflection of four: There are four endurances in the Sweat Lodge, four-direction offerings in the Pipe Ceremony, and four direction-facings in the Sun Dance. The vision quester carries four colors and places these four colors in a square within which he or she sits.”⁹

⁸. Ibid., 20-24. This association of the Self to a stone bears a strong resemblance to the language of the western alchemists whom Jung studied so thoroughly. One of Jung’s main arguments was that the alchemists, with their esoteric jargon, were not speaking primarily of the transmutation of earthly elements, but the sublimation of the spiritual/psychological Self.

We can see very clearly that what is important is simply the fact that things come in fours, that the all-ness of things is expressed in fours; but one direction is no more important than an other, one age is not more necessary than an other. McGaa’s depiction of the four races, red, yellow, black, and white, is often seen as one of the meanings behind the colors of the medicine wheel. I should add, though, that one finds different colors in different wheels, and the connections with the four races is not always explicit. Yet in the medicine wheels in which it is mentioned it functions as a powerful tool for depicting the entire earth and the way her diverse inhabitants must fit together.

It should also be noted that in the universe of the medicine wheel the number seven expresses a similar signification to the number four. This was something brought to my attention by Matthew Haar Farris, an adopted member of the Lakota tribe, whose teachers include Wallace Black Elk, and who incorporates the medicine wheel in counseling work. In the medicine wheel there are often added three more elements to the four directions—the sky, the earth, and the center which is called Great Spirit (Lakota: Wakan Tanka). The concept that we are thus dealing with is both of four and of seven; perhaps we could say that when sketched as a one-dimensional figure it is most obviously quaternal, but that when its three-dimensionality comes to the fore we are dealing with a seven part symbol. In my reading concerning the medicine wheel and the spiritual symbolism of the Plains Indians it seemed that the four and the seven more or less aimed at describing the same thing, a system which encompasses the whole.
The Hindu Quaternity: Trinity Plus One

In Hinduism the quaternity has a noticeably different structure. We can say this taking into account that Hindu symbols and thinking on religious matters is extremely diverse. It is not my desire to be in any way conclusive or universal in my analysis. I simply want to point out a feature which I believe can be seen as a general one in the Hindu quaternities, as opposed to the traditional quaternities which we saw in the medicine wheel. The first point is that while the quaternity is still very strong the importance of the fourth has become more focused and has separated itself off from the other three. It is no longer simply another element like the first three. It is now the most important element, the element in which the other three find their ultimate meaning, the element which gives the perspective of the absolute. In fact, as Charles Malamoud points out, one of the expressions denoting the absolute is derived from *turiya*, one of the two ways in which the fourth in expressed in Sanskrit.10

While one element in the Hindu quaternity is almost always distinguished from the other three, it is not necessarily always distinguished in the same direction. Often in Hindu quaternities the three is associated with the divine or heavenly while the fourth is earthly and human. This is represented in the image of *Purusha*, the cosmic entity whose body is divided in four, with three parts remaining above and the fourth coming down to form the earth. Another example is the belief that when a woman marries she is first of all

10. Charles Malamoud, *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, trans. David White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 111. There are two ways to say four in Vedic Sanskrit, *caturtha*, and *turiya*; the former denotes a first order four, simply the number after three and before five, but the latter is used for the second order operation in which the fourth completes and encapsulates the preceding three.
the wife of three different deities, and only at the end is she the wife of her husband.

Malmoud sees this structure in many different places in Hindu thought:

The fourth term designates a visible reality, in contrast to the first three, which lie in an inaccessible nether world: speech, *vak*, is made up of three parts that are beyond man’s reach, and of a fourth, human speech. The same holds true for cosmic *Purusha*: only one of his four parts is manifest in beings. In the beginning there were four fires: the first that men know now is only one of them, sole survivor. A girl is first the wife of Agni, then of Soma, then of the Gandharvas; only fourthly does she become the wife of her human husband, who thus receives her as a leftover of the gods.  

But when we look at the four aims, the four stations of life, and the four castes, it is the three which are identified with the earthly and the fourth which is identified with liberation from *samsara*. In the four goals, *kama*, *artha*, and *dharma*, refer to personal, familial, and societal duties and goods, respectively, while it is the fourth, *moksha*, that offers escape from all of these into an identification of the microcosmic (*Atman*) with the macrocosmic (*Brahman*). The four castes, consisting of *shudra*, *vaishya*, *kshatriya*, and *brahmins*, have as their duty the care of the public good whether in the form of menial labor (*shudra*), trade and business (*vaishya*) or government (*kshatriya*), while the *brahmins* are ultimately concerned with liberation and with the relationship of the human to the divine. With the four stations of life, the first three are concerned more or less with the regular process of growing up, from being a student (*brahmacharya*), to running a family (*grihasthya*), to retiring to study in later life (*vanaprasthya*); but here again it is the fourth which emphasizes a totally other way of life, a radical break with what has gone before, as the *sannyasin* gives up all identifying factors, cuts all ties with his family,

wanders from town to town, lets his hair and beard grown, even removes his clothes and
forgets his very name, to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to breaking out of the cycle of
rebirth.

In all these examples what is particular about the fourth is not that it is spiritual
while the three are material (or the other way around), but precisely that it marks a break
from the logic of the three preceding it—it introduces something that doesn’t fit with
what had come before. While the other three are predicated on some sort of cyclical
model (whether divine or earthly) the fourth will always break out of that cycle, in
whatever direction. There is even the idea that this escape has the form of both the most
spiritual and the most material, or that the highest spiritual experience comes only from
the most naked collision with material reality. This is probably best exemplified by the
sannyasin, who literally roam the land naked. Their experience of life has become raw
and unmediated, and their spirituality is expressed or attained through an extremely direct
and intense physical existence.

Another way of describing this fourth is that it denotes a mode of reality which is
at odds with the accepted order of things. In this way the nakedness of the sannyasin has
to be understood as transgressing against the modes of acceptable behavior. And yet,
while being transgressive, it is also seen as vitally important, I would say foundational,
for that very social order, which is why the sannyasin are fed when they wander into a
town, nameless and naked. This aspect of transgression is also implied in any marriage,
in which, because the husband is the “fourth,” he is in some way committing adultery
with his wife against the gods; he is making a cut into the marital order of things, just as
the sannyasin makes a cut into the social order of things. The duty of the Brahmins is another example. For though they are of the highest caste and connected with the vitally important religious rituals, their other duty is to cook for their society. Why? Because just like the husband gets only the remainder of his wife after the gods have enjoyed her, so too do people when they eat get only the remainder of a meal after the Brahmins have offered it first to the gods. But what is interesting for us is that the food remainder in Hindu culture is somewhat taboo, that is, one does not take the leftovers from a meal, put it in a box, and serve it for tomorrow’s lunch. Again, the function of the fourth, the Brahmin, has a transgressive nature to it, and yet that transgression is absolutely foundational—the remainder is taboo, yet nothing we have, from wives to food, is anything but remainder.

We have seen a couple ways in which the Hindu quaternity is different from the traditional quaternity, in its appreciation of the fourth as representing something fundamentally different from the other three elements, and in its understanding of the fourth as being both transgressive and foundational to societal norms, be it of divine or human society. The fourth also has the sense of encompassing the whole, represented by

12. I have heard that this taboo also extends to second hand clothing, which is looked down upon because of the possibly contaminating presence of the spiritual/psychical residue of its previous owner.

13. This is in the spirit of a hymn from the Atharva Veda that Malamoud quotes: “On remains are founded name and form, on remains is founded the world. In remains, Indra, Agni, and everything are concentrated [. . . . ] Being and non-being, both are in remains, death, vigour, Prajapati [. . . . . . ] Inbreath and outbreath, sight, hearing, the fact that things are imperishable, and the fact that they perish: from remains are born all of the gods in heaven, who live in the sky.” Malamoud, Cooking the World, 22.
the other three. We see this in the way that the primal syllable *Aum* is discussed; here, in the first words of the Mandukya Upanishad: “Aum. This eternal Word is all: what was, what is and what shall be, and what beyond is in eternity. All is OM.”

We are told that this syllable is equated with both Brahman and Atman and “has four conditions.”

The first condition is the waking life of outward-moving consciousness, enjoying the seven outer gross elements.

The second condition is the dreaming life of inner-moving consciousness, enjoying the seven subtle inner elements in its own light and solitude.

The third condition is the sleeping life of silent consciousness when a person has no desires and behold no dreams. That condition of deep sleep is one of oneness, a mass of silent consciousness made of peace and enjoying peace.

This silent consciousness is all-powerful, all-knowing, the inner ruler, the source of all, the beginning and end of all beings.

The fourth condition is Atman in his own pure state: the awakened life of supreme consciousness. It is neither outer nor inner consciousness, neither semi-consciousness, nor sleeping-consciousness, neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. He is Atman, the Spirit himself, that cannot be seen or touched, that is above all distinction, beyond thought and ineffable. In the union with him is the supreme proof of his reality. He is the end of evolution and non-duality. He is peace and love.

The first three states correspond to the first three letters, or sounds of *Aum*, but the fourth state corresponds to the sound as a whole. This is sometimes represented by drawing a circle around this holy sound, in the following manner:

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15. Ibid.
One sees that the first three states have a logical succession of waking, dreaming, and sleeping, but that the fourth is expressed paradoxically, that is, as the “awakened life of supreme consciousness.” This is paradoxical because as we just read, concerning the third state, that, while it is the state of consciousness, it is also the state of “deep sleep.” So what would this deep sleep of pure consciousness be in an awakened state? What other than the highest point of meditation? What is most interesting for our purposes is the way that the fourth does not really fit into the sequential series of the first three states, yet is seen to be all encompassing of the three and foundational. Inasmuch as it is “peace and love,” it has a strong resemblance to the third state which is “made of peace and enjoying peace.” In a way that we will see in Jung and some of his followers (especially Edwin Edinger), the third is seen as the bearer of peace into the world of fighting duality, and that the fourth is understood as the base of the three, so to speak, the peace and love of the third in its universal or absolute aspect. The third state, though the state of peace, is merely a phase within the natural cycle of sleeping, dreaming and waking; but the fourth is fundamentally different in that it suffers no change. Though it is in the third state that
its fundamental characteristics are perhaps viewed most clearly, the fourth is really not any closer to it than to the other states. The fourth bounds all these states equally, like a circumference bounds a center, in which each point on that circumference is equidistant to the center point, and we could even expand this circle so that not only the syllable Aum but all of language could fit inside it—“eternal word is all,”\textsuperscript{16} or, as Joseph Campbell says of this fourth state: “The silence around the sacred syllable is the Unmanifest Transcendent.”\textsuperscript{17}

We read in the Maitri Upanishad another description of the absolute, here called turya, the fourth:

\begin{quote}
Since the living being called the spirit of life has come from that which is greater than the spirit of life, let the spirit of life surrender itself into what is called turya, the fourth condition of consciousness. For is has been said: “There is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let one’s mind and one’s subtle body rest upon that and not rest on anything else.”\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

I would like to stress this phrase, “something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind.” This is an excellent description of how the fourth (turya) functions within Hinduism, for it is something that is both outside and inside at the same time, but

\textsuperscript{16} We can also see here a homologue to the Christian notion that the Logos, the Word, is the source of all creation, or rather, that through which all is created. But there is a difference, for in Hinduism the Word is all, whereas in Christianity we have to say: “Through the word all that is created, is.” This is important inasmuch as it breaks the circle. Creation, in the Christian understanding does not necessarily fall inside the circle. We might even say that in Christianity there really is no circle, for the consideration of a Trinitarian and suffering God contradicts the notion of an all.


\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Upanishads}, 102.
it is neither outside or inside in the way that other things are inside or outside. That is, other things must be either outside or inside, but not at the same time, but the fourth can only be both outside and inside—what is denied to it is the possibility of being one but not the other. In the phrase of Jacques Lacan we have here an example of ex-timacy, that which is closer to you than your own self. In Hinduism it is your own self, but it is also the self that is all other selves, for Atman is the deep self that is more intimate to you than your own jiva (ego self)—it is ex-timate.

Figure 4 Trimurti-Sadashiva
In the statue of the deity, Trimurti-Sadashiva (*Maheshamurti*), in Elephanta, we have an example of a *tri-murti* (having three forms) and an analogue to AUM, for there are three visible faces which express sequentiality, that is, creation, preservation and destruction, yet there is a hidden face as well; or to say the same thing in a different way, there is an absence of another face which is present to us, namely the quarter of this figure which does not face us. The face to the left, angry with flaming eyes could stand for waking consciousness; the figure to the right, demure and female, could stand for dreaming consciousness; the figure in the middle, the preserver, and neuter, sleeps and represents the peace between the warring of the sexes. Heinrich Zimmer says that this middle face is a “representation of the Absolute.” We should remember here also the distinction between Brahman with and without attributes (*Saguna* and *Nirguna Brahman*). In this case the middle figure would be *Saguna Brahman* and at the back would be found the silent quarter, *Nirguna Brahman*, which completes the sculpture.

This quaternal logic explains why the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva can be said to be universal in Hindu worship, while at the same time the absolute variety and multiplicity of worship is affirmed—the oft heard three hundred and thirty million gods. Hinduism can afford to be so diverse in its worship precisely because it is understood that

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20 The Jesuit Père Bayart also described the Trimurti as “quaternal” but in a critical sense, arguing that the Hindu “trinity” allegedly contained in it, is modalist and subordinationist, and thus should be strongly distinguished from the Christian trinity. See, Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of Religion* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 66-67.
there is always an absolute which resides behind the deity or form (*ishta*) that one addresses. The truth is, the trinity and the absolute, the *turya*, are one—or at least they can’t really be separated, just as one cannot separate out the four castes or four goals or four stages; they exist in relationship to each other, and though one may be a *shudra* and thus not know the experience of being a *Brahmin* (at least in this life), one’s existence is nevertheless defined in part by the fact that there are *Brahmins* and other castes. One always is within a whole.

**The Pythagorean Tetractys**

With the number mysticism of the Pythagoreans we get something different from either the traditional or the Hindu quaternity. The Pythagorean quaternities are abstract and mathematical rather than practical. They were a way to come at a deep knowledge of the universe that was hidden to most men. As opposed to the quaternities we just discussed, the Tetractys and other Pythagorean quaternities do not affect the common man but are reserved for that special person who devotes himself to the love of wisdom, to philosophy. And yet there are still similarities. The quaternity still expresses wholeness and still has a foundational character, it still gives the promise of eternal life and something secure above the vagaries of material existence; but the realm over which the quaternity functions has shrunk. It has become the domain of the select few who have the patience and the perseverance (and the love) to cut through the mass of sense perceptions hiding the truth of Number. We have here the beginning of a worldview that is scientific and experimental, that rewards patient trial and error on unyielding material. For Jung,
the presence of quaternity at the fountainhead of Western philosophy and science was extremely important in validating his own researches and emphasis on this topic.

Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher born on the Island of Samos about 570 B.C. Though he did not seem to write anything down he became famous as the founder of a broadly construed school of thought which took his name. What we know of the Pythagoreans comes from the few writings that his disciples left as well as accounts from other philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Iamblichus. His biggest impact on Western thought comes through the influence that some of his disciples had on Plato who took up and transformed the Pythagorean emphasis on number, mathematics, and cosmic 
harmonia. But what especially seemed to attract Plato was the holistic nature of philosophy which, in the hands of Pythagoras, became a way of life that didn’t separate the religious, the political, or the intellectual. W.K.C. Guthrie claims that with Pythagoras and his school there occurs a fundamental shift in the way philosophy is done. No longer a vehicle for “curiosity or technical improvement” philosophy becomes a “search for a way of life whereby a right relationship might be established between the philosopher and the universe . . . . . . Pythagoras was indeed as much a religious and political teacher as a philosopher, and founded an organized society of men pledged to uphold his teaching in practice.”

Pythagoreans are well known for their belief in the transmigration of souls, (another feature of their thought which Plato borrowed) upholding the value of silence

over speech, and eschewing beans. What most interests us, though, is their thinking on number and its connection with music and with the universal law of the cosmos. In Aristotle’s discussion of them he says both that Pythagoreans claim that, “Things themselves are numbers,” as well as that, “Existing things owe their being to imitation (mimesis) of numbers.” And then in a slight variation on this, that, “Since the nature of everything else seemed to be entirely assimilated to numbers, and numbers to be primary throughout the world of nature, they assumed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all that exists, and the whole universe to be a harmonia and a number.” Guthrie holds that we should not make too big a deal about these different construals, inasmuch as Greek thought and language at the time of Aristotle, with one word for same and similar, was not really equipped itself to make much of it. The main point is that number was the animating feature in the Pythagorean universe and that things were numbers inasmuch as they participated in the nature of numbers. The Pythagoreans are probably trying to say something similar to that which Plato articulated more clearly in his theory of participation in the forms.

Although we don’t have any of the words of Pythagoras, we do have some fragments from one of his followers, Philolaus, who says concerning number that: “Everything that can be known has a Number; for it is impossible to grasp anything with

22. Ibid., 229.

23. Ibid.
the mind or to recognize it without this (Number).” This seems to agree with Aristotle’s characterization above, with the added insight that it is our access to number that enables us to know anything. It seems that Pythagorean numbers are kind of early version of Plato’s forms. Philolaus also says that, “Number has two distinct forms, odd and even, and a third compounded of both, the even-odd; each of these two forms has many aspects, which each separate object demonstrates in itself.” Such talk sounds again very Platonic in that we might say what is being speculated here is the Idea of even and odd.

It seems that the Pythagorean ideas concerning Number were closely related to early music theory. Philolaus claims that: “You may see the nature of Number and its power at work not only in supernatural and divine existences but also in all human activities and words everywhere, both throughout all technical production and also in music.” We could even say that their theories were connected with the specific instrument on which music was often played, the lyre, which is described in this way:

In the seven stringed lyre, four strings were tuned to fixed intervals, namely the outer two, which spanned an octave, and two of those between them, of which the middle string was tuned to a fourth above the lowest (and hence a fifth below the highest), and the one next above it to one tone higher. These four strings thus provided the three intervals which the Greeks regarded as ‘concordant’: octave, fifth and fourth. In addition the interval between the two middle strings was a tone.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 75.
The tuning of the remaining strings varied according to the type of scale required.27

For the Pythagoreans both the number four and the number three (as well as other numbers) were important, but the number four was foundational in that it was out of these four strings that the three main intervals were drawn.

The numbers three and four are both considered in the music theory of the Pythagoreans in that the first four numbers, 1,2,3,4, went to compose the primary musical intervals, 4:3 being the fifth, 3:2 being the fourth, and 2:1 being the octave. They understood these intervals to not only reign within the realm of earthly music but also to control the music of the spheres, that is, the divine sounds made by the planets as they went on their pristine rounds about the sky. For the Pythagoreans the whole idea of kosmos, something beautiful and ordered, was unthinkable without the numbers underlying this harmony: “Their original insight was that the numerical ratios of the musical scale indicate that the apparent chaos of sound can be brought into rational, knowable order by the imposition of number. They reasoned that the entire universe is a harmonious arrangement (in Greek, kosmos) ordered by, and thus knowable through, number.”28

Harmony, of course, is a word which we inherit from these ancient thinkers who posited that harmonia was the gift that number bestowed upon matter and spirit, on all that exists. The term originally referred to a carpenter’s joint as well as the pegs that held


the lyre together. Sextus Empiricus relates his understanding of this pivotal term according to the numbers of the Pythagorean sacred symbol, pictured below, the Tetractys: “The Tetractys is a certain number, which being composed of the four first numbers produces the most perfect number, ten. For one and two and thee and four come to be ten. This number is the first Tetractys, and is called the source of ever flowing nature since according to them the entire cosmos is organized according to harmonia, and harmonia is a system of three concords—the four, the fifth, and the octave—and the proportions of these three concords are found in the aforementioned four numbers.”

\[ \text{Figure 5 Tetractys} \]

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The Tetractys was another way of communicating the foundational importance of the number four. As you can see there are four points composing the base of this figure, and there are also four levels. There are a total of ten points, which for the Pythagoreans was the perfect number of totality. Philolaus says the following of the number ten:

One must study the activities and the essence of Number in accordance with the power existing in the Decad (Ten-ness); for it (the Decad) is great, complete, all-achieving, and the origin of divine and human life and its Leader; it shares. . . . The power also of the Decad. Without this, all things are unlimited, obscure and indiscernible.30

The Tetractys was a holy symbol for the Pythagoreans and apparently they would wear it as a patch on their clothing. It seems to have been for them the ultimate symbol of the integrity of knowledge and life. Along with representing the musical intervals the four levels of this figure also stood for the four elements (air, water, fire, earth) and the four aspects of space (point, line, plane, and solid body). In a composition devoted to extolling the virtues of the decad Speusippus says that, “one is a point, two a line, three a triangle and four a pyramid, and all these are primary and fundamental to the other figures in each class.”31

Although many classical scholars, Brunet and Mieli among them, feel that Pythagoras should be credited with discovering the “numerical rations which determine the concordant intervals of the scale,” Guthrie himself is more cautious and points to another possible source for the interest in numbers of this mythical character. He cites Aristoexenus, the “friend of fourth-century Pythagoreans,” who was of the opinion that, “Pythagoras derived his enthusiasm for the study of number from its practical

30. Freeman, Ancilla to the Presocratic Philosophers, 75.
applications in commerce.” Guthrie, agreeing in principle with this idea, goes on to say that “The impact of monetary economy, as a comparatively recent phenomenon, on a thoughtful citizen of mercantile Samos might well have been to implant the idea that the one constant factor by which things were related was the quantitative.”

But the respect shown the Tetractys surely went beyond a merely economic concern, such as we see in the following hymn, associated with Pythagorean worship:

Bless us, divine number, thou who generated gods and men! O holy, holy Tetractys, thou that containest the root and source of the eternally flowing creation! For the divine number begins with the profound, pure unity until it comes to the holy four; then it begets the mother of all, the all-comprising, all-bounding, the first-born, the never-swerving, the never-tiring holy ten, the keyholder of all.

Guthrie cites as well an oath the Pythagoreans would recite to each other concerning their founder, “By him who handed down to us the Tetractys, source and root of everlasting nature.” It should be noted that even though the Tetractys was an important religious symbol, along with its mathematical and scientific meanings, this religion was not so much for the people as it was for the select few who devoted their lives to securing the difficult wisdom which it represented. In this way the quaternity of Pythagoras is much more aloof than the traditional or Hindu ones, and yet it still manages to insinuate itself into such diverse areas of human experience as religion and mathematics. This is one characteristic of quaternity that always seems to be present, its aim to be all-encompassing, to be foundational for all things that follow.

32. Ibid., 221.

33. Ibid., 225.
Conclusion

We have thus looked at three very diverse sources in order to introduce us to the idea of quaternity. The fact that the quaternity was so central to the life of the Plains Indians, who were so connected to the rhythms of nature, while at the same time being the basis for the austere and abstract reasoning of the Pythagoreans, meant, for Jung at least, that quaternity was absolutely fundamental to the way in which human beings understand their life. In all three examples we have looked at the quaternity is connected with an encompassing all-ness, with that which is universal and gathers disparate elements. This will not go away with Jung, but rather it will be the foundation for his thinking.

One thing that is different, though, about the quaternities we have just examined is that they are not really attuned to the issues mentioned in the Introduction (femininity, evil, matter) which we can perhaps refer to as Western, and which Jung clearly identified as foundational to the neurotic symptoms he dealt with on a daily basis. For example, there is not really, in any of the above examples, a serious grappling with sexual difference, nor do we see that typically Western duality between matter and spirit, both of which become decisive issues in Jung’s formulation of his quaternities. There is a hint of these dualities in the Hindu quaternities, in the separation between moksha, and samsara, and in the fact that the fourth stage of life, that of the wandering mendicant, is one in which the sexual life has dropped off; but the difference between samsara and moksha cannot be explained as a simple matter/spirit distinction, and sexual renunciation is only
one part of this cycle, whereas in the West, according to Jung at least, sexuality is a consistently rejected 4th in the psychic quaternal structures of Western peoples.
CHAPTER 2
THE QUATERNITY OF C.G. JUNG

Axiom of Maria: “One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the Third comes the One as the Fourth.”

Individuation and the Marriage Quaternio

In the most general terms quaternity, for Jung, was simply an ordering device, a way of bringing structure to chaos, whether it be internal or external to the psyche. Quaternity as a natural structuring principle seemed to be endemic not only for the psyche, but to the natural world as well as the occluded realm of the spirit, which Jung held to be very real, and in which he dabbled not only as a psychologist but also as an occultist—his doctoral thesis detailed the soothsaying talents of one of his cousins. Jung was neither a nominalist who claimed that the words we use to describe this world refer only back to themselves, nor was he a subjective idealist who didn’t think we could get beyond our own perceptive limitations. No, for Jung not only do our perceptual limitations cause us to order things in terms of quaternal structures, but reality itself, both visible and invisible, seems to follow this structure as well. Jung’s worldview comes closest to classical Hindu religious

thought in which the true nature of the self (Atman) is congruent with the objective reality of the spiritual world (Brahman).

Jung claims that the quaternity is “the most natural division of the circle,” and “forms the logical basis for any whole judgment.” He goes on to say that, “Schopenhauer proves that ‘Principle of Sufficient Reason’ has a fourfold root. This is because the fourfold aspect is the minimum requirement for a complete judgment.” He states that it “always represents a consciously reflected and differentiated totality. Quite apart from its almost universal incidence it also appears spontaneously in dreams as an expression of the total personality.” Jung considered numbers to be the reflection of a deep order in the universe as well as in the soul of man:

Number helps more than anything else to bring order into the chaos of appearances. It is the predestined instrument for creating order. . . . It may well be the most primitive element of order in the human mind, seeing that the numbers one to four occur with the greatest frequency and have the widest incidence. In other words, primitive patterns of order are mostly triads or tetrads.

The tensions between the numbers three and four will occupy us later on, but we can see already in these few references the breadth of terrain to which he assigns quaternal functions, from the structure of human judgment and dreaming to the foundations of geometry. My examples in chapter 1 were purposefully diverse to prepare us for the

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universality which Jung assigns to the quaternity. The fact that the quaternity was central to the life of the Plains Indians, who were so connected to the rhythms of nature, while at the same time being the basis for the austere and abstract reasoning of the Pythagoreans, meant, for Jung at least, that quaternity was absolutely fundamental to the way in which human beings understand their life. In this chapter I hope to flesh out that very breadth, showing what he meant by quaternity in his psychological theories, in his critique of Christianity, and through his extensive studies on alchemy. I will leave for the following chapter the critiques and developments of his theories from subsequent thinkers.

The psychological importance of quaternity for Jung was great, for by ascertaining one’s inner quaternity, one does nothing less than harmonize one’s being with the being of the natural and spiritual worlds. The method for doing this is called individuation and it consists of three or four phases (depending on where you start counting), but whose structure is essentially quaternal, as I will show. The visual image that Jung provides for this process is called the marriage quaternio. Jung defines the marriage quaternio in the context of the process of individuation in this way:

The integration of the shadow, or the realization of the personal unconscious, marks the first stage in the analytic process, and . . . without it a recognition of anima and animus is impossible. The shadow can be realized only through a relation to a partner, and anima and animus only through a relation to a partner of the opposite sex, because only in such a relation do their projections become operative. The recognition of the anima gives rise, in a man, to a triad, one third of which is transcendent: the masculine subject, the opposing feminine subject, and the transcendent anima. With a woman the situation is reversed. The missing fourth element that would make the triad a quaternity is, in a man, the archetype of the Wise Old Man, which I have discussed here, and in a woman the Chthonic Mother. These four constitute a half immanent and half transcendent quaternity, an archetype which I have called the marriage quaternio. The marriage quaternio provides a schema not only for the Self
but also for the structure of primitive society with its cross-cousin marriage, marriage classes, and division of settlements into quarters.\(^5\)

We might say that the marriage quaternio is Jung’s term for the most natural expression which quaternities take in certain environments, namely, marriage structure in primitive society as well as the different elements of the psyche that are revealed in the process of individuation. Insofar as this is the quaternity that Jung uncovered over the length of his career and the one that deals most directly with his analytical work we might say that it is the most fundamental of Jung’s quaternities. Another factor which makes the marriage quaternio so important in understanding Jung is the way in which his own biography, his own individuation process, is tied into the figures of that quaternio which he shows us in revealing statements connecting his own biography with the elements of his theoretical thought. For instance, at his tower retreat in Bollingen, on the north shore of Lake Zurich, he built a domicile that he called “the concretization of the individuation process,” and which was conceived as a quaternity, the structure itself forming a kind of trinity of buildings, while the fourth aspect was by a “courtyard and a loggia.”\(^6\) Bollingen was really a place where Jung could deepen his knowledge of the characters in his own quaternio, one of which, Philemon, was clearly his “Wise Old Man”:

> At Bollingen I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself. Here I am, as it were, the “age-old son of the mother.” That is how alchemy puts it, very wisely, for the “old man,” the “ancient,” whom I had already experienced as a child, is personality No. 2, who has always


been and always will be. He exists outside time and is the son of the maternal unconscious. In my fantasies he took the form of Philemon, and he comes to life again at Bollingen.  

Individuation, for Jung, is a paradoxical process, “by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole.’” It is “a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality” which can be translated as “coming to selfhood” or “self realization.” It is not against the collective per se but rather encourages a subject to identify his own personality out of the collective matrix in which all people all rooted: “As the individual is not just a single, separate being, but by his very existence presupposes a collective relationship, it follows that the process of individuation must lead to more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation.” He often speaks of it as a process commencing around middle age in which the concerns of the first part of life, such as finding a career and starting a family move into the background to make way for the more introspective values of integrating undeveloped aspects of the psyche and coming to terms with the dissolution of all the projects for which the first half of life had spent

7. Ibid.


10. Ibid., 173.

11. Ibid., 155.
itself. One of his students, Aniela Jaffé, said that individuation was, in fact, a
“preparation for death.”

Jung often made comparisons between psychic and natural phenomena, and the comparison he most often used for individuation was the voyage of the sun across the sky:

I must take for comparison the daily course of the sun—but a sun that is endowed with human feeling and man’s limited consciousness. In the morning it rises from the nocturnal sea of unconsciousness and looks upon the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse that steadily widens the higher it climbs in the firmament. In this extension of its field of action caused by its own rising, the sun will discover its significance; it will see the attainment of the greatest possible height, and the widest possible dissemination of its blessings, as its goal. In this conviction the sun pursues its course to the unforeseen zenith—unforeseen, because its career is unique and individual, and the culminating point could not be calculated in advance. At the stroke of noon the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning. The sun falls into contradiction with itself. It is as though it should draw in its rays instead of emitting them. Light and warmth decline and are at last extinguished.

Jung’s extensive use of natural metaphors in describing the life of the psyche reinforce his understanding of the universal validity of quaternity, such that one can find it virtually wherever one looks, but especially in those experiences, like the rising and setting of the sun, which are the most common and repeated most often.


14. This is fact was one of the ways in which Jung described archetypes, such that—“They are the ruling power, the gods, images of the dominant laws and principles, and of typical, regularly occurring events in the soul’s cycle of experience.” Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 95.
Since the efforts of the first part of life are connected, in Jung’s view, with the ego and with the conscious function, with making plans and carrying them out in the world, the second part of life is a turn inward, and the first challenges which one faces will be precisely those characteristics which one has consciously disdained: “The unconscious compensation of a neurotic conscious attitude contains all the elements that could effectively and healthily correct the one-sidedness of the conscious mind if these elements were made conscious, i.e. were understood and integrated into it as realities.”\textsuperscript{15} The collective term for these elements was the “shadow,” often represented in dreams by a figure of the same sex as the dreamer who is dark in some manner, or even terrifying. “By shadow I mean the ‘negative’ side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious.”\textsuperscript{16} The shadow, whether encountered in a dream or in life, stands for qualities that a person has consciously rejected all their life and which the psyche is demanding be integrated in order for psychological and spiritual health to be attained.

In Jung’s reading of \textit{Faust}, Mephistopheles was the shadow character, “who in spite of his negating disposition represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar who hovers on the brink of suicide.”\textsuperscript{17} In another example which Jung gives we see the

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 110.
\item Ibid., 66fn.
\item Jung, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections}, 235.
\end{enumerate}
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shadow possessing the ego and overrunning it, instead of the ego doing the work of
consciously assimilating aspects which at first it might find disagreeable:

I know of a pious man who was a church-warden and who, from
the age of forty onward, showed a growing and finally unbearable
intolerance in matters of morality and religion. At the same time his
moods grew visibly worse. At last he was nothing more than a darkly
lowering pillar of the Church. In this way he got along until the age of
fifty-five, when suddenly, sitting up in bed in the middle of the night, he
said to his wife: “now at last I’ve got it! I’m just a plain rascal.” Nor did
this realization remain without results. He spent his declining years in
riotous living and squandered a goodly part of his fortune. Obviously quite
a likable fellow, capable of both extremes!18

Jung also described this first stage of the individuation process as the ability to
distinguish what is subjective in the projections we cast upon the world around us:

The first stage of the treatment of the transference does not involve
only the realization by the patient that he is still looking at the world from
the angle of the nursery, school-room, and so on, by projecting and
expecting all the positive and negative authoritative figures of his personal
experience; this realization merely deals with the objective side. To
establish a really mature attitude, he has to see the subjective value of all
these images which seem to create trouble from him. He has to assimilate
them into his own psychology; he has to find out in what way they are part
of himself; how he attributes for instance a positive value to an object,
when as a matter of fact it is he who could and should develop this value.
And in the same way, when he projects negative qualities and therefore
hates and loathes the object, he has to discover that he is projecting his
own inferior side, his shadow, as it were, because he prefers to have an
optimistic and one-sided image of himself. Freud, as you know, deals only
with the objective side.19

Books, 1970), 179. It is not insignificant that Freud is mentioned at this stage, for in
Jung’s own individuation process Freud in some way functioned as his shadow. On his
first meeting with Freud in 1907 Jung claims that they talked “without a pause for
thirteen hours.” They immediately developed a relationship in which Freud played the
father to his “crown prince” Jung. But within five years theoretical differences
between them precipitated a total break in their relations, a traumatic encounter that
At this point it might be helpful to distinguish two quaternities here, the quaternity of the marriage quaternio, consisting of (for a male subject): a masculine subject, corresponding feminine subject, transcendent anima, and transcendent function (Wise Old Man); as well as the quaternity of the phases of individuation. In the latter quaternity the confrontation with the shadow could be read as the first phase, even though the shadow is not listed in the marriage quaternio proper. This is because through the process of individuation the shadow is incorporated into the subject (the projections are “dissolved”)—the ego no longer eschews those negative properties about himself which he had formerly projected onto others. In Jung’s case his confrontation with Freud eventually allowed him to incorporate precisely those traits of Freud which made it impossible for Jung to be loyal to him; that is, he himself became the groundbreaking and aggressive leader which Freud had first modeled to him.

The shadow is represented by a person of the same sex and derives from the personal unconscious of the person—a concept which can be understood as similar to Freud’s unconscious, a place of repressed memories, feelings, and thoughts:

It contains recognizable material of a definitely personal origin; these contents are individual acquisitions or products of instinctive processes that make up the personality as a whole. Furthermore, there are forgotten or repressed contents, and creative contents. There is nothing especially peculiar about them. In other people such things may be conscious. Some people are conscious of things of which other people are

Jung described as a sort of death. It was at this point that Jung began to develop his own distinctive ideas concerning analysis. Using the language of individuation their break would have marked the point where Jung was able to recognize what in himself was consciously repressed. His gradual success on his own terms could be read as an integration of the shadow character of his own psyche.
not. I call that class of contents the sub-conscious mind or the personal unconscious, because, as far as we can judge, it is entirely made up of personal elements, elements that constitute that human personality as a whole.\textsuperscript{20}

The next layer of the individuation process—the whole of which can be pictured as a journey from the circumference of a circle, which would be the ego, through successive layers of the psyche till it reaches its center and goal, the Self—is the confrontation with the anima (if we’re discussing a man) or the animus (for women). For a man the anima is the archetype or form of Eros (relationship, femininity) while for a woman the animus is the form of logos (rationality, masculinity). The confrontation with the anima/us was more difficult in Jung’s view because instead of residing in the personal unconscious, it found its home in the collective unconscious, a region which the subject had not experienced personally but had experienced, if at all, through the medium of symbols. Jung describes the transition from the first to the second stage in this way:

\begin{quote}
Let us now assume that the projection of personal images has been worked through and is sufficiently dealt with, but there is still a transference which you simply cannot dissolve. Then we come to the second stage in the therapy of transference. That is the discrimination between personal and impersonal contents. The personal projections, as we have seen, must be dissolved; and they can be dissolved through conscious realization. But the impersonal projections cannot be destroyed because they belong to the structural elements of the psyche.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

In this second phase of the individuation process we meet with the impersonal images, that is, the images of the collective unconscious, which “cannot be dissolved.” A split then occurs which in the marriage quaternio is evidenced in the anima/us which has an

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\item[20.] Jung, \textit{Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice}, 40.
\item[21.] Ibid., 180.
\end{enumerate}
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earthly instantiation (the projected content of the impersonal image) and a heavenly form, the eternal, indissoluble, archetype. Personal projections, such as the one which developed between Freud and Jung, can be dissolved, and one can bring this conflict to an end through conscious work. Impersonal projections, on the other hand, should cause one to be “extremely cautious,” because the source of the projection is an archetype which can’t be dissolved and which will always be on the ready to become incarnate, as it were, in an earthly form, via projection. Jung considered the acceptance of fascism in the 1930s in Germany and Italy to be evidence of “the savior complex as mass psychology,” in which entire populations projected the unconscious power of the savior archetype onto their leaders.22

The concept of the collective unconscious is Jung’s most famous contribution to psychology, and a brief examination of it will suffice to show the uniqueness of the direction which he took via Freud’s discoveries:

There is another class of contents of definitely unknown origin, or at all events of an origin which cannot be ascribed to individual acquisition. These contents have one outstanding peculiarity, and that is their mythological character. It is as if they belong to a pattern not peculiar to any particular mind or person, but rather to a pattern peculiar to mankind in general. When I first came across such contents I wondered very much whether they might not be due to heredity, and I thought they might be explained by racial inheritance. In order to settle that question I went to the United States and studied the dreams of pure-blooded Negroes, and I was able to satisfy myself that these images have nothing to do with so-called blood or racial inheritance, nor are they personally acquired by the individual. They belong to mankind in general, and therefore they are of a collective nature.23

22. Ibid., 181.

What Jung found is that dream images from extremely diverse peoples will tend to coalesce around a few familiar forms, or archetypes, which act as the subsoil for human psyches everywhere. Once the individuation process had reached the level of the anima/us it had gone beyond the personal unconscious and was tapping into this universal realm. Let us look at Jung’s own words in describing it:

> The collective unconscious takes the place of the Platonic realm of eternal ideas. Instead of these models giving form to created things, the collective unconscious, through its archetypes, provides the \textit{a priori} condition for the assignment of meaning.\textsuperscript{24}

> From the standpoint of the psychology of the personality a twofold division ensues: an “extra-conscious” psyche whose contents are \textit{personal}, and an “extra-conscious” psyche whose contents are \textit{impersonal} and \textit{collective}. The first group comprises contents which are integral components of the individual personality and could therefore just as well be conscious; the second group forms, as it were, an omnipresent, unchanging, and everywhere identical \textit{quality or substrate of the psyche per se}.\textsuperscript{25}

The realm of the collective unconscious has an almost holographic quality to it, such that accessing any part of it is like accessing the whole of it, the experience with anima/us not excluded. Jung went so far as to say that the anima/us “represented the collective unconscious” for a person. In this way the tension between the ego and the anima is both greater and less than the tension which is experienced in the confrontation with the shadow. It is greater in the sense that while the assimilation of the shadow involves integration of consciously rejected elements, the meeting of the anima necessitated

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Jung, \textit{Mysterium Coniunctionis}, 87.
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assimilation of *unconsciously* rejected elements, that is, elements which are diametrically opposed on a deeper level. Sexual difference is one obvious example of this, which is why one’s anima/us was always a character of the opposite sex. But it is lesser in the sense that, if one proceeds faithfully through the difficulties of individuation one will experience the deep harmony which underlies the opposition. The tension with the shadow can be neutralized because it lacks the depth of unity, but the tension with the anima/us is eternal because its oneness is eternal. This is represented in the marriage quaternio by the fact that the shadow is not shown separately but is integrated into the ego. The anima/us is represented in two forms due to the fact that, with the entrance of the process of individuation into the realm of the collective, a spiritual reality has opened up which cannot be totally assimilated to its earthly counterpart. The anima/us is thus never completely assimilated into the ego but takes on various personae in a person’s life. In Jung’s case it is clear that his relationship with Toni Wolff, a woman with whom he was intimately connected for decades, represented his confrontation with the anima and in fact coincided with the birth of that aspect of the theory itself. Yet because the anima also maintains its identity as an archetype it is never completely filled out by one person, and Jung’s infamous love triangle with his wife and Toni Wolff (not to mention the hordes of mostly female admirers) was evidence of this.

The third stage of the process of individuation Jung describes as the ability “to differentiate the personal relationship to the analyst from impersonal factors.” In the terms of the marriage quaternio this means being able to distinguish between the

heavenly and earthly anima/us. This is for Jung the end of the transference with the analyst, for one now can see what about their attraction to (or repulsion from) the analyst was due to archetypal factors and what was due to personal factors. This is the end of analysis and the beginning of the subject’s life as an “individual,” as one that is individuated from the masses, as one that can be in conscious accord with the movements of his unconscious life, as opposed to being drawn unknowingly by the same power.

If the integration of the shadow results in the ego no longer rejecting important elements in its makeup, the integration of the anima/us is represented by sexual union, the coming together of opposites, which proceeds naturally to the birth by which the activation of the Self archetype is so often connected. The meeting with the anima/us is also seen as a union as opposed to the hostility of the encounter with the shadow—“Insofar as analytical treatment makes the ‘shadow’ conscious, it causes a cleavage and a tension of opposites which in their turn seek compensation in unity.”

If the shadow is incorporated throughout the process of individuation Jung also hints that the anima becomes, if not incorporated, at least more familiar to the ego, more integrated to the entire psyche. In his autobiography, after recalling how he used to put questions to the anima of his dreams he states: “Today I no longer need these conversations with the anima, for I no longer have such emotions. But if I did have them, I would deal with them in the same way. Today I am directly conscious of the anima’s ideas because I have learned to accept the contents of the unconscious and to understand them.”

27. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 35.

28. Ibid., 188.
Jung’s later life, at his paintings, writings, and the work he did at Bollingen it is clear he was identifying himself more and more with the transcendental aspects (the heavenly anima and wise old man) of his own marriage quaternio.

In the meeting with the anima/us there is a sense of “union of opposites” with the emphasis on the opposites. When the discussion turns to the Self, the emphasis in on the union and on the new birth which arises from achieving union where there once was none. In this way the figure in the marriage quaternio with which the Self is most closely linked is what Jung calls the transcendent function, which for men is a wise old man and for women is some version of an Earth mother. This transcendent function is a harmonizing agent that enables the subject to transcend the dualities which control earthly life, and experience a new birth on a spiritual plane. And while Jung speaks about integrating the shadow or the anima/us, when the process has reached the level of the Self, Jung uses the term transformation instead, clearly referring to the alchemical transmutation of matter into spiritual substance.

The self is the most abstract of Jung’s archetypes, but it is also the most central; and though all the archetypes in some sense stand for the whole collective unconscious this sort of holographic relationship is one with the definition of the self. The self is, then, the archetype of archetypes. It is a “God image” which “is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning.”

A quaternial structure in a dream or drawing by a patient was

29. Ibid., 199.
often to Jung a sign of the activation of the self, which is fundamentally that which is able to express the unity of the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche:

As it is a concept of human totality, the self is by definition greater than the ego-conscious personality, embracing besides this the personal shadow and the collective unconscious. Conversely, the entire phenomenon of the unconscious appears so unimportant to ego-consciousness that we would rather explain it as a *privatio lucis* then allow it an autonomous existence.  

The appearance of the self in the psychic life of a patient was the fourth and final phase of the individuation process which Jung defined as “the objectivation [sic] of impersonal images.”  

This is a properly creative phase in which a person is able to find or create appropriate “receptacles” for the undeniable energy of the archetypes to which she is now attuned. One might perhaps join a church or rediscover the religion of their youth, and Jung saw absolutely nothing wrong with this; in fact, he greatly encouraged it when his patients joined the Catholic Church or “Oxford Group movement.” But he was also aware that for many people the symbols of the church or of religion in general may not be appropriate forms for their archetypal content, and thus Jung saw artistic and other creative endeavors as on a par with the spiritual work that can be achieved through more traditional religious means.

If we mark the break with Freud as Jung’s experience with the shadow, and Toni Wolff as an important instantiation of his anima, it is the work he did at Bollingen which is the direct expression of the archetypes of the self. I already mentioned the manner in


which the buildings and grounds were conceived as a quaternal structure. That this quaternity was a sign of the self and of the transcendent function is emphasized by the inscription he placed over the gate of the Tower: *Philemonis Sacrum—Fausti Poenitentia* (Shrine of Philemon—Repentance of Faust)\(^3\) —Philemon being the wise old man who guided Jung in his dreams, and Faust representing the overweening ambition of consciousness in the West. Jung claimed that at Bollingen “it is as if one lived in many centuries simultaneously,”\(^3\) another proof that, there, he was living at the level of the collective unconscious.

The first building he constructed at Bollingen was to evince the holistic nature of a mandala: “It was to be a round structure with a hearth in the center and bunks along the walls. I more or less had in mind an African hut where the fire, ringed by a few stones, burns in the middle, and the whole life of the family revolves around this center. . . . [which] concretize an idea of wholeness.”\(^4\) Jung had taken to sketching mandalas after his break from Freud and during the time when he was searching for his own form of psychology. The mandala was, according to a line Jung quotes from Faust, “Formation, Transformation, Eternal mind’s eternal recreation,” which he then equates with, “the self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious, but which cannot

\(^3\) Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 237fn.

\(^4\) Ibid., 223-224.
tolerate self-deceptions." We see the seeds of his work at Bollingen in the discoveries he made while sketching these quaternal images:

My mandalas were cryptograms concerning the state of the self which were presented to me anew each day. In them I saw the self—that is, my whole being—actively at work. To be sure, at first I could only dimly understand them; but they seemed to me highly significant, and I guarded them like precious pearls. I had the distinct feeling that they were something central, and in time I acquired through them a living conception of the self. The self, I thought, was like the monad which I am, and which is my world. The mandala represents this monad, and corresponds to the microcosmic nature of the psyche.

He tells us that it was during this time, starting in 1918, that he began to really differentiate his work from that of Freud’s, and began to see quaternity, self, and mandala in very similar terms:

I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, only at the beginning; later, everything points toward the center. This insight gave me stability, and gradually my inner peace returned. I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate. Perhaps someone else knows more, but not I.

We should point out here that the marriage quaternio has some peculiarities all its own. First of all, as I have already noted, the shadow is not a component of the quaternity proper, but is considered as integrated into the ego. Also, there is clearly a fifth element

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 196. While Jung eschews any language of linear development here, I don’t think he is so far from something like Erikson’s life-cycle stages as he makes out. Such stages are clearly evident in his thought all the way up the realization of the self, which is almost a vanishing point in his system.
37. Ibid., 197.
that is at least implied in this structure which is often referred to as the birth, the golden child, or the “quintessence” (an alchemical term) which emerges from the quaternal matrix. If we were to provide a justification as to why these elements are not explicitly included in the quaternity we might surmise that they are both more like effects of the quaternal matrix as opposed to its consistent features. The shadow can be described as the negative effect of the ego’s positive ideals for itself which are integrated through the process of individuation. While the shadow does not disappear, it is not necessary to include it as a separate element from the ego because its features are implied in the positive description of the ego. The fifth should be considered as a potential birth instead of an actual birth. It is the expression of the wholeness that is the unified quaternity, or alternatively, because the psyche is now unified within itself as a four-part structure, it has the capability for true creativity and for authentic fruitfulness outside the bounds of neurosis and mental illness. It is truly free, individuated, no longer compelled to follow the obsession of the masses; therefore, it can participate in a birth which will be life giving for itself and its community.

**The Critique of Christianity**

In Jung’s work the issue between psychology and religion comes down to this: the psyche follows a pattern and a logic that is fundamentally quaternal, and if a religion is true to this structure in its symbols and teachings, then the religion is a good one and stands a chance of providing an authentic path for its faithful to travel down as it shepherds them through a process of coming to terms with the shadow side of their own psyches and the
world of the archetypes. If the religion is deficient, though, if it does not sufficiently map onto the structure of the psyche that Jung claimed had been verified by the research of analytical psychologists and other evidence from the human sciences, mental illness, or at least some measure of dissatisfaction, was likely to be the result.

For Jung the homogeneity of the human psyche was just as clear as the homogeneity of human physiology, for, “the structure and function of the bodily organs are everywhere more or less the same, including those of the brain. And as the psyche is to a large extent dependent on this organ, presumably it will—at least in principle—everywhere produce the same forms.”38 This is partly the foundation for his opinion that religion is dependent on psychology and not the other way around (such as we see it in William James). “Religions are psychotherapeutic systems,”39 he says, and because of the physiological similarity of people all over the world, there is also a fundamental psychological similarity. Thus, a large part of his work was formulating a vision which would make sense for each and every person. To ground these theories Jung depended equally on what his patients told him during analysis, the drawings and paintings they produced, as well as the mythology, folk-lore, religion and philosophies of as many different people groups from as many different places and times as he could get his hands on. While he would not have claimed that his research was exhaustive, he was

38. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, xix.

confident that he had accumulated enough different kinds of evidence to prove scientifically that the human psyche functioned everywhere in a consistent manner.\textsuperscript{40}

When Jung talks about religion he clearly does so from the vantage point of the psychologist, a point he makes abundantly clear, especially in writings and interviews subsequent to the publishing of his book, \textit{Answer to Job}, for which he was attacked by theologians for his creative, and rather unorthodox, understanding of the roles of Satan and Yahweh in the book of Job. One statement from the text makes this clear: “God made himself man, became Christ, in order to redeem his injustice to Job.”\textsuperscript{41} In this same interview Jung took great pain to affirm the place of religion in human life, saying, that “religious experience is real, is true,” and that through “religious experiences the soul may be ‘saved,’ its integration hastened, and spiritual equilibrium established.”\textsuperscript{42} But he also stresses that there is a psychological truth behind these events, such that, “the presence of God is manifest, in the profound experience of the psyche, as a \textit{coincidentia oppositorum}, and the whole history of religion, all the theologies, bear witness to the fact that the \textit{coincidentia oppositorum} is one of the commonest and most archaic formulas for expressing the reality of God.” While the \textit{coincidentia oppositorum}, an alchemical term,

\textsuperscript{40} We might say that the uniformity of the human psyche is something that psychology holds as a sacred truth, that it is what gives it the validity of a science. Jung’s uniqueness is that he did not theorize this universality in scientific terms but in broadly human ones, thus allowing him to use evidence from religion, anthropology, literature, etc. Those who have followed Jung have not retained his emphasis that what he was doing was scientific.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 228.
could be used to describe religious experiences across many different traditions, Jung is also clear that the need for such a psychology as his comes out of the experience of Western man as “desacralized”—“Faith and faith alone has no longer the power—alas!—to cure certain people. Modern man must discover a deeper source of his own spiritual life”—this “deeper source” referring to the theories of the archetypes which Jung developed, as well as those from alchemy and world religious which could be put in the service of his psychological system.

Jung’s relationship with Christianity and especially with its theologians was never without its troubles. While it is undoubtedly the case that Jung thought Christianity had very real problems due to certain errors in its theology and self-understanding, he also affirmed—the more the older he got—the importance that westerners not reject their religious heritage, and that psychic health for a westerner would almost always involve a serious grappling with the symbols, if not the dogma, of the Christian faith. In a telling passage from a series of talks he gave to Institute of Medical Psychology in London in 1935 we can see the contradiction of his position on the place of Christianity for westerners:

I have had some patients who now go to the so-called Oxford Group Movement—with my blessing! I think it is perfectly correct to make use of these psychotherapeutic institutions which history has given to us, and I wish I were still a medieval man who could join such a creed. Unfortunately it needs a somewhat medieval psychology to do it, and I am not sufficiently medieval.44

43. Ibid.

So on the one hand he gives his blessing to those who embrace the church, and we can assume he considers these people psychically healthy, even cured, especially if they had once been patients of his; on the other hand he says that one must have a “medieval psychology” to go to church! How exactly should we take this? It seems that he is using the term “medieval” here in a derogatory sense, but we do not have to necessarily jump to that conclusion. He is most likely simply trying to denote a worldview that is pre-scientific, that places more weight on tradition instead of empirical proof. Jung, as a psychologist/scientist as opposed to a theologian, saw himself as someone who demanded the kind of empirical proof he could glean from analyzing dreams, word associations, accounts of religious experiences, etc. And yet we can see in the above quote that while he is not critical of the existence of the church he is also not convinced of its present day effectiveness, and at the very least he is saying that there is some inherent difficulty in being both modern and religious (or, more accurately, Christian).

For Jung, authentic knowledge could only really be gained through a bringing-to-consciousness of the contents of the collective unconscious. Since every subject was in the same relative position in regards to their unconscious, the notion of hierarchy and a privileged place from which knowledge speaks is not amenable to Jung’s system. At the end of individuation the subject is in the position to own the treasure of his own unconscious, and has gained access to the depths of the collective unconscious. Jung states that our task is not, therefore, to deny the archetypes, but to “dissolve the projections in order to restore their contents to the individual who has lost them by
projecting them outside himself.” For Jung, one is always in the thrall of the unconscious, but whereas an average person unknowingly projects the contents of his archetypes, the individual who has gone through a successful analysis is no longer cut off from the source of his own being. Ultimately, the source of creativity are these archetypes and the mysterious realm of the collective unconscious.

There is a critique, here, of the radical difference that Christianity maintains between creator and creature, such that God will always be in a position of superiority over man, and the highest aspiration for man should not be to become like God but only to praise God. Although Jung was always careful that his statements would not be understood theologically, the Self for him was clearly all that one really needed of God—as we noted he refers to it as a “God principle.” All in all, Jung’s understanding of Christianity is such that the Christian symbols are accepted but only insofar as they accord with the path of individuation outlined above, in which the subject must be given complete freedom to realize his own God/Self, free from the dogma of the church which would tend to straightjacket one’s appropriation of the archetypal images.


46. The beatific vision of God is usually understood as the blessed gazing upon God, but it might be instructive to read, as Northrop Frye does, “The vision of God” in the subjective genitive, that is, God’s seeing (vision) through us, not our vision of God—“we perceive as God; we do not perceive God.” So what is operative here is not our vision of God but God’s vision of us. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), 108.
The Problem with the Problem of Evil

We can learn a lot about what Jung thought a healthy religion was by his critiques of Christianity. The Christian understanding of evil, that it was not substantial but merely a privation of the good, a *privatio boni*, he thought to be antithetical to the truth of the psyche, in which good and evil are relative to each other, neither one having more or less substance than the other. He quotes with approval the saying of the alchemist Gerhard Dorn that “there is nothing in nature which does not include as much evil as good.” But He quotes with disapproval the common medieval saying, *omne bonum a deus, omne malum a homine* (all good is from God, all evil from man) which for him encapsulated what was fundamentally wrong with the Christian God, namely that He—at least according to orthodox formulations—did not contain any evil, or shadow, as Jung would say. This is the traditional view that God is all good, all loving, all knowing, and that He is capable of no evil whatsoever. Jung complains: “The Christ symbol lacks wholeness in the modern psychological sense, since it does not include the dark side of things but specifically excludes it in the form of a Luciferian opponent.” Now the splitting itself was not so unacceptable; in fact, this was exactly what happened in the process of psychological individuation, and it is something one sees in many religious systems, such

47. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 55. It is interesting to read his memoirs where he identifies the origin of some of these ideas very early in his life. As to the idea that God could be, or contain, evil he points to a dream he had as a young boy in which God defecates on a cathedral. After that he knew that “god could be something terrible.” Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 40.

as in the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva in which creative power is given to
Brahma and destructive power to Shiva. Jung’s problem with the Christian version of this
was that Lucifer had been cut off from the trinity as opposed to merely contrasted with it,
such as in the Hindu trinity where, even though Shiva has a destructive role, Shiva is not
metaphysically antithetical to Brahma, only functionally complementary, and ultimately a
necessary facet of the divine economy. But the difference between Christ and Satan is a
metaphysical one representing a duality which could not be stricter. As Jung states: “In
the Christian concept . . . the archetype is hopelessly split into two irreconcilable halves,
leading ultimately to a metaphysical dualism—the final separation of the kingdom of
heaven from the fiery world of the damned.”

It was precisely this “metaphysical dualism” which Jung saw his theories as a
corrective to. For while in the structure of the psyche the dualities were very stark, it was
a diversity that could be united to create a healthy personality. Jung called this the
mysterium coniunctionis and it was the goal of individuation brought about through the
activation of the self archetype. Because orthodox Christianity envisaged a metaphysical
split between good and evil as opposed to a unification of opposites, Jung considered it to
be a dangerously unbalanced world-view which could contribute to psychotic and
neurotic breakdowns. Thus when the Pope, in 1950, declared the assumption of the
Virgin Mary to be dogma, Jung considered this to be “the most important religious event

49. Ibid., 42.
since the reformation.” It was important because now the trinity was balanced by a figure, Mary, who was undeniably earthly, and, if not evil, like Satan, her inclusion was at least a partial admittance of the need for something of a shadow element. The Catholic faith had made a step in the right direction, according to Jung, because it now admitted that its Godhead might be read in terms of what, for Jung, was the true structure of the psyche, a quaternity. I quote the following at length for it expresses what is most important in Jung’s thinking on Mary and the trinity:

The Christian Trinity is able to maintain itself as such only by eliminating the fourth protagonist of the divine drama [Satan, God’s firstborn]. If he were included there would be, not a Trinity, but a Christian Quaternity. For a long time there had been a psychological need for this, as is evident from the medieval pictures of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin; it was also responsible for elevating her to a position of mediatrix, corresponding to Christ’s position as the mediator, with the difference that Mary only transmits grace but does not generate it. The recent promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption emphasizes the taking up not only of the soul but of the body of Mary into the Trinity, thus making a dogmatic reality of those medieval representations of the quaternity which are constructed on the following pattern.

Only in 1950, after the teaching authority in the Church had long deferred it, and almost a century after the declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, did the Pope, moved by a growing wave of popular petitions, feel compelled to declare the Assumption as a revealed truth. All the evidence shows that the dogmatization was motivated chiefly by the religious need of the Catholic masses. Behind this stands


51. It seems that Jung considered the Catholic church to be a more effective “psychotherapeutic system” than the Protestant churches. When he interviewed a group of acquaintances asking them who they would go to if they had a problem about 20% of protestants named their pastor while 60% of catholics named their priest: “This proves that the Catholic church in particular, with its rigorous system of confession and its director of conscience, is a therapeutic institution.” Jung, Analytical Practice: Its Theory and Practice, 182.
the archetypal numen of feminine deity, who, at the Council of Ephesus in 431, imperiously announced her claim to the title of “Theotokos” (God-bearer), as distinct from that of a mere “Anthropotokos” (man-bearer) accorded to her by the Nestorian rationalists.\(^5\)

This inclusion of Mary in the heavenly host was reminiscent for Jung of the Gnostic conceptions of Christ which often saw him as androgynous or somehow connected with a feminine aspect:

The fact that not only the Gnostic Logos but Christ himself was drawn into the orbit of sexual symbolism is corroborated by the fragment from the *Interrogationes maiores Mariae*, quoted by Epiphanius. It is related there that Christ took this Mary with him on a mountain, where he produced a woman from his side and began to have intercourse with her.\(^5\)

For the Gnostics Christ was the primal or original man, who very often had both male and female characteristics. For Jung this meant a person who had reconciled their conscious and unconscious functions, who, “As the Anthropos . . . corresponds to what is empirically the most important archetype and, as judge of the living and the dead and king of glory, to the real organizing principle of the unconscious, the quaternity, or squared circle of the self.”\(^5\) and further, “The quaternity of Christ, which must be borne in mind in this vision, is exemplified by the cross symbol, the *rex gloriae*, and Christ as the year.”\(^5\)

His quaternal nature is stressed even more strongly by Jung in another passage:

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54. Ibid., 204.

55. Ibid.
That the Son is closely akin to the self is evident from the emphasis laid on the quaternary nature of Christ: he has a “fourfold voice” (quadruplex vox), his heart has four kinds of pulse, and from his countenance go forth four rays of light.”

The presence of the feminine and the emphasis on the fourfold or quaternal went hand in hand for Jung, because they both stressed the action of complementarity, filling in “what had been missing in the pure, deified masculinity of Christ. . . . [namely] the counterbalancing femininity.”

In the traditional thinking of Christian theology Christ gives symbolic birth to the church when the blood and water flow from his side on the cross. In this way he shows himself as the second Adam, because just like Eve was born from a rib taken from Adam’s side, so the second woman, who is Mary but also the church, comes not before, but after the second man—she is derived from him but also destined to join him, as bride with her bridegroom. The Gnostics, as we have seen, also pick up on this image of Christ showing the Virgin the nature of spiritual wisdom by producing a woman from his side and then joining with her; yet there is an important difference in emphasis, for the Gnostic image is psychologized in a way that the orthodox tradition is not:

The splitting of the Original Man into husband and wife expresses an act of nascent consciousness; it gives birth to a pair of opposites, thereby making consciousness possible. For the beholder of the miracle, Mary, the vision was the spontaneous visualization or projection of an unconscious process in herself.”

56. Ibid., 206.
57. Ibid., 205.
58. Ibid., 204.
The emphasis is on a union whose fundamental imagery is sexual and which looks backward, to the primal man, as its goal as well as origin. The orthodox Christian reading of this union is sublimated in a crucial way, and looks not backward to the Edenic state but forward to the state of the new Jerusalem, in which, though the sexual imagery is not avoided, *eros* makes way for the feast of *agape* in which there will be “no giving or taking in marriage.”

**The Importance of Alchemy**

As I have already mentioned Jung was aware of the value of religions as therapeutic systems that, notwithstanding their value to the eternal soul, could be helpful to the psychic lives of their followers in the here and now. He was critical of the fad—this is at least how he saw it—of westerners “going east,” of embracing (mostly superficial versions of) Yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. I think his words of caution were very prescient, but, judging by the way the New Age movement and Jungian thought have developed, his warnings have gone for the most part unheeded. Jung himself was very drawn to the tenets of Hinduism and practiced yoga when the pressures of his busy life got to him. The worldview which Jung paints in his writings coincides very well with that of traditional Hinduism and its themes of karma and reincarnation, and is in general more Eastern than Western. Even so, Jung felt it more important, in most cases, that a person be connected with the symbolic tradition in which they were raised than to adopt a
foreign one. At one point he says that when a person is done with an analysis, “A Jew becomes a Jew, a Protestant a Protestant, a Catholic a Catholic.”

In his book, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, which is a commentary on a recent translation of an ancient Chinese alchemical text, he both stresses the necessity for westerners to learn about eastern religion and ways of knowing as well as the danger of abandoning one’s own tradition:

Growing acquaintance with the spiritual East should be no more to us than the symbolical expression of the fact that we are entering into connection with the elements in ourselves which are still strange to us. Denial of our own historical premises would be sheer folly and would be the best way to bring about another deracination. Only by standing firmly on our own soil can we assimilate the spirit of the East.

A common point he made in comparing East with West is that one had to flip things upside down to make sense of the comparison. For example, he considered Hindus in general to be very rooted in the unconscious but in need of an influx of consciousness, whereas Westerners for the most part were overly developed on the conscious side and needed to get to know the contents of the collective unconscious. He even said that when dealing with a western person, the traditional Hindu ordering of the chakras should be turned upside down, to bear witness to the fact that the Westerner starts with consciousness: “Since the Western mind is based wholly on the standpoint of

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consciousness, it must define anima in the way I have done, but the East, based as it is on
the standpoint of the unconscious, sees consciousness as an effect of the anima!"61

While making comparisons with Eastern religion, alchemy, and psychology were
vital for Jung, his main focus was on articulating the lineage of his own thought, which
he felt had to be done through Western traditions. He did not see Freud as the
fountainhead for this thought, but considered his work to be the refining of a practice that
had much older roots in the religious and philosophical thought of the West. Due to his
dislike for some of the Christian dogmas discussed above, he paid great interest to the
thought of “heretics” (such as Giordano Bruno and Origen), many of whom had the same
criticisms of the Christian tradition that he did. Early on he became very interested in the
Gnostics, due to their understanding of the feminine and the fact that their version of
Christ seemed to be more rooted in the empirical evidence of human psychological
experience.62 As a result they took evil more seriously and thought the privatio boni to be
a mistake:

Thanks to the doctrine of the privatio boni, wholeness seemed
guaranteed in the figure of Christ. One must, however, take evil rather
more substantially when one meets it on the plane of empirical
psychology. There it is simply the opposite of good. In the ancient world
the Gnostics, whose arguments were very much influenced by psychic
experience, tackled the problem of evil on a broader basis than the Church
Fathers. For instance, one of the things they taught was that Christ “cast
off his shadow from himself.”63

61. Ibid., 119.

62. It should be noted that when discussing the Gnostics Jung tends to reduce a
very complicated and diverse world of thought to his (much more basic) psychological
schematics. There are surely myriad ways of understanding these prodigious texts!

63. Jung, Aion, 41.

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Yet at a certain point Jung turned from Gnosticism to alchemy, not because the Gnostics were deficient theoretically, but because he was concerned with continuity of the tradition. Here is how he explains this shift in his memoirs:

As far as I could see, the tradition that might have connected Gnosis with the present seemed to have been severed, and for a long time it proved impossible to find any bridge that led from Gnosticism—or neo-Platonism—to the contemporary world. But when I began to understand alchemy I realized that it represented the historical link with Gnosticism, and that a continuity therefore existed between past and present. Grounded in the natural philosophy of the middle ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious.⁶⁴

Although Jung, to my knowledge, does not complain about the dualism of the Gnostics or their negative stance on matter, it seems to me that another plausible reason for his declining interest in them is that the Plotinian schema of ascent which the Gnostics adopted left no room to develop an understanding of the unconscious, which demanded some sort of language of descent. Instead of seeing the universe as a duality in which spirit yearns to break away from the matter which imprisons it to join the One Mind (Nous) from whence it came, the alchemists were much more likely to speak of the similarity, even identity, between things above and things below. The saying of Hermes Trismegistus was their watchword: “As below, so above.” The following passage, in which Jung quotes from the alchemist Vigenerus, we see how this philosophy was played out both cosmoligically and psychologically:

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⁶⁴ Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 201.
Man is a microcosm of the universe and is composed, just like the universe, of four elements. Vigenerus writes the following in support of man’s likeness to the universe in which he finds himself: “For the elements are circular [in their arrangement], as Hermes makes clear, each being surrounded by two others with which it agrees in one of those qualities peculiar to itself, as [for instance] earth is between fire and water, partaking in the dryness of fire and the coldness of water. And so with the rest. . . . Man, therefore, who is an image of the great world, and is called the microcosm or little world (as the little world, made after the similitude of its archetype, and compounded of the four elements, is called the great man), has also his heaven and his earth. For the soul and the understanding are his heaven; his body and senses his earth. Therefore, go know the heaven and earth of man, is the same as to have a full a complete knowledge of the whole world and of the things of nature.”

The alchemists tended to work in two directions at the same time, ascending and descending, looking at nature and the spirit simultaneously. They were rooted in the natural world, and as we can see that their image of the microcosmic quaternity, the quaternity of man, is modeled on the quaternity of the elements in nature. Jung was fascinated by the almost naïve belief of the alchemists that whatever transformation they subjected their chemical substances to would also redound onto their own persons—“Thus it is that the psychic sphere representing the body miraculously appeared to the adept to be identical with chemical preparation in the retort. Hence he could believe that any changes he effected in the latter would happen to the former as well.”

In a short interview which Jung gave to Mircea Eliade toward the end of his life he lays out in a very concise manner what he learned from alchemy:

For fifteen years I studied alchemy, but I never spoke to anyone about it; I did not wish to influence my patients or my fellow workers by

65. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, 388.

66. Ibid., 489.
suggestion. But after fifteen years of research and observation, ineluctable conclusions were forced upon me. The alchemical operations were real, only this reality was not physical but psychological. Alchemy represents the projection of a drama both cosmic and spiritual in laboratory terms. The opus magnum had two aims: the rescue of the human soul and the salvation of the cosmos. What the alchemists called “matter” was in reality the [unconscious] self. The “soul of the world,” the anima mundi, which was identified with the spiritual mercurius, was imprisoned in matter. It is for this reason that the alchemists believed in the truth of “matter,” because “matter” was actually their own psychic life. But it was a question of freeing this “matter,” of saving it—in a word, of finding the philosophers’ stone, the corpus glorificationis.\footnote{C.G. Jung, “Eliade’s Interview for Combat” in \textit{C.G. Jung Speaking}, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 227-228.}

It was this belief in matter, which Jung understand as referring to what is now known as the unconscious, which made the alchemists so attractive to Jung. And whereas Gnosticism, with its emphasis on the elevation of spirit was antithetical to the orthodox Christian belief in the resurrection of the body, Jung felt the alchemical project was not an alternative to the Christian one but a continuation, and even a bettering, of it. In his lengthy tome on alchemy, \textit{Mysterium Coniunctionis}, Jung explains in detail the way the alchemists saw themselves in relation to Christianity, such that their work was not distinct from the work of Christ, but consonant with it. In most of Jung’s descriptions the work of Christ on the cross is seen as salvific for the soul of men and women, yet not for the soul of the cosmos. Thus, alchemical work was specifically directed towards the cosmos itself. Though the alchemical arena is Christian we can clearly see an influence of Gnostic, Greek, and pagan influences here in which the stark difference which theology posited between humanity and the rest of nature was not determinative. We can see why the alchemists were so attractive to Jung, for they do not reject their Christian heritage.
but aim to incorporate elements into it which emphasized its connectedness with the pagan traditions and the religious traditions of the East.

In Jung’s view, the fact that alchemists always talked about two things at the same time, the chemical combinations as well as their symbolic references, caused confusion for them and created an internal limit to the psychological accuracy of their work:

Anyone who has but a slight acquaintance with the literature know that the adepts were ultimately concerned with a union of the substances—by whatever names these may have been called. By means of this union they hoped to attain the goal of the work: the production of the gold or a symbolical equivalent of it. Although the *coniunctio* is unquestionably the primordial image of what we today would call chemical combination, it is hardly possible to prove beyond a doubt that the adept thought as concretely as the modern chemist. Even when he spoke of a union of the “natures,” or of an “amalgam” of iron and copper, or of a compound of sulphur and mercury, he meant it at the same time as a symbol: iron was Mars and copper was Venus, and their fusion was at the same time a love-affair. The union of the “natures” which “embrace one another” was not physical and concrete, for they were “celestial natures” which multiplied “by the command of God.” When “red lead” was roasted with gold it produced a “spirit,” that is, the compound became “spiritual,” and from the “red spirit” proceeded the “principle of the world.” By the combination of copper and the *acqua permanens*, which was usually quicksilver, we think only of an amalgam. But for the alchemists it meant a secret, “philosophical” sea, since for them the *acqua permanens* was primarily a symbol or a philosophical postulate which they hoped to discover—or believed they had discovered—in the various “fluids.” The substances they sought to combine in reality always had—on account of their unknown nature—a numinous quality which tended towards phantasmal personification. They were substances which, like living organisms, “fertilized one another and thereby produced the living being [ζωον] sought by the Philosophers.”

The alchemists did not see a split between nature and spirit; for them what happened in one happened in the other as well: “As above so below.” It is thus not wholly appropriate

68. Ibid., 458.
to say that they considered their chemical combinations to be symbols of internal, psychological procedures, but we can only say that they understood the same procedure to be going on in two different locales. Jung’s contribution was to read the alchemists solely in psychological terms and even to see the beginnings of his stages of individuation in the various stages of the alchemical purification.

I have already mentioned the notion of the alchemists that they were completing the salvific work of Christ on a cosmic level. For Jung, what made their work necessary, and not just a rehashing of Christian dogma, was the inclusion of the “empirical man” in this process; that is, the *magnum opus* was not something God did on our behalf, but a work that we must share equally in for it to be efficacious:

If the alchemical process of thought corresponded only to the three stages of purification, illumination, perfection, it would be difficult to see the justification for paraphrasing the analogous Christian ideas, which are patently betrayed, for instance, in the fixing to the “black cross.” But the need for a symbolism other than the Christian one is evident from the fact that the transformation process does not culminate in the second Adam and the white dove but in the lapis, which, with God’s help, is made by the empirical man. It is a half physical, half metaphysical product, a psychological symbol expressing something created by man and yet supraordinate to him. This paradox can only be something like the symbol of the *self*, which likewise can be brought forth, i.e., made conscious, by human effort but is at the same time by definition a pre-existent totality that includes the conscious and the unconscious.  

For the alchemist Michael Dorn this was experimental rather than received knowledge, for:

> We cannot be resolved of any doubt save by experiment, and there is no better way to make it than on ourselves. . . . We have said earlier that piety consists in knowledge of ourselves, and hence we begin to

69. Ibid., 454.
explain meditative knowledge from this also. But no man can truly know himself unless first he sees and knows by zealous meditation. . . . what, rather than who he is, on whom he depends, and whose he is, and to what end was made and created, and by whom and through whom. 70

In Dorn we can clearly see the difference between pious cultivation of received knowledge (such as from the *magisterium* of the church) and the necessity to discover knowledge for oneself. For both Dorn and Jung, the trinity was a sign of divine knowledge while quaternity pointed to that which man must find out for himself, and while we can say that Dorn was more careful than Jung to keep his quaternity close to the Christian trinity, of first importance is the responsibility of man to evoke this knowledge in himself: “Thou wilt never make from other the One which thou seekest, except first there be made one thing of thyself.” 71

**Alchemical Quaternities**

We have described what the alchemist desired to do, let us now look at the phases in which this procedure took place, and comment as we go on similarities to the process of individuation. The “beginning” of the procedure was the term for a “primitive consciousness” which was “liable to break up into individual affective processes—to fall apart, as it were, in four directions.” 72 Jung continues: “As the four elements represent the whole physical world, their falling apart means dissolution into the constituents of the

70. Ibid., 481.

71. Ibid., 482.

72. Ibid., 459.
world, that is, into a purely inorganic and hence unconscious state. Conversely, the combination of the elements and the final synthesis of male and female is an achievement of the art and a product of conscious endeavor.\textsuperscript{73} We can see that the process will be essentially one of unification, but not without a phase of stark dissolution to precede this. This state, known alternately as the nigredo, chaos, or massa confusa is a state of an “inextricable interweaving of the soul with the body, which together formed a dark unity (the unio naturalis).”\textsuperscript{74}

The first phase of the alchemical process proper, at least in Michael Dorn, one of Jung’s favorite thinkers, is called the unio mentalis, the mental union, and was thought of as equivalent to the union of the Father and the Son in the Trinity represented by the Dove, or Spirit. Though this is an abstraction away from the body, it is necessary in order to make clear what was muddled when body and soul were mixed together in the unio naturalis. It is preparatory to the next phase which is the joining of the mind with the body “represented by the feminine or passive principle, namely Mary.”\textsuperscript{75} Dorn describes the process in this way:

We conclude that meditative philosophy consists in the overcoming of the body by mental union [unio mentalis]. This first union does not as yet make the wise man, but only the mental disciple of wisdom. The second union of the mind with the body shows forth the wise man, hoping for and expecting that blessed third union with the first

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 460.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 488.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 466.
unity [i.e., the \textit{ unus mundus}, the latent unity of the world]. May Almighty God grant that all men be made such, and may He be one in All.\textsuperscript{76}

In the interview with Eliade Jung describes the stages in a different way. The first, undifferentiated, state is called the \textit{nigredo} which is also the chaos of a troubled psyche represented by a “dragon” or “devil,” which cannot be integrated without suffering. Jung says of this encounter that, “For the awakened Christian this is a very serious psychic experience, for it s a confrontation with his own ‘shadow,’ with the blackness, the \textit{nigredo}, which remains separate and can never be completely integrated into the human personality.”\textsuperscript{77} Even though in his discussion of individuation proper the shadow is clearly integrated with the ego, there is definitely some sort of consonance between that shadow and the \textit{nigredo} of the alchemical phases. We should understand that, even though the darkness of the \textit{nigredo} is not completely integrated it does, as we see below, go through a transformation. We should also note that in Dorn’s schema the \textit{nigredo} seems to be more properly a state prior to the actual workings of the alchemical transformation, leading us to suppose that the line between the commencement of the transformation/individuation process and the state prior to it may not be completely cut and dry. That is, a struggle with complications due to a shadow projection may very well precipitate analysis, in which the first issue to be dealt with will be the tension between ego and shadow. That is why we may tentatively link all these starting points: the ego (from the marriage quaternio), confrontation with the shadow (from the phases of

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 465.

\textsuperscript{77} Jung, “Combat Interview,” 228.
individuation), and the *nigredo* (both as a state prior to the alchemical procedure and the struggle with the shadow or “devil”).

In another place Jung expressly connects the confrontation with the shadow not to the *nigredo* but to the *unio mentalis*: “Expressed in the language of hermetic philosophy, the ego-personality’s coming to terms with its own background, the shadow, corresponds to the union of spirit and soul in the *unio mentalis*, which is the first stage of the *coniunctio*. What I call coming to terms with the unconscious the alchemists called meditation.”\(^7\)\(^8\) Although there seems to be a contradiction here, I think it can be somewhat cleared up if we realize that, even though Jung does not state this explicitly, in the transition from the *nigredo* as a state prior to the alchemical process or individuation to the effort to disentangle the ego from the shadow at the same time as attempting to integrate this shadow—“coming to terms” with it are Jung’s words—there is something left over, that bit of the shadow which “can never be completely integrated into the human personality.”\(^7\)\(^9\) My position is that this leftover is what comes back in the final *unio* with the *unus mundus* (explained below) which is equivalent to the birth of the self archetype in the process of individuation.

I think we must admit that Jung is not as clear as he could be here. For my own purposes I see two different levels of integration: the first, the integration of the ego and shadow, is expressed in terms of an antagonistic duality which can never totally be resolved. The second, expressed in terms of sexuality and of two lacks coming together,

\(^{78}\) Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 497.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
is one of harmony as opposed to antagonism and, while it also has a sense of being open-ended, this functions not as a limitation but rather as a source of creation. Jung expresses this second type of integration when he says that, “Just as a lapis philosophorum, with its miraculous powers, was never produced, so psychic wholeness will never be attained empirically, as consciousness is too narrow and too one-sided to comprehend the full inventory of the psyche.” Even so, we must say that it was important for Jung that one attempt to live out the unity which one seeks, and if it could not be proved “empirically,” perhaps it could evoked in a drawing, as in the example of the mandalas which he had his patients produce, and the great many paintings that adorn the “secret” room in Bollingen, which few people ever were allowed access to but of which published images exist. In Jung’s own words, in which he describes the archetypal experience of Joachim of Flora, but which fit any situation in which the final integration is attempted, “This problem can be solved neither by philosophy, nor by economics, nor by politics, but only by the individual human being, via his experience of the living spirit.”

The second step in Dorn is called the unio mentalis and is also described as the “dawn” or aurora which is an abstraction from the muddle and blindness of the nigredo state but which does not signify the end of the process: “In this state of ‘whiteness’ one does not live in the true sense of the word, it is a sort of abstract, ideal state.” In other words, one has seen the problem from a particular point of view, but only at the cost of

80. Ibid., 533.

81. Jung, Aion, 87.

removing oneself from matter, from the body. As Jung notes, “in order to bring about their subsequent reunion, the mind (mens) must be separated from the body—which is equivalent to “voluntary death”—for only separated things can unite.”83 His own analytical psychology aims do to the same thing, “when it objectifies the affects and instincts and confronts consciousness with them.”84

The next step will necessarily be to descend back into the body, joining the purified mind again with the body. This is Dorn’s “second union of the mind with the body,” or alternately, the rubedo, the ruby redness which signifies life, and specifically an abstract state that has been suffused with the energy of the body:

In order to make it [the aurora] come alive it must have “blood,” it must have what the alchemists call rubedo, the “redness” of life. Only the total experience of being can transform this ideal state of the albedo into a fully human mode of existence. Blood alone can reanimate a glorious state of consciousness in which the last trace of blackness is dissolved, in which the devil no longer has an autonomous existence but rejoins the profound unity of the psyche. Then the opus magnum is finished: the human soul is completely integrated.”85

The third stage of the conjunction was both a unification with the unus mundus, in the manner of the Axiom of Maria which states that, “One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the Third comes the One as the Fourth,” as well as the integration of the fourth which would literally be Mary, the mother of Christ: “This third stage of the coniunctio was depicted after the manner of an Assumption and Coronation of Mary, in which the

83. Jung, Mysterium Conjunctionis, 471.
84. Ibid., 472.
Mother of God represents the body.” We have here a clarification of that ambiguity which we saw earlier between Mary and Satan, as both being “fourths” to the trinity, in which Mary is the transformation or sublimation of the satanic, dark, element. The nigredo, as pointed out earlier, is identified with the devil or a dragon. The unio mentalis is associated with the trinity, but the reason this is not a finished state is because Mary, as the body, is not yet integrated. This happens in the third phase, when the integrated mind rejoins to the body. Then finally this new creation is joined to the unus mundus. This, as many of the alchemical and Gnostic visions were, is really a version of an apokatastasis, universal restoration, in which all things, including evil, are integrated into the whole. What starts out as devilish evil is transformed into the bodily reality of the Virgin Mary. According to Jung, Michael Dorn “identified woman with the devil because of the number two, which is characteristic of both.” What was evil (nigredo) as a two, that is, as a shadow separated from an ego, or a mind separated from a body, becomes integrated at the level of the four, when the body is joined back to the mind, when the state of separation and abstraction is filled with the blood of life.

Jung claimed that the papal announcement in 1950 created, for all practical purposes, a Christian quaternity, though it was “not defined as such” by the Church. This quaternity is sketched by Jung such that the Father and Son are at the opposite ends of a horizontal bar while the vertical bar contains the Holy Spirit and Mary at its ends:

86. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, 466.
87. Ibid., 188.
88. Ibid.
This is a transformation of a quaternity Jung sketches earlier in the book (shown above) in which the horizontal bar is composed of the Son (Salvator) and the Antichristus (Diabolus), also referring to Satan as “Satanael the elder son of God, and Christ the younger.” This transformation is, in my opinion, quite analogous to the way that the devil of the nigredo returns as the Mary of the unus mundus in the alchemical transformation. The alchemists did not avoid Christian language to express the end of this transformative process. Jung notes that, “Just as for the mystic, Christ takes over the leadership of consciousness and puts an end to a merely ego-bound existence, so the filius macrocosmi, the son of the great luminaries and of the dark womb of the earth, enters the

89. Jung, Aion, 147.
realm of the psyche and seizes the human personality, not only in the shining heights of consciousness but in the dark depths which have not yet comprehended the light that appeared in Christ.”

Ultimately, Jung thought the alchemists were important not because they succeeded in what they had set out to do—which was nothing less than “save the cosmos”—but because they had discovered the deep structure of the human psyche. “So although the alchemists failed to discover the hidden structure of matter, they did discover that of the psyche, even if they were scarcely conscious of what this meant.”

Because of their inability to separate psyche from soma they were doomed to a certain type of failure, but while modern science continued the project of investigating nature, Jung felt that the forays made by the alchemists into the nature of the psyche had been left incomplete prior to his own researches.

Science and the End of All Things

One can understand the difference between Jung and Freud in terms of how they saw themselves in relation to the history of science. For Freud, the psychoanalysis which he developed was part of the linear progress of science, and to his dying day he thought of himself as applying the principle of modern science to the subject matter of the human psyche. Jung, on the other hand, while also considering his discipline a science, conceived of himself as returning to the site where science and psychology had once

90. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, 494.

91. Ibid.,126.
mingled their waters. He saw himself as healing a breach that had occurred rather than extending a tradition. While Freud saw himself as working at the end of a linear development, Jung saw the development as circular and himself as riding a wave as it returned to its source.

One of the ways in which he expressed this historical significance was through the language of *aeons*, periods of time measured out according to stars, which for Jung meant according to the dictates of the unconscious. Astrologically speaking, Jesus appears at the beginning of the age of Pisces, the fish. Jung considers it a matter of synchronicity that fish imagery is so prevalent in the gospels and in the language and imagery of the Christian church, from its beginning all the way to the present. The sign of Pisces, though, is not just one fish, but two, and in one of Jung’s most creative extrapolations he sees the arrival of modern science (that is, the end of alchemy and the beginning of chemistry) as the transition from the first fish, that of Christ, to the second fish, that of the Anti-Christ:

The northerly, or easterly, fish, which the spring-point entered at about the beginning of our era, is joined to the southerly, or westerly, fish by the so-called commissure. This consists of a band of faint stars forming the middle sector of the constellation, and the spring-point gradually moved along its southern edge. The point where the elliptic intersects with the meridian at the tail of the second fish coincides roughly with the sixteenth century, the time of the Reformation, which as we know is so extraordinarily important for the history of Western symbols. Since then the spring-point has moved along the southern edge of the second fish, and will enter Aquarius in the course of the third millennium. Astrologically interpreted, the designation of Christ as one of the fishes identifies him with the first fish, the vertical one. Christ is followed by the Antichrist, at the end of time. The beginning of the enantiodromia [the “running apart”] would fall, logically, midway between the two fishes. We have seen that this is so. The time of the Renaissance begins in the
immediate vicinity of the second fish, and with it comes that spirit which culminates in the modern age.\footnote{92}

For Jung it was not only the process of individuation which spelled out the truths of alchemy, but the run of history itself follows these same lines. That is, the modern sciences which developed in the West after the renaissance, after the \textit{enantiodromia} from the first to the second fish, is, from the point of view of the first fish (the church which is the body of Christ), is the work of the Anti-Christ, but from the point of view of a scientist like Jung (that is, someone who accepts the importance of the second fish in regard to the first), something along the lines of a \textit{unio mentalis}, an abstracting from the muddle in which the two fish are indistinguishable from each other. For Jung, the move into the astrological Age of Aquarius was the coming together (again) of the two fish in which religion (Christianity) and science would be reunited on a higher level. This is exemplified by the 1950 papal announcement concerning Mary, and of course coincides with the final stage of the alchemical process, which is the joining together with the \textit{unus mundus} (for which the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin was a symbol), as well as the final stage of the psychological process, the coming to consciousness of the Self.

Jung sees this future in terms of a revision of certain errors in Christian theology:

\begin{quote}
If, as seems probable, the aeon of the fishes is ruled by the archetypal motif of the hostile brothers, then the approach of the next Platonic month, namely Aquarius, will constellate the problem of the union of the opposites. It will then no longer be possible to write off evil as the mere privation of good; its real existence will have to be recognized.\footnote{93}
\end{quote}

\footnote{92. Jung, \textit{Aion}, 94.}

\footnote{93. Ibid., 87.}
In terms of quaternity, the Trinity of traditional theology which was perfect goodness with no taint of evil will have to accept that evil is relative, necessary to the good, and just as substantial. The wisdom of the Gnostics and the alchemists will have to be finally accepted as such, and the culture of the Christian West will see itself no longer as an exception among the children of the earth, but as simply one among equals. According to Jung, the theological elevation of the Christian Trinity was a symptom of Western hubris which had its expression not only in the theological realm but also in the scientific. The age of Aquarius signifies an age of sharing and equality in which all religions and modes of knowledge are more or less taken on the same level. Whereas Pisces was represented by a fish, which for Jung signified consciousness submerged in the unconscious and concomitantly its struggle to emerge from that state, Aquarius (the water carrier) signifies the rise of the unconscious (and especially the collective unconscious) and the unification of the consciousness won during Pisces with its foundational and universal truths.

Conclusion

There are a few ways in which the Jungian quaternity can be distinguished from other types of quaternities. But first it made be helpful to point out that the fundamental aspects of quaternity which I outlined in chapter 1 still hold true for the Jung. That is, universality and integration are still the bedrock of the Jungian quaternity. The 1950 dogma of the Assumption is a perfect example to see this integrative faculty in action, as well as to see what makes the Jungian quaternity distinctive. For what this dogma meant for Jung is that several aspects which had been rejected by official theology were being welcomed back...
into the fold. For Jung, it was not just a matter of elevating the mother of Christ. What was more important was the symbolic import of bringing a woman into the fold of the divine godhead. And although Catholic theologians would be quick to point out that Mary’s status as created is not here being revised, Jung is much more attuned to the archetypal energies being released. Mary is not just the mother of Christ, but she is also Woman in general, as well as being a stand-in for the original 4th of the divine archetype, Lucifer, or anti-Christ. And inasmuch as she is the second Eve, she is also the second mother, and here Jung does not hesitate to say that this is an implicit welcome to mother Earth, to mater as matter. So the three aspects of femininity, matter, and evil that I mentioned in my introduction are all being integrated under this dogma, and even though the Catholic church would surely balk at such an interpretation, as many of Jung’s theologian correspondents did, the appearance of the archetype of quaternity was undeniable for Jung himself.
CHAPTER 3

QUATERNITY IN THE SUCCESSORS TO JUNG

Introduction
The fate of Jung’s quaternity in the hand of those who considered Jung their master will be our necessary next step. The first generation of Jungians, of whom Marie-Louise von Franz, Edwin Edinger, and Erich Neumann are the most well known, were very close to Jung in many ways (although Neumann set off on his own more than the other two). They saw it as their duty to communicate the Jungian message to a broader public. This is probably not atypical among first-generation followers of any great thinker (Jones played this role to Freud’s genius, for example). But as we move to 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} generation Jungians the gospel begins to change dramatically, and by the time we get to James Hillman the notion of quaternity has been much reduced, and with Joseph Campbell, whose writings for many function as the introduction to Jung, the clinical aspect has all but disappeared.

In the previous chapter I introduced the theme of Jung’s relation to science. We will be returning to this theme throughout this chapter as a way of evaluating Jung’s successors. For Jung, as well as for Freud, it was important that his practice, analytical psychology, be thought of as a science, even if not a “hard” science, for several reasons.
First of all, he himself was trained as something of a scientist, as a psychiatrist and a medical man. In his field it was scientific experiments which carried the day, and even though Jung’s dissertation concerned occult subject matter, it was his statistically savvy word association tests that first made his name in North America. Also, by retaining the link with science Jung as was able to keep analytical psychology from becoming something that only spiritualists would be interested in, and that regular people, not to mention scientists, would want to keep their distance from. Even though Jung himself was a bit of a spiritualist he was passionately desirous to bring his discoveries into the light of day. In this way his life and thought carry a nice balance, reminiscent of the image he evokes in his autobiography of life being a candle held out against a mass of darkness. True, the darkness outweighs the light, but the light, no matter how meager, is all we have to illuminate something which would otherwise be intolerable. So to simply read him as a theosophist, as many new agers have done, is to misunderstand his project, and to forget that he was always writing from the point of view of the clinician. And no matter how “far out” some of his speculations ranged, due to this clinical aspect he was never far from the scientific practice of experimentation and trial and error.

James Heisig, in his book *Imago Dei*, traces the development of the god image in Jung’s writings and shows how, very early on his is career, Jung abandoned the wholly polemical view of religion which he had learned from Freud, and started to see religion in a different light. Heisig quotes from Jung’s 1913 *General Aspects of Psychoanalysis*:

> Just as primitive man was able, with the help of religious and philosophical symbols, to free himself from his original condition, so too the neurotic can free himself from his illness. . . . . A religious or philosophical attitude . . . . is a cultural achievement; it is a function that
is exceedingly valuable from a biological point of view, for it gives rise to incentives that drive human beings to do creative work for the benefit of a future age, and if necessary to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the species.

Even though Jung clearly values religion here due to a biological criterion, we nonetheless can see the seed of his more mature valuation. This was a way for Jung to save both science and religion, or, as Heisig remarks, “He admits that religion may serve to put us in touch with areas of the unconscious mind that might otherwise prove inaccessible, so that it is narrow-minded to try to replace it tout court with ‘science.’”

And yet, we also have to admit that neither the psychoanalysis of Freud or of Jung (or of any other analysts) was ever accepted into the scientific mainstream, with the result that psychoanalysis has become a separate discipline, distinguishable from the hard sciences, from medical science (as in psychiatry), but also from the humanities and from religion. Perhaps we could say, limiting ourselves to Jung’s legacy, that analytic psychology has become an “alternative” science as well as an alternative religion. In many ways the religion that Jung sets up is the religion of quaternity, that is, it sees a religion as viable only if it accords with the quaternal makeup that is the human psyche.

Jung’s openness to religion, and the religious language he employed in describing his own psychological theories has colored all his followers. This question of religion is one way that one of the fault lines within psychology (broadly speaking) can be assessed. That is, the flat out rejection of religious considerations initiated by Freud can be seen in


2. Ibid.
the fields of cognitive and behavioral psychology, while the eagerness to accommodate religious and spiritual phenomena is something that very much characterizes the opposite end of the spectrum—the Jungians, New Age thinkers, and even many pop psychology writers and speakers. It is to the Jungians that we now turn.³

Marie -Louise von Franz

Marie Louis von Franz was one of Jung’s closest followers while he was alive and she was one of the most intellectually gifted of the first generation Jungians. She was equally at home discussing the most contemporary mathematical models of reality as she was with the vast number of diverse mythologies which Jung required his students to be intimately familiar with. She is, in her writing, very loyal to the fundamental concepts of Jung and one can see that she has assimilated them completely (if perhaps uncritically) and sees herself as carrying the torch of Jung’s theories into ever expanding fields.

She is especially interesting to us because the role of numbers in the Jungian unconscious was very important to her. She closely connected the roles of time, synchronicity, and counting, and approached these in a more systematic manner than Jung ever did. Although at a creative level she probably doesn’t say anything fundamentally different from what her mentor had already preached, she nevertheless is

³. It should be noted that Freud himself had many perspicacious things to say concerning religion, and though he himself was an atheist, and conceived of psychoanalysis as quite separate from religion, his honesty compelled him to some very interesting conclusions in the field of religious thought, which Jacques Lacan, among others, have elaborated upon. A bona fide rapprochement between Freudian psychoanalysis and Christian theology has yet to be attempted, but surely is a necessary project.
instructive in the amount of detail she gives concerning our topic at hand, that of quaternities. In fact, the story of how her book, *Number and Time*, came about is very illuminating as far as the way she saw herself in connection with Jung. She states in the preface of this book that after Jung had finished his late work entitled, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, he “hazarded the conjecture, already briefly suggested in his paper, that it might be possible to take a further step into the realization of the unity of psyche and matter through research into the archetypes of the natural numbers.”⁴ Jung himself had begun to make rough notes concerning “the mathematical characteristics of the first five integers on a slip of paper,”⁵ but had considered himself too old to undertake another serious project and, two years before his death, gave her his notes and said, “I am too old to be able to write this now, so I hand it over to you.”⁶ In one of his letters Jung said he felt that natural numbers were the key to understanding synchronicity and the mystery of the *unus mundus*, that “number . . . is just as much discovered as it is invented.”⁷ In another place he claims that “we define number psychologically as an archetype of order which has become conscious.”⁸ Von Franz’s claim in her book is none other than that number is the bedrock of the truth of archetypes and she quotes Plato in

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5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 9.

8. Ibid., 45.
support, for whom, in his famous mythology outlined in the *Timaeus*, conceives the 
Demiurge as creating the Heavens, a “moving likeness of eternity,” as “moving according 
to number.”

Von Franz’s project in the book is, as she states, to “observe the 
phenomenon of number from a new angle, one based on a consideration of the 
unconscious.”

She takes for granted the presence and validity of the Jungian collective 
unconscious, replete with archetypes, and interrogates the manner in which natural 
numbers, the numbers that we count with, can be understood in the light of that system.

Though von Franz does not break new theoretical ground with this work, some of 
her clarifications of Jung’s thoughts are helpful. For instance, she stresses that the 
unconscious for Jung was not to be thought of as something completely different from the 
natural world, but rather as existing on a “spectrum” that had “somatic processes” on one 
end and archetypes on the other. She quotes from *Mysterium Coniunctionis* that, “until 
now no one has been able to discover a world in which the known laws of nature are 
invalid.”

She sums up Jung’s thought by saying that “number forms, according to Jung, 
that particular element that unites the realms of matter and psyche.” This is helpful 
because in reading Jung one often comes away with the impression that the collective 
functions as a sort of *noumenon* to the phenomenon of nature—Jung does not avoid this

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 4.
12. Ibid., 9.
13. Ibid., 52.
terminology himself—but with his principle of synchronicity Jung backs away from this strict Kantian duality into a more Jamesian view of the universe in which, when one looks closely at the world, one cannot find the strict boundaries between different realms that one had assumed existed. Therefore, the fact that all peoples in all places (so far as we know) have some notion of counting, and that so many cultures place special emphasis on the numbers three and four means that this phenomenon is just as indicative of the existence of a shared unconscious as is the ubiquity of mandalas in dreams or, on the other side of the spectrum, the universal dependence on water for the sustenance of life.

As evidence for the connection between the hard reality of the sciences and the more fluid nature of our dreams and language of symbols she points to the statements of scientists such as the mathematicians Karl Friedrich Gauss and Felix Klein in which the discovery of a theorem or law of nature is very often attributed to inspiration or, in Gauss’s case, the “grace of God.” Jung also used these statements, in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* in support of his theory of the collective unconscious. The point is that this language of inspiration in connection with the universal truths of science shows that, at bottom, such truths are no different from the truth of the archetypes of the self or the mother, even though these archetypes find expression through the language of religion or literature as opposed to physics or set theory. She makes the pertinent observation as well

that the Cartesian system of co-ordinates, one of the “hardest” facts within the hard sciences, is very clearly a mandala.\textsuperscript{15}

Perhaps one of the reasons Jung never attempts a serious study of the natural numbers is that it is very difficult to talk about them without just considering them as purely “natural,” that is, self explanatory. It seems to just go without saying that one number would follow after another that casting any light on the significance of this fact is both too easy and too hard. We might say that natural numbers figure a major blind spot in constructing a psychology of the mind. In discussing other archetypes such as the Self, there is enough variation in the expression of this structure that one can build the dramatic tension of one’s theory of its essential unity. The same goes for any of the typical Jungian archetypes. But numeric expressions are disarmingly homogenous, and how could they not be? One track that von Franz takes is to examine the purely arithmetical properties of the first five counting numbers (to which she limits herself in her book), such as, concerning the number four, that “it is a property of the number four that equations of the fourth degree can be solved [i.e. through radicals], whereas equations of the fifth degree cannot.”\textsuperscript{16} In her step-by-step discussion of the numbers 1-4, she starts each discussion with an enumeration of these qualities. While this may be helpful in achieving some sense of the difference of numbers from each other, it nonetheless does not reduce the opacity of numbers as such. I think this is why her effort in this book was not followed up by other Jungians. I think there was a realization that,

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 39.
though numbers may be validly considered as archetypes we cannot really say anything psychologically meaningful about them outside of their expression through language, religion, literature, and the re-counting of dreams.

**Properties of the First Four Natural Numbers**

The number one has two aspects, according to von Franz, a qualitative and a quantitative:

In China, as in occidental number symbolism, one signifies the indivisible Whole, the *hen-to-pan*, the All-One. The purely mathematical fact that the number series begins with the one, but extends on to infinity, indicates that this number is also conceptually bound up with the infinite. It thus possesses the following complementary dual aspect: quantitatively it forms the unit, qualitatively it contains the whole sequence of natural numbers. Its “unit” character arises through a kind of *kenosis* out of the All-Unity, and in this manner the one becomes the *principium individuationis*. In it a paradox appears: One is unique and, at the same time, one among many.\(^ {17}\)

She claims that Plato and Pythagoras had views on numbers which were primarily quantitative, such that the two was considered as a halved or doubled one. As she notes, “Plato and many of the number theorists who followed him in antiquity considered all further numbers to arise by *diaresis* (division) of the monad.”\(^ {18}\) But she herself wants to propound a view that is qualitative and which understands the monad, the one, to run “right through the number series,” comparing it to a “field in which the individual numbers represent activated points.”\(^ {19}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 62.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 63.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
What exactly does she mean by this? By saying that the number one runs “right through the series,” she means to understand each subsequent number not simply as adding another unit on to a series (or further dividing a whole, as Plato would have it) but rather as representing a containment, an encompassing, of all that had gone before. She quotes Maria Prophetissa’s alchemical axiom that, “Out of the One comes Two, out of Two comes Three, and from the Third comes the One as the Fourth,” and she emphasizes the final movement in which it is clear that the Four was somehow always implicit within the One, that it is almost like the field on which the other numbers are arranged. For von Franz the medieval *quinta essentia* also played this role—the fifth element was not necessarily an element in addition to the quaternities so important in alchemy, but simply a representative of that quaternity. It represented the unifying, monadic aspect of the numbers prior to it. Von Franz’s point is that every number does this for the preceding numbers, so four unifies the three before it, six unifies the five before it, and so forth. As evidence for this view she point to the Chinese idea that the number of tao is eleven because “it signifies the unity of the decade in its wholeness.”

The number two is the number of division and of duality as an overriding concept. In a sense the Platonic view that numbering is dividing is a concept under the sign of the two. Von Franz points out that “the word for two in certain primitive languages is related

20. Ibid., 65.
21. Ibid., 120.
22. Ibid., 65.
to the word ‘to split,’ and in others to the words ‘to follow’ and ‘to accompany.’”23 She notes the ubiquity of the theme of the double guardians to the sacred space, whether it be a Shinto shrine or the cherubim guarding the tree of life. Thus the number two conveys a sense of the “threshold” not only to the beyond, but, perhaps more importantly, to the meeting of conscious and unconscious, a threshold to the “coming to consciousness” of the unconscious.24 She quotes at length from Jung’s discussion of the significance of the number two, such that, “Two is the first number because, with it, separation and multiplication begin, which alone make counting possible.”25

Whereas the number one is, for von Franz, best expressed as simply the All, perfect undifferentiated unity, and two is the primal splitting of the unity, the number three gives (re)birth to this unity in the sense of healing the split between the one and two in a novel synthesis. As Jung notes:

There arises a tension of opposites between the One and the Other. But every tension of opposites culminates in a release, out of which comes the “third.” In the third, the tension is resolved and the lost unity is restored. . . . Three is an unfolding of the One to a condition where it can be known. . . . had it not been resolved into the polarity of the One and the Other, it would have remained fixed in a condition devoid of every quality.26

From a meta-psychological stance so much has already been expressed in these first three numbers that it seems there is scarcely any need for the other numbers. For we can see

23. Ibid., 88.
24. Ibid., 92.
25. Ibid., 97.
26. Ibid., 98.
how the seeds of wholeness and recovery are always latent in the number system even at the point of absolute difference, the point where the two opposes the one as something wholly other to it. In this regard Von Franz notes that for some native Americans, “the word for ‘three’ also means the ‘center of one.’”27 And yet this sense of division is not eradicated by the synthesis of the three, otherwise there would be no further counting. In the first two numbers have the sense of ultimate good and evil, in that one as the All is painted as a positive unity and as a home, a starting place where all is unified. And we have its “immortal” enemy in the dyad, where good is pitted against evil. Jung notes that one purveyor of early alchemy held that God did not bless the second day “because on this day (Monday, the day of the moon) the binaries, alias the devil, came into existence.”28 But with the three, even though it is a “good” synthesis and a return to the One, it is also shows that there is something beyond merely dualism, and that something points beyond itself as well.

Clearly the number three is important in the West because of the Christian trinity, though three as a divine number is also found in Pythagoras and in Jewish mystical thinking. In China, too, three is the symbol of “unanimity”29 and for Jung, underworld deities are often in threefold form because they represent “the flow of psychic energy, indicating a connection with time and fate.”30 The idea of “flow” is surely not absent in

27. Ibid., 105.
28. Ibid., 97.
29. Ibid., 103.
30. Ibid., 104.
the trinity with its sense of love moving between Father and Son via the Spirit, *circumincessio*, as the Fathers called it. Von Franz connects the word “three” linguistically with “through” (and also with the respective words in German, French, and Latin) bringing out the sense of going beyond, or penetrating. As we saw earlier in the quote from Jung three is connected with going beyond a static duality of good and evil, dark and light, etc. and bringing them together in some sort of synthesis. Von Franz quotes Menninger saying that the step to the number three brings one into the “sober but clear light of objectivity.” Because of this the number three was always connected strongly for Jung with rationality and with spirit. Whereas 1 is undifferentiated unity, 2 is unmitigated opposition, 3 is the seeing of that duality (or the encompassing of it) in the form of thought. In this way the duality, though still present, is mitigated because it is known. The conflict does not have the final word.

Following the thought of Jung, von Franz considers the number four to represent a “boundary aspect” such that, starting with number five we see numbers that are “genuine, empty, numbers detached from the objects. Up to the number four, the archaic character of the number concept has been tenaciously preserved.” As evidence she points to the fact, already mentioned, that, “equations beyond the fourth degree can no longer be

31. Ibid., 107.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 114.
solved by radicals.” She points to language such as Czech in which “2+2 are 4, but 2+3 is 5 (beyond five the singular verb is used),” the significance lying in the fact that the plural verb evokes the qualitative archetypal sense of the number, its sense of unifying the many. The Romans also, when naming their children, used personal names through the fourth child, but after that just used numbers, such as Quintus, Sextus, etc.

Though on the qualitative model that von Franz emphasizes the unifying sense is valid for all numbers, it is especially true (perhaps archetypically true) of the number four which is primarily the number of completion, and unification of the many. If three is the light of rationality, four is the slightly darker light that surrounds this rationality. Remembering the axiom of Maria, the four brings back the unifying sense of the one, while still preserving the truth that has been won by the progression to the three. She notes that for the natives of the Admiralty Inlet, “the words for ‘four’ and ‘one’ and actually identical.” For evidence that four is the number of completeness von Franz points to the “quaternions of Hamilton and Jakobi [which] are used to control the rules for rotating a rigid body in space,” as well as Einstein and Minkowski’s “four dimensional model of the universe.” She notes that in China, “the number five

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 115.
36. Ibid., 115 fn.
37. Ibid., 131.
38. Ibid., 114.
39. Ibid., 115.
possesses the same significance as four does with us,” but only because it “is taken to represent the centered four,” similar to the way the fifth essence functions in alchemy. Von Franz repeats Jung’s conception of medieval Christianity as leaning so heavily on the trinity because they were supremely uncomfortable with matter and bodies, which would have represented the fourth, as it did for the alchemists—“for this reason certain medieval philosophers tried to include matter in the Trinity as God’s fourth aspect.”

In von Franz we have someone who accepted the Jungian system wholeheartedly and did her theoretical work always with an eye towards analytical practice. She was conscientious to avoid reducing Jung’s thought to merely mathematics on the one hand, or merely therapy on the other. She exudes an old world sense of tradition and orthodoxy that few Jungians after her could match.

**Edward Edinger**

Edward Edinger is another thinker often referred to alongside Marie-Louise von Franz as a “classical Jungian,” that is, one who stayed true to the core of Jung’s thought and eschewed innovation for the purpose of spreading the Jungian gospel, so to speak. Edinger is valued, especially by American readers, for giving clear, yet substantial, readings of Jung which can well serve as introductions to those readers unfamiliar with the writings of Jung himself, or confused by what they have read of the prolific Swiss

40. Ibid., 120.

41. Ibid., 129.
analyst. Edinger is perhaps most well knows for his book *Ego and Archetype*, which could be thought of as a distillation of Jung’s thought on individuation and alchemical symbolism, but Edinger also had a knack for applying the Jungian template to classic texts, such as the Bible, Moby Dick, Faust, and others.

The aspect of Edinger’s thought that most interests me is his emphasis that “quaternity must be complemented by trinity.” Now he says this is not in opposition to Jung’s more common statement to the converse, that we have had too much trinity and not enough in quaternity (in the West at least), but as a correlate to the centrality of quaternity and as an important aspect of Jung’s own thought. Although we could say that Edinger is more interested in preserving the importance of trinitarian thought than Jung is, he never aligns himself against Jung. The sense which Jung communicated of the West having gone wrong at some point, in its emphasis of spirit over matter, of having taken a detour yet unknown for the human species, is much softened with Edinger.

One way in which the four of the mandala is combined with a trinity is what Adler, quoted by Edinger, calls the “natural growth, the formula, of the mandala” which is “1, 2, 4” 1 being represented by a circle with a dot, the “original preconscious, totality,” 2 as a circle with a vertical line though the middle which is the “division of this preconscious totality into two polarities,” and 4 being the addition of a horizontal line, “the synthesis arising out of thesis and antithesis.” So there are three steps but one ends up with a division into four. As Edinger notes, “fourness, or psychic totality, must


43. Ibid.
be actualized by submitting it to the threefold process of realization in time.”

Commenting on a dream related in Jung’s *Psychology and Alchemy* Edinger claims that “it is clear. . . . that Jung does not consider the quaternity a completely adequate symbol for totality. Rather a union with of the quaternity with the trinity in a more complete synthesis is required.” Edinger points to the significance of the numbers 12 and 7 as being, respectively, the product and the sum of four and three. He concludes, “The trinity archetype seems to symbolize individuation as a process, while the quaternity symbolizes its goal or completed state. Three is the number for egohood, four is number for wholeness, the Self. But since individuation is never truly complete, each temporary state of completion or wholeness must be submitted once again to the dialectic of the trinity in order for life to go on.” As I mentioned before, this does not seem to disagree with Jung at any fundamental points, for Jung often spoke of the ubiquity of the three along with the four and never underestimated the importance of trinities not only for Christianity but for many different traditions. Jung was also adamant, against what he saw as a dangerous element in Zen, that the ego be preserved alongside the appearance of the Self. Jung would agree that individuation is “never truly complete” (at least in earthly existence).

Edinger thought that quaternity and trinity often played complementary roles in the life of a psyche such that the quaternity or mandala image “will emerge in times of

44. Ibid., 190.

45. Ibid., 193.

46. Ibid.
psychic turmoil and convey a sense of stability and rest, while trinitarian symbols imply growth, development and movement in time. They surround themselves with dynamic rather than static associations.” This theme of complementarity is very Jungian, for Jung thought the unconscious fundamentally complements weaknesses in conscious life. One weakness, perhaps, of Edinger’s reading is that he continually interprets trinitarian images as associated with movement and time, a characterization which does not explain very well the divine attributes of trinities which Jung often underlined—the Christian trinity for example transcends time. In his picture of the individuation process which involves the “three entities” of the ego, Self, and the connecting link between the two, he connects the Father to the Self, the Son to the ego, and the Spirit to the connecting link. But this does not take into account the difference between the transcendence of the God-trinity and the time-boundness of the human trinity. Of course, Edinger is not a theologian and he would be much more willing to collapse the Creator-created boundary than most theologians, yet part of the efficacy of quaternity for Jung is that it helped keep that relationship active, in its recognition that trinity expressed something that humans strived for but were not, whereas quaternity was a healing of this divide, a human coming to terms with themselves in relation to the divine.

In Edinger’s reading of the Bible he accepts wholesale the Jungian identification of the self with God. Thus, he says that “the ego’s relation to the Self is a highly problematic one and corresponds very closely to man’s relation to his Creator as depicted

47. Ibid., 182.
in religious myth.” He also accepts the work of Erich Neumann and others that posit the activity of the Self in early infancy such that the work demanded during the first half of life is “ego-Self separation,” while that demanded of the second half is “ego-Self reunion.” Edinger’s reading of Biblical (and other religious texts) can be seen in the light of the alteration between ego and Self which is the overriding dynamic throughout one’s entire life. For instance in his book on Revelation he states that, “the basic theme of the apocalyptic process is the coming of Self into conscious realization which characteristically brings with it a good bit of anxiety.” He understands the multitudes of sevens in that book to fulfill a similar role to that played by the number three elsewhere: “Seven, like three, is a sequence of stages or a ‘ladder’ in a life process . . . . . . I suggest that ‘three’ refers to a process of an ego-based operation that the possibility of leading to the experience of the Self from the standpoint of the ego. On the other hand, ‘seven’ refers to a process of a Self-based dynamic sequence, leading to an experience of the Self from the standpoint of the Self.”

The original state of the psyche is what Edinger, probably following Neumann, calls “inflation” in which there is no differentiation between the ego and the Self, conscious or otherwise. He points to the myth which Aristophanes recounts in Plato’s

48. Ibid., 4.
49. Ibid., 5.
51. Ibid.
Symposium in which the original human creations were “round, his back and sides forming a circle,” as well as the efforts of young children to reproduce the human form in their drawing, with the earliest attempts centering on circular or mandalic shapes. The archetype of the puer aeternus was for Edinger the example of a figure who never lets go of this infantile sense of importance, who, in order to pass beyond this initial step, must “give up his identification with original unconscious wholeness and voluntarily accept being a real fragment instead of an unreal whole.” He understands our original home in the garden of Eden to be a reference to this original state, and then quotes a Jewish legend which states that the only way to reach the three of life is,

By clearing a path through the hedge-like tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That is, one must repeatedly accept the temptation of the serpent, repeatedly eat the fruit of knowledge, and in that way eat his way through to the tree of life. In other words, the recovery of our lost wholeness can only be achieved by tasting and assimilating the fruits of consciousness to the full.

This is a very Gnostic understanding of the fall legend, and I am not sure that he is reading the Jewish legend in the proper light. Would its writers really have condoned eating their way to the tree of life? He quotes the legend as saying “clearing a path,” but then interprets it as eating. Yet putting this aside, we see here the fundamentals of Edinger’s system. There is an initial wholeness that is lost and which must be recovered.


53. Ibid., 14.

54. Ibid., 21.
without giving up the loss itself. The loss is associated with the ego experience whereas wholeness of course is the domain of the self.

Edinger’s subject matter was very much the same as Jung’s, involving the material of religion, literature, and especially alchemy. For Edinger the important of alchemical language is that it detailed the process of dissolution of the “ego-self” axis which is also the goal of psychoanalytic activity:

The base matter was the primal material, the stuff that one started with, corresponding to the inflated immaturities of one’s own psyche. This was to be transformed into the philosopher’s stone, a divine essence. The prima material is our ego-Self identity, the residue of original inflation. To submit this material to the alchemical process means to apply conscious effort and attention to the task of refining and separating this composite mixture to the end that the Self or archetypal psyche will be freed from its contamination with the ego.”

In a way Edinger simplifies Jung’s process of individuation, not troubling with the anima/us figures so much, but reducing most of the movement to this axis which has the Self at one end and the ego at the other. The end of the process of analysis for Edinger is the making conscious of the Self as distinct from the ego, distinguishing the four from the three: “the goal is to redeem by conscious realization, the hidden Self, hidden in unconscious identification with the ego.” One problem with this simplification is that it must understand all psychic problems as ultimately symptoms of an inflated ego (one that is taking on characteristics of the Self). Even though he allows this same inflated ego to be crushed by an imminent rejection, the inflation is nevertheless primary, which seems

55. Ibid., 102.
56. Ibid., 103.
to me as unnecessarily reductive. An example of a confusion arising from this reduction is his description of the symbol from alchemy of the circle inside a square inside another circle. According to Edinger, “the human soul is a square” while the “circle is a common symbol for God and eternity.” He understands the inner circle to be “the prima material, the original boundless chaos,” or what he refers to as the ego and Self collapsed onto each other in the same of immature inflation. The square represents “the separation of the prima material into the four elements, that is, the discrimination that the conscious ego brings out of the original undifferentiated whole,” or the beginning of separation between ego and Self, and the outer circle is the new relationship attained between ego and Self in which they are maintained in their separation and differentiation. This is the “quintessence” of which alchemy speaks. My problem with this interpretation is that the whole point of the symbolism of the circle is that of eternality and expansiveness. To make such a sharp distinction between two circles seems dubious to me. It also strikes me that this particular alchemical symbol is not as ubiquitous as the simpler square within a circle, which is more effective in that it allows for the ambiguity of the circle to be expressed (is it a symbol for God or something that man has distilled?) without giving such a reductive interpretation. In my opinion Edinger makes a common mistake among Jungians, and one that Jung can be blamed for as well, of placing too much of the burden of their theories on consciousness. Edinger himself calls the worldview created by Jung

57. Ibid., 211.
58. Ibid.
“an entirely new world view which has as its central principle and supreme value the human psyche with its unique phenomenon of consciousness.”

If von Franz was the European orthodox champion of Jung, Edinger was definitely the American version of the same. He is responsible for introducing a great number of people, from the merely curious to those with analytical aspiration, to the thought of his master. Neither he nor von Franz ever criticize Jung on any substantial matter, which is not the case for the thinkers we will consider next. Yet it seems to me that part of the reason for the decline in Jungian thinking today is the inability of the best thinkers to ascertain the weaknesses of Jung, and the willingness of the others to take those weaknesses in precisely the wrong direction.

**Erich Neumann**

Erich Neumann was born in Germany, educated as an analyst under Jung himself, and spent the majority of his life practicing analytical psychology in Tel Aviv. He is most well known for his work with the Great Mother archetype and for his emphasis on the feminine. It thus might seem strange that he is guilty of the same over-valuation of the conscious function as Edinger. Neumann’s reading of the Biblical fall is that it is not a lamentable disobedience to a good creator, but rather, in an interpretation very reminiscent of the Gnostics, a representation of a necessary step in the psychological development of the human being—“the heeding of the serpent leads to expulsion from

paradise and to a higher consciousness.”  

This privileging of the conscious development is clear in his exposition of the tale of Amor and Psyche (or Eros and Psyche) in which the story becomes a paradigm of feminine development as opposed to the masculine/heroic. For Neumann, because the soul (psyche) itself is characterized as feminine we would do well to ask in what way is there a distinctive feminine transformation. It is his position that there is too much of an emphasis on the development or the trajectory of the male hero, destroying, conquering, and bearing the light of consciousness into a chaotic and dangerous underworld of the psyche. For Neumann the feminine journey was no less a light-bearing consciousness bringing quest, but whereas the male would conquer and overcome, the female (as psyche) would seduce and, above all, effect transformation, Neumann’s key term for the action of the feminine psyche. For Neumann the feminine journey is actually privileged, in both men and women, by virtue of the feminine origins of the psyche, not only the Greek gender of the noun, but most importantly the feminine figure of the myth and the feminine elements in the playing out of this myth.

This is something we see in many thinkers strongly influenced by Jung, that whereas he himself tended to place myths into an analytical, scientific framework, people like Neumann, James Hillman and Joseph Campbell tend to privilege the myth, and to fit their psychologizing into the framework of the story. Neumann is in a way the fount of this kind of myth-centric Jungianism which has become dominant over more clinically

centered voices. Neumann’s treatment of Amor and Psyche is a prime example of a philosophy grounded in a story, and it is important to note that this book has become a classic in the Jungian field as a development of Jung’s thought on the feminine. I quote from a crucial passage in which Neumann discusses the path that Psyche takes:

In the beginning Psyche sacrificed her Eros-paradise for the sake of her spiritual development; but now she is just as ready to sacrifice her spiritual development for the immortal beauty of Persephone-Aphrodite, which will make her pleasing to Eros. In so doing, she seems indeed to regress, but it is not a regression to something old, to the matriarchal position, for example. By preferring beauty to knowledge, she reunites herself, rather, with the feminine in her nature. And because she does this lovingly and for Eros, her “old” femininity enters into a new phase. It no longer consists in the self-contained beauty of a young girl who sees nothing beside herself, nor is it the seductive beauty of Aphrodite, who has only the “natural purpose” in mind. It is the beauty of a woman in love, who wishes to be beautiful for the beloved, for Eros, and for no one else.  

Neumann sees the progression of Psyche as involving sacrifice at every stage. The first sacrifice that she has to make is that of her intimate union with the god Eros, in which they could make love on the condition that she not try to see his face. But her desire to know her lover is too strong and so she attempts to illuminate his face with a candle. Wax drips from the candle and awakens him, at which point he flees, and Psyche must set out to find him. That is the first break, the first sacrifice she must make, and the second is when she must give up that very knowledge to again be in a love relationship with her newfound Eros.

61. Ibid., 123.
In Psyche’s confrontation with Aphrodite, who Neumann refers to as the “central feminine principle,” a quaternity is introduced, for the number of tasks which she commands Psyche to perform is four. According to Neumann the three tasks which Psyche first had to perform had to do with things outside of herself and could thus be accomplished by “helpers,” the last though is a task that she alone must conquer. Neumann points out that the traditional number of tasks the hero was required to perform was three, but most heroes are men and their stories do not involve the same mystery which this one does, the mystery of transformation and love. “Feminine individuation” says Neumann, “and the spiritual development of the feminine. . .are always effected through love.” I would add that his female hero also has a seductive role to play, but not merely for the cause of sex or as a temporary diversion, but in the deep sense of calling and coaxing Eros to develop his heroic character. For at one point she must coax him with light, but at the end she must coax him with darkness. In Neumann’s understanding this is a singularly feminine role and he is perhaps thinking of the role that Eve plays in the biblical story, which Neumann reads as proving that disobedience is necessary for the acquisition of “higher consciousness.” But here is where I think he loses sight of not only the point of that story but also of Jung’s insights concerning the self. In Genesis it is not their consciousness which causes them to be redeemed from their fall, but God’s action. Their increased knowledge never brings good with it by itself, but only by God’s intervention. This is what Jung tried to represent by the action of the self, which seems to

62. Ibid., 111.

63. Ibid.
come from outside and is definitely not reduced to consciousness. The fact that Neumann reduces the psychic drama to consciousness is made ironic by the fact that he does this in the name of the feminine, which of course, for Jung, was the antithesis of male logic and reason.

Now in the story Psyche’s sisters are clearly evil, but Neumann interprets Psyche’s heeding of their malicious advice—that Psyche try to find out who her husband is—as a necessary step in her development. That is, it is necessary for development that she indulge her dark side. He then equates this with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve’s sin: “It is the sisters who make her conscious of the monster-beast aspect.” This is because he interprets the maliciousness of the sisters as a “current in Psyche herself,” equating disobedience with increased consciousness and psychic growth. This is a dubious enterprise at best, for if disobedience is necessary and good, then the one that is being disobeyed must be malevolent. So we see Neumann is in the same difficult position which the Gnostics found themselves in as regards to God, and although Jungians in general are well known for empathizing with Gnostic thought, none of them, it seems, want to accept the consequences of such a thought, namely, a severe distrust of materiality coupled with an evil creator God.

Both Neumann and Edinger tend to think in much more dualistic terms than Jung did and to reduce the individuation process to merely a coming-to-consciousness. They more or less ignore the dynamic introduced by Jung’s notion of anima/us, and, while not

64. Ibid., 77.

65. Ibid., 75.
ignoring quaternities, do not have a feel for what the dynamic of conscious/unconscious
that they represent.

Neumann makes the mistake of lumping everything he likes into the feminine and
preaching the gospel of returning to the feminine, the substance of which is nothing other
than increased consciousness. Even though he speaks of “feminine characteristics” such
as transformation and seduction, ultimately they are transformations of consciousness and
seductions to greater knowledge and self-awareness. There is also a questionable reading
of the final scene in which Psyche (again) disobeys the instruction to not open the casket
which contains immortal beauty. Because Psyche opens the casket that she might “win
the grace of my fair lover,”66 Neumann sees this as a sacrifice of knowledge and action
for the sake of beauty which will win love. It is also a seduction, for now Eros has the
“possibility of encountering her again on a new plane, as savior and hero.”67 So is it
really the feminine that leads here, or is it just the same old male heroics? And can we
really read Psyche’s impulsive action of opening the casket as more than simply a girlish
fascination with being beautiful? For she has been warned that the casket is dangerous,
yet she seems to forget this in one impulsive moment. I’m in no way convinced that this
represents her escape from “narcissism” as Neumann claims: “Aphrodite [the jealous
mother of Eros] wishes psyche to regress from the woman who loved Eros who was
‘carried away’ by her love for him, and to become once more the maiden immured in

66. Ibid., 50.

67. Ibid., 124.
narcissistic love of herself as in a glass coffin, who sees only herself, and whose womanhood slumbers.”

His rationale for his emphasis on the feminine is that in both men and women the “totality of consciousness and the unconscious” is understood as the psyche, and “the mandala figure, which appears in man and woman as the totality of the psyche, is feminine in its symbolism as circle and round, or uroboric as that which contains the opposites.” My argument is not that the masculine is primary, but simply that what most interested Jung was the interplay between the two, and he tried hard to keep the sense of tension alive in his descriptions of the psyche. Granted, he did not always succeed, but I think the fact that Neumann seems to simply ignore the functions of the anima/us is sign of the reductiveness of his theory in general. We see with Neumann the beginning of a movement which is still going strong today with authors such as Thomas Moore, who express their indebtedness to Jung but are guilty of the one-sided emphasis on the feminine and the “soul” which Neumann begins. In justifying his emphasis Neumann claims that,

It was only after the medieval ban on the feminine-earthly side of psychic life—a ban laid down by a spiritual world one-sidedly oriented toward celestial-masculine values—began to be lifted that the divine in earthly nature and the human soul could be rediscovered. Thus in the modern era a new development of the feminine set in, just as, with the rise of depth psychology, a new form of psychic development and transformation is beginning to be discernible in the West.

68. Ibid., 119.

69. Ibid., 141.

70. Ibid.
The problem with Neumann and his heirs is that the transition to the “feminine” was facile and did not involve a serious rethinking of the terms in which the argument was set out. So they end up touting the very thing they are supposedly trying to defend against, the advance of mere consciousness. Jung at least made the effort to investigate other ways of knowing, from his doctoral thesis on the ouji board skills of his cousin, to the emphasis on drawings mandalas, visualization, and simply silence—Bollingen is best understood as a shrine dedicated to non-verbal ways of knowing. In my opinion, Jung also fails because he does not differentiate these other ways of knowing sufficiently from the “animus” style of dialectical logic to which he was trying to find an alternative. The problem with Neumann and the thinkers I will discuss next, is that they don’t seem to see the problem, or even the difficulty, in their touting of the feminine.

It seems that feminists, too, were not unaware of the kinds of problems I have pointed out here. Demaris Wehr, in her book, *Jung & Feminism*, discusses the different critiques that feminists have leveled at Jung’s theories. She cites Rosemary Reuthe who “faults Jungian psychology for supporting men’s ‘co-optation’ of the feminist movement”\(^{71}\) in which the topic quickly shifted from what men have taken from women, to what has been taken from men, namely their “feminine side.” The feminine then becomes something that has been described from the vantage point of the male, and not only that, but something that is owed them. We can perhaps see this operating in some of Neumann’s thought. Wehr also cites Ann Ulanov, a Jungian analyst, who states that:

\(^{71}\) Quoted in Wehr, *Jung & Feminism*, 3.
In [male feminists’] identification of their own suppressed self with the “feminine,” they think they have a handle on women’s true “nature.” They want women to cultivate this male definition of the “feminine” in order to nurture the “feminine side” of men. They purport to understand and sympathize with women and, no doubt, sincerely think they do. But they tend to become very hostile when women suggest that this definition of the “feminine” is really a male projection and not female humanity. The male ego is still the center of the universe, which “feminism” is now seduced into enhancing in a new way.\textsuperscript{72}

I think this is very important perspective to keep alongside that of Neumann’s—that seduction can work both way, and just because something is done in the name of the feminine does not mean that it is free of all sexism, or even misogyny.

In Neumann’s book \textit{Origins and History of Consciousness} he sets out his own version of the individuation process which is similar to Jung’s in many respects, but still places too heavy an accent on the conscious function. Like Jung, he sees the second half of life as the time when the archetype of the self comes into prominence.

In this transformation process—which not only occurs in the conscious form of the individuation process, but, through the self-regulation of the psyche, also governs the maturation of all personality—the ego reaches consciousness of the self. With the growing self-awareness of the ego, the self evolves out of its unconscious activity and arrives at the stage of conscious activity. The path of transformation followed by the individuant resembles the hermetic process in alchemy; it is a new form of dragon fight culminating in a qualitative change of consciousness. The mythological stage which we called “Transformation, or Osiris,” becomes a psychological reality when the conscious mind experiences the unity of the psyche.\textsuperscript{73}

Even though Neumann does, in other places, mention the functioning of the anima/us figures, the thrust of his argument excludes their dynamic involvement in the

\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in \textit{Jung & Feminism}, 3.

individuation process, and we are left with a rather flattened out version of the story of
the psyche, very much like Edinger’s Ego-Self axis which has only two modes, ego-self
identity, and ego-self differentiation—it is no wonder that Neumann’s work is entitled
“Origins and History of Consciousness”—for he is really does have much to say
concerning unconscious modes of being. In his mythological mapping of the
development of consciousness the beginning point is what he calls the uroboros, “when
the ego is contained in the unconscious.” This is followed by a difficult birth of the ego
to reality, the external world, in which the ego-hero is called upon to burst the bounds of
the uroboric womb, killing the mother, and setting out upon his own life. Granted,
Neumann sees the development of the ego as the ability to know, to cast light, on the self
and the archetypes, but clearly the emphasis is on the ego escape from bondage, and in its
consciousness of self, the emphasis is on the consciousness.

Part of the problem with Neumann, and again it is something he inherits from his
master, is a naïve belief that psychic development can be conceived as a natural, step-by-
step phenomenon which has a one to one correspondence with biological development:

Normally the archetypal stages are lived through without
disturbance, and the development of consciousness proceeds in them just as
naturally as physical development proceeds in the stages of bodily
maturation. As organs of the psyche’s structure the archetypes articulate with
one another autonomously, like the physical organs, and determine the
maturation of the personality in a manner analogous to the biological
hormone-components of the physical constitution.

74. Ibid., 5.

75. Ibid., xvi.
But why should the human psyche be reduced to this kind of functioning? It seems especially ironic that thinkers such as Jung and Neumann, who in many are reacting against a worldview which would base everything on repeatable phenomena and direct causality (cf. Jung’s notion of “acausality”), would so unthinkingly adopt this kind of biological determinism. We see it, though, again and again in the way that Neumann discusses the nascent ego:

In the relation between the ego and the unconscious, a “psychic gravitation” may be observed, a tendency of the ego to return to its original unconscious state. This tendency is inversely proportional to the strength of the ego and consciousness. In other words, the stronger the energetic charge of consciousness, the more free libido is available to the ego as will and interest and the smaller is the inertia expressive of psychic gravitation.\(^7\)

We see how Neumann is thinking here in distinctly dualistic terms with a language borrowed from the physical sciences. We can perhaps blame this habit on the beginnings of psychoanalysis and analytic psychology when both Freud and Jung were trying to conform themselves to scientific and medical standards. But clearly Neumann is no longer trying to fight this battle, so why is he insisting on these metaphors? It seems to be nothing more than intellectual laziness, which would opt for the straightforward analogies of physical sciences rather than the more delicate functioning of the human ones—there cannot simply be a wholesales transfer from one to the other.

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James Hillman is a pivotal figure in the history of Jung’s influence. An American, he went to Zurich to receive his training at the Jung Center there, eventually arising to prominence as its president. Later on he moves in another direction and develops his “archetypal psychology” which he distinguishes from Jung’s analytical psychology on several counts. He also became associated with the Men’s Movement, a quasi new age forum encouraging men to get back to their primal roots. Hillman describes his archetypal psychology as “a cultural movement part of whose task is the re-visioning of psychology, psychopathology, and psychotherapy in terms of the Western cultural imagination.”\footnote{77. James Hillman, \textit{Archetypal Psychology} (Putnam: Spring Publications, 2004), 13.} Although he credits Jung as being the “first immediate father of archetypal psychology” he also claims that “archetypal psychology, in distinction to Jungian, considers the archetypal to be always phenomenal, thus avoiding the Kantian idealism implied in Jung.”\footnote{78. Ibid., 14.} He states that, “unlike Jung who radically distinguishes between noumen as archetype \textit{per se} and phenomenal archetypal image, archetypal psychology rigorously refuses even to speculate about a non-presented archetype \textit{per se}. Its concern is with the phenomenon: the archetypal image.”\footnote{79. Ibid., 24-25.} Hillman stresses the imaginative character of his brand of psychology and claims that it works on the “soul as a first principle, placing this soul as a tertium between the perspectives of body (matter,
nature, empirics) and of mind (spirit, logic, idea).” He defines soul as “a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself. . . . soul refers to the deepening of events into experiences . . . . the significance soul makes possible, whether in love or religious concern, derives from its special relation with death. . . . by soul I mean the imaginative possibility in our natures, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image, and fantasy—that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical.” Hillman claims that Western thought (or “Northern” as he sometimes maintains) has erred in becoming obsessed with “history as development” and that it has “lost its relation with death and the underworld.” Not surprisingly he greatly privileges the Greeks over the Hebrews, valuing the Dionysian immersion into the turmoil of life and death which he sees in the former and disparaging the emphasis on literality, historicism, and anti-sensuousness which he espies in the latter.

As far as evaluating Hillman’s influence I will state at the outset that I am torn between being critical of many of the reductions which he performs on Jungian concepts, while respecting his emphasis on clinical practice and practical work, something which drops out in so many Jungians, Edinger and Joseph Campbell foremost among them. As both Edinger and Neumann have a tendency to reduce the quaternal thinking of Jung to a dualism (between ego and Self across the ego-self axis) we can see in Hillman yet a

80. Ibid., 16.

81. Ibid., 28-29.

82. Ibid., 33.
further reduction of the psyche to simply a whirlpool of images on which no judgment can be rendered, but the subject simply sits back and lets the images and fantasies wash over him, being happy enough to be considered part of their play: “That the soul longs, its pathos partly an expression of its pothos, is the ground of both its imperfection, felt as restlessness and failure, and the creative poiesis in humans and all of nature to produce endless novelty, endless variation in the makings of itself.” What we have here is a picture of the universe which perhaps owes more to Heraclitus and Empedocles than anyone else.

In what way does Hillman fit into our conversation concerning quaternity? I think he is important more for what he doesn’t say about quaternity than for what he does. Like Neumann, and perhaps influenced by him, Hillman fastens onto the soul (psyche) as the most important term and considers such a discussion important for balancing what he sees as an overly masculine Western consciousness with the feminine attributes of the soul. For Neumann there is a focus on the language of transformation and seduction in this regard, whereas for Hillman it comes down to being open to the play of images and fantasies which is life, admitting the mutable character of all things, seeing death and life as one. Whereas for Edinger and Neumann the duality often was expressed between ego and self, for Hillman it is fundamentally between soul and everything else, soul being the spiritual or “symbolic” meaning of things versus any reading which would cramp this vision, Hillman often pointing a finger at the Judeo-Christian tradition (even going so far

83. Ibid., 83.
as to refer to the “curse of Christianity” as an anti-example because of its claims to the absolute nature of God and the Good (opposed to the “relativism” of the soul, which, as a tertium, takes part in both good and evil) as well as its incommodiousness to other gods. To say that Yahweh is real while others gods are mere fabrications severely limits the imaginative style of Hillman’s soul whose agenda is to “restore the mythical perspective to depth psychology by recognizing the soul’s intrinsic affinity, nay, love for, the Gods.”

Hillman accuses the “omnipotent and omniscient Godhead” of the Judeo-Christian heritage of being a “Titan returned from Tartaros to a too high place, and, worse, all alone,” and he even implicitly accuses Jung of abetting this tradition with his “monotheism of Self”; whereas Hillman wants to stress the diversity of being, not only gods versus God, and imagination over unconscious, but also soul (in its imaginal muchness) versus a monolithic Self. He states: “If a psychology wants to represent faithfully the soul’s actual diversity, then it may not beg the question from the beginning by insisting, with monotheistic prejudgment, upon unity of personality. The idea of unity


86. Ibid., xii.

87. Ibid., xiii.

is, after all, only one of many archetypal perspectives. In fact, Hillman sees as many gods as there are diseases:

*First*, archetypal psychology can put its idea of psychopathology into a series of nutshells, one inside the other: within the affliction is a complex, within the complex an archetype, which in turn refers to a God. Afflictions point to Gods; Gods reach us through afflictions. Jung’s statement—“the gods have become diseases; Zeus no longer rules Olympus but rather the solar plexus, and produces curious specimens for the doctor’s consulting room”—implies that Gods, as in Greek tragedy, force themselves symptomatically into awareness. Our pathologizing is their work, a divine process working in the human soul. By reverting the pathology to the Gods, we recognize the divinity of pathology and give the God his due.\(^{90}\)

This is a very telling passage, especially noticing how Hillman capitalizes “Gods”—clearly his project is to give these fallen pagan divinities a place as high as has been reserved, heretofore, for the monotheistic one. And yet by exalting multiplicity and variety over unity, by raising the Greeks over the Hebrews, is Hillman really being as all-encompassing as he would like? Doesn’t he simply put multiplicity where unity was, and instead of gaining the richness of all these different perspectives, misses the chance of even having one perspective? For it seems to me that part of the depth of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition is that it offers an explanation for the pagan gods, giving them a place on the map, whereas we can’t really say the reverse.

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89. Ibid., xx.

90. Ibid., 104.
In the book *Inter Views*, Hillman is asked by the Italian journalist Laura Pozzo whether there is “a danger of replacing diagnostic terms with mythical terms or God?”

Hillman answer is interesting in that he comes out against such a practice. He states:

> I’ve come out against that very often. The issue isn’t finding new terms to replace the old terms. The old terms are fine. It’s a matter of seeing the old terms differently, shifting away from both nominalism and realism to rhetoric and metaphor. You see, mythical language just can’t be taken literally. Everybody knows these Gods don’t exist and that they aren’t real. We all know Venus and Saturn are images, metaphors, fantasies. But we forget that that is true of hysteria, schizophrenia, and ego, too. Mythical terms can’t get literalized the same way because built into them is the sense of the fantastic—and yet, at the same time, they have the cultural value, the traditional power and universality of Gods.  

In other words, when something gets a medical name attached to it we automatically think that it is devoid of mythical and metaphorical taint. But of course they are not. And yet, by reverting to the “old terms,” even if we do not take them literally (and here I think we have to admit that many in the Men’s movement, and other similar movements, did) do we not shrug off the scientific heritage of psychoanalysis too quickly? Clearly Hillman’s desire to reinvigorate old terms comes from his Jungianism, and I think the same criticism can be laid at the feet of his master: while it is true that the old terms have a depth of meaning and wealth of associations that medical terms lack, to revert to them too quickly runs the danger of being blind to a major part of what makes up the subjectivity of people today—the tremendous credulity we have for science and

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91. Ibid., 42.

92. Ibid.
technology. Hillman did not lose sight of the therapeutic aspect of his work, as so many others did, but I think he nevertheless can be criticized for a certain kind of nostalgia.

Hillman’s status as an American, and as a Texan no less, must be taken seriously as well, for much of his emphasis on symbolic readings and on the importance of the imagination stems from his desire to provide an alternative to American “literalism” which has its roots in Puritan methods of scriptural exegesis. He says this very plainly in his interview with Pozzo:

.I live in Texas. People don’t worry there, people don’t have Viennese Jewish inhibitions, people don’t come apart into schizophrenic Zerfahrenheit: they just do it in the world and make money, too. Shoot your father, shoot yours son, rape, drink—the whole family drinks—drive the car and drink, take this drug or that, buy, buy, buy, change your face, lift your breasts, buy some hair, different hair for different occasions. Put in a new heart. Bypass the heart—what a metaphor! If you get tired of something, move out or sell or go bankrupt. divorce it. If you want it, marry it. Transvestites, transsexuals, trans-you-name-it. I will name it: transcendence. There is something religious underneath that makes them transcend their conditions. . . . at the same time its all church backed. Fundamentalist. Do you see what I am driving at? Psychopathic behavior is a fundamentalist behavior: taking fantasies literally and also confusing the literal and the concrete.93

Hillman’s reaction to this is to posit a strong break between the concrete and the symbolic, between “real life” and the life of the imagination. This is not to say that the “imaginal” work done in analysis cannot have effects on the real world (this is something on which Pozzo questions him)—Hillman does not want to say that—yet nonetheless, it is something of an original sin with Hillman to confuse the two realms. And living in Texas, I’m not sure we can blame him. In fact, Hillman can be very critical of a sort of

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93. Ibid., 126-127.
hackneyed mode of analytical interpretation which just pigeon holes every reality in a person’s life into a transference or a projection. For Hillman, the images that one conjures up in analysis (or elsewhere) have a life of their own and often do not need to be interpreted at all. He complains that if Dante had gone to analysis he just would’ve been told that Beatrice was “his anima that hadn’t grown up yet,” and that there would have been something “immediately wrong with his having fallen in love with a girl child in a red dress in church.” One of the fundamental rules of Hillman’s archetypal psychology is to “stick to the images,” which means that when one dreams of a “huge black snake. . . the moment you’ve defined the snake, interpreted it, you’ve lost the snake, you’ve stopped it, and then the person leaves the hour with a concept about my repressed sexuality or my cold black passions or my mother or whatever it is, and you’ve lost the snake.” In a way, Hillman’s project is to keep people (Americans especially) aware of the difference between the material and the symbolic, between the literal and the metaphorical.

If we say that Hillman has reduced the quaternity of Jung to a swirling One, that one would have to be the anima, which, as we remember, plays an important role in Jung’s marriage quaternio, and, as the Latin word for soul, is the object of Hillman’s “soul making”:

94. Ibid., 66.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., 54.
97. Ibid.
Soul-making, as work on anima through images, offers a way of resolving the dependencies of transference. For it is not the therapist or any actual person whatever who is the keeper of my soul beyond all betrayals, but the archetypal persons of the Gods to whom the anima acts as bridge. The shaping of her amorphous moods, sulphuric passions, bitter resentments, and bubbles of distraction into distinct personalities is the main work of therapeutic analysis or soul-making. Therefore it works in imagination, with imagination, and for imagination. It discovers and forms a personality by disclosing and shaping the multiple soul personalities out of the primary massa confusa of arguing voices and pushing demands.  

If the anima is the only facet of the quaternio that is left for Hillman, imagination is the only one of the functions that is left to keep it company. And though this would be a problem from a strictly Jungian point of view, it is not something Hillman worries about because he himself defines his work in that way, saying: “For me therapy is basically the evocation of imagination: it’s training, working, struggling with imagination.” What saves Hillman from simply becoming a mythologist along the lines of a Joseph Campbell is that he is always thinking in terms of clinical practice, as we can see in book, *Suicide and the Soul*, which he writes to address the concerns of analysts facing this difficult subject. Concerning suicide he says that, “for the analyst it is even more complex than psychosis, sexual temptation, or physical violence, because suicide represents the epitome of the responsibility an analyst carries.”

the analyst, “loss of soul, not loss of life, should be his main dread.”

In a way Hillman, in this book, is arguing for a certain openness to suicide, not in the sense of encouraging it or of doing nothing to prevent it, but to realize that sometimes the suicidal urge is a “demand for a fuller life through the death experience.” Suicide, or the threat of it, is, in other words, a sometimes unavoidable challenge in the life of the soul.

It is fitting that Hillman dedicated an entire book to the subject of suicide because, from a certain perspective, it is the epitome of what he wants to eradicate, that is, the tendency to misunderstand the symbolic import of a psychic state, such as a depression or pull towards death, by acting out on it in a literal fashion, by actually killing oneself:

Keeping distinct inner and outer is a major task of an analyst. If he uses his tools well he frees life from entangling projections and frees the soul from its worldliness. Inner and outer are kept apart so that later they may be re-united appropriately, the soul expressing itself in the world, and outer life feeding the inner man. The suicide threat, like any of the problems which bring a person into analysis in the first place, is a confusion of inner and outer. We suffer when we muddle psychic reality with concrete people and events, thus symbolising life and distorting its reality. And the reverse: we suffer when we are able to experience psychic reality only by acting out concretely our fantasies and ideas.

It is this rejection of literalism and openness to metaphorical and poetic readings that made Hillman popular with many thinkers who came of age during the “Age of Aquarius”. The Australian writer David Tacey is one of these. He discusses his own upbringing in the midst of the Age of Aquarius quickly becoming the New Age, which he

101. Ibid., 83.
102. Ibid., 63.
103. Ibid., 77.
describes as “more tame and commercial” than the Age of Aquarius, which was “largely nascent and underground.”" He became interested in Hillman’s archetypal psychology during this time which he describes as a:

More intellectual version of the same values and attitudes that were apparent in the Aquarian Conspiracy. This American movement aspires toward egolessness and relaxation, viewing the unconscious as a stream of sacred images that entertain and dazzle us, without making any claims on us, or asking us to become morally involved in what we are experiencing. Although operating under Jung’s name, this movement is not Jungian at all, since it fails to understand the need for consciousness to respond ethically to its encounter with archetypes.

I think Tacey’s criticism of Hillman is correct, but with a caveat, for while Jung was quite concerned with the morality involved in his psychology and was somewhat unique in his emphasis on that area, this morality sometimes degenerated into conservative Swiss values, with no seeming connection to his theoretical work. Certain thinkers, such as Mark Noll, have more or less accused Jung of fascism, and while I think that Noll goes too far, there is a sense in which Jung’s moral compass is simply the fact of tradition and conservative values of a certain place, which seem to feign ignorance of European ethical thought since the time of Kant. The other side of my caveat is that, even though Hillman does focus overwhelmingly on the interior life, he is not unaware of the necessity that at some point inner and outer are “re-united appropriately.” The question of course is whether or not Hillman’s theoretical and practical tools actually allow that to happen.


105. Ibid.
I cannot claim to be familiar enough with Hillman’s work or the history of his institute in Dallas to be able to comment conclusively on this question, but many of the criticisms that Tacey has of the New Age in general could just as easily be leveled against Hillman, as, for example, when he says that “there is precious little development of the higher Self in the New Age; instead, we find an almost systematic development of the ego, even though the New Age claims to be transcending the ego.” Even though someone like Hillman might have us think that in the process of “soul making” in which the imagination is unleashed and explored, we are departing from the confines of a rigid ego, I don’t think this removes the danger that this could also be simply the ego indulging itself. This is clear in the work of Jacques Lacan where the ego is always associated with images, and where they find their limit in the unconscious, which is “structured like a language.” It seems that thinkers like Hillman feel they are being radical by ignoring language and espousing image, which they see as a return to the plastic arts of the Greeks over the linguistic emphasis of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Thinkers like Lacan are critical of such a move, which they see as a flight from the realities of our present situation into a fantasy of something other, a fantasy that we could shrug off our heritage in a couple sessions of unbuckled imagination.

Tacey has some interesting things to say about the differences between Jung and his followers as pertains to the distinction between the ego and the self. He notes that Jung never capitalizes “self” but that this was a practice started by his successors who

106. Ibid., 23.
came to “emphasize the distinction between it and the common ‘self’ or ego.”

Tacey seems to think it a weakness of Jung’s that he did not do more to distinguish the two terms, but it seems to me to be somewhat endemic in Jung’s thought, for if we are honest, although his system is much less monolithic than Hillman’s, he ultimately doesn’t introduce a proper limit to the realm of the image. For example, in his analysis of dreams there is none of the Freudian emphasis on the particularly linguistic elements such as metaphor, metonymy, homophony, etc., but all elements are considered only as images. There are ego images, anima images, images of the self (mandalas, quaternities), but in the end they are all images, and so if we want to find the source of Hillman’s error, I’m afraid we have to look at Jung himself. And yet, where Jung succeeds in this field is in carving out a space for the dark side, the inassimilable nature of the self and deepest nature of the human psyche. This is vital and it functions the way language, especially language in its slips, functions in Freud and Lacan, as something that stops the image in its tracks and presents an unknown (something repressed, something I can’t see). Freud connected this with the “navel of the dream,” that part which resists a conclusive interpretation, and unless we retain some aspect of the unknown we risk a wholesale loss of the unconscious for a play of images, which ultimately remain under our conscious control. Tacey characterizes Jung’s position well when he says, referring to the self, that “for Jung, wholeness is not what we ‘want’, but what life forces upon us; therefore, it could hardly be expected to become popular.”

107. Ibid., 41.
108. Ibid., 68.
Arguably the most popular of those who have been called Jungian, Joseph Campbell is known most for his work with, and encyclopedic knowledge of, world mythology. What does it mean to say that someone like Joseph Campbell is Jungian, though? For he was never a psychologist or a therapist, and he never wrote on these subjects, at least not explicitly, even though one of his most famous lines, “Follow your bliss,” seems to have been taken as if it was therapeutic advice by many people. I think we can describe Campbell as Jungian in the sense that he takes very seriously Jung’s idea that stories and myths, literature and philosophy, can say something very intimate about the psyche, and that to read these texts is to find out about ways to live. That is, reading a myth is akin to reading our own psychological text. One of his popular books is in fact titled *Myths to Live by*, and he encouraged his students and readers to make their lives a living myth. Although he was not, as Hillman was, an analyst, he does, like Hillman, reduce the Jungian quaternity to something much closer to a monad. With Hillman this monad is the flux of variegated imagination; with Campbell it has a more precise name, that of monomyth.

Looking closely at the monomyth in order to draw out the quaternal features and roots within it, the first thing we notice is that is that the monomyth is, quite appropriately, monolithic. Even though Campbell talks a lot about the contradictions and paradoxes contained with it, fundamentally the monomyth is controlled by one
dominating central aspect. He quotes Schopenhauer in this regard, to the effect that “your whole life composed by the will within you,” and, “it is as though our lives were the features of the one great dream of a single dreamer in which all the dream characters dream, too; so that everything links to everything else, moved by the one will to life which is the universal will in nature.”109 Similarly to the way that the imaginative faculty controls or orients the various images in Hillman, this “universal will” has the power to cause all stories and myths, no matter how divergent, to serve the same goal of natural and human destiny. With Campbell the nature and the human are both instances of becoming as opposed to being: “When life comes into being, it is neither afraid nor desiring, it is just becoming.”110 Campbell reads myth and religion in a very individualistic way such that the point of them is never dogmatic or moral but always to address the inner life of the individual, to increase his or inner freedom or “bliss.” And what exactly is bliss? Understanding that Campbell never formulated this theoretically, or probably meant it ever to be more that simply a pithy formulation, bliss seems to me to be very similar to Hillman’s sense of awe and wonder at the swirling images of the gods that rule the psyche. There is again that sense of “letting it all wash over you,” of utter involvement in the phantasmagorical sea of becoming. In the context of discussing the birth of romantic love in the myth of Tristan and Isolde, Campbell compares following one’s bliss to the sacrifice which the lovers make for the their love: “Any life career that you choose in following your bliss should be chosen with that sense—that nobody can


110. Ibid., 218.
frighten me off from this thing. And no matter what happens, this is the validation of my life and action.” He also evokes Nietzsche’s notion of *amor fati*, to the tune that “if you say no to a single factor in your life, you have unraveled the whole thing.” Campbell often stressed the darker images of myths, and even read their violent scenes as images of positive sacrifice and the urge to life which comes out of death. He is not Hellenizing like Hillman, and in fact he gives the myths of the Bible the same treatment that he gives all myths; they must all be read the text of individual struggle and release.

Campbell accepts the basic rudiments of the Jungian psyche such that it is a sharing between conscious and unconscious functions with the former as a “secondary organ of a total human being, [which] must not put itself in control.” One’s own myth always meant facing the monsters of the unconscious and the “dark side,” but always with an eye towards deliverance from them and towards the new life which slaying them affords. In his most famous book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell traces out the rudiments of the monomyth. He sketches it in the form of a circle and begins with the hero leaving the safe confines of hearth and home to set out on a journey of danger, adventure, and self-discovery. At the quarter mark on Campbell’s diagram, the hero faces an extreme trial which could be dragon-battle, dismemberment, crucifixion, or any other image of great violence and struggle. Opposite this on the circle though is the hero’s resurrection or return. For Campbell, monomyth necessarily involved struggle that

111. Ibid., 190.

112. Ibid., 161.

113. Ibid., 146.
involved the core of the hero’s being (and often resulted in his death), and bliss always included a life giving death. He would often play on the dual meaning of passion, as both a suffering and a driving desire.

It would not really be correct to criticize Campbell as wanting to avoid or minimize death in his work—he says, “one can experience an unconditional affirmation of life only when one has accepted death, not as contrary to life but as an aspect of life”\(^\text{114}\) —but I think it can be said that Campbell’s death ends up ultimately as a virtual death. It is a death as lived through a myth, and even though he often spoke about the importance of living one’s life as a myth, there is something deeply anti-historical about his leanings. He even admitted that he never read the newspapers and often complained about those who would do so at the expense of the eternal wisdom to be found in classic books and stories. A question that often arises when reading Campbell is, if we are enjoined to imitate these mythic and literary heroes, how is this to be done? When we read, in *The Power of Myth*, about the couple in a traditional community in New Guinea that gets ritually crushed under a roof while copulating—with Campbell commenting that here “is the union of begetting and death. . . .the nature of life itself has to be realized in the acts of life,”\(^\text{115}\) —where does that leave his reader? Clearly these adolescents are seen to be following their bliss and having an authentic religious experience, but it becomes very problematic when one wants to translate this figure to a modern reader, even though Campbell immediately equates their experience to the experience of the Mass. And

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 152.

without any of the psychoanalytic aims and limits that Jung had, Campbell can only really say that it is symbolic or imaginative for us. This is a problem, for we end up with a situation in which the reader is encouraged to somehow live as intensely as a Buddha, a Christ, a Lancelot, or a Pocahontas, but then given no medium to get there apart from his or her fantasy. But of course none of the figures Campbell is writing about had their adventures in the virtual. Even with meditative traditions like Zen, we cannot say that their heroes are struggling in the virtual realm—the illusions and attachments that are being fought against are very real! Campbell thus reduces Jung to a virtual plane of diverse images. One gets the feeling, when reading Campbell, that he cites nearly every mythological and religious tradition ever known to man, and while this is surely impressive, is it not perhaps compensation for the fact that structurally, Campbell is weak, having reduced a quaternity to a monad?

David Tacey has a similar critique of Campbell, whom he includes among New Age gurus. Describing the type of person attracted to such a guru, he says, that this person “wants blissful union without the suffering of the cross, spiritual rebirth without having to endure spiritual death. He is ‘hooked’ on the sacred, addicted to spiritual techniques and practices, and his credo is: ‘Follow your bliss.’”116 I think Tacey’s criticism is consonant with mine in that the virtual universe Campbell posits is one in which we want the suffering and death to happen only vicariously, but the boon and blessing to be real. This is similar to Tacey’s criticism of Hillman, that the sense of responsibility in nowhere present, and in my opinion, because of Campbell’s lack of

analytic experience, it sticks even better. How could we develop a sense of responsibility if the suffering is not ours, and the reward seems to always elude our grasp? If we are supposed to follow a myth, what is the good of barraging someone with a thousand of them? What hero in these stories chooses from among a thousand different myths? Does he not live out the myth and the story that is his? Another of the criticisms I leveled at Jung is also applicable to Campbell, that he seems not to be able to develop a modern, scientific myth that could make sense for us, and that would be different from the ones preceding and surrounding it. We can’t deny that science has made us something of an anomaly on this earth. If this is so, why would we think that we could follow someone else’s myth, or worse, that all myths are more or less equal, and we could just pick one of our liking (especially considering our scientific culture is premised on suppositions of novelty and superiority)? There is an implicit rejection of modernity in all of these thinkers, that many time goes hand in hand with a reaction against the Judeo-Christian tradition. This latter symptom is clear in Hillman, and even though Campbell ranks the Christian myth along with all the others, in making all these stories synonymous with all the rest, he strikes at the heart of the Christian claim to distinctiveness. I would argue that this vitiates not only Christianity and Judaism but other religions as well, even though many religions do not stake such a claim to distinctiveness (Zen Buddhism for example is not historically rooted in the figure of Buddha, but sees Shakyamuni as simply someone who has accessed a truth that is available for all). The distinctiveness of Judeo-Christianity, its notion of an elect people, is crucial for analyzing the psychological situation of Westerners.
In *Hero with a Thousand Faces* Campbell gives his brief overview of the monomyth:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his common day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or to be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero’s sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divination (apotheosis), or again—if the powers have remained unfriendly to him—his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir).\(^{117}\)

The first thing I would point to is the roughly quaternal structure of this “monomyth,” for the main episodes are four in number: the setting out, the “death” or dismemberment, the marriage/atonement, the resurrection/return. Along the way there are various peripheral adventures but these four are the ones that get emphasized and that seem to be the most crucial—they are the *sine qua non* of the monomyth, which for Campbell is behind all myths worthy of the name. This matrix works good enough in the story of Shakyamuni

Buddha, who leaves the confines of a comfortable life, fights the demonic forces under the Bodhi tree, under which his attachments are destroyed but enlightenment is won, which is the boon he then gives back to the world. I am not quite so certain that the story works as well when we turn to the biggest myth of the west, the story of Christ. On an earthly level it seems to follow the monomyth for Jesus leaves his humble community of Nazareth, gains followers as he sets out for Jerusalem, the city of his quest, is crucified, and then returns in the flesh to his friends and gives them the Holy Spirit, the gift of eternal life. If we look at the larger picture though, we almost have the reverse of the monomyth, for we have the Logos leaving a community (Trinity) which has no need for anything. Out of divine love he empties himself to appear in a human way (say, under the form of the monomyth), but after accomplishing what he set out to do, returns to his divine home, which we can’t really say ever needed anything—from “their” standpoint the journey was completely gratuitous. It is perhaps telling Campbell’s first book was on *Finnegan’s Wake* (he takes the term monomyth comes from this work of James Joyce), surely the most mythically stuffed book every written. It is not a stretch to see all of Campbell’s work, with the way he moves so quickly from one tradition to the next, from Paleolithic times to the present day, as an elaboration on the myths of *Finnegan’s Wake*.

There are ways in which this setup is quite Jungian and other ways in which it is not. In its general import I feel that it is something which Jung could perhaps agree with, for it involves the ego struggling against dark forces—Campbell’s “dismemberment” could be equated with Jung’s notion of conflict with the shadow. The nadir on Campbell’s graph could be seen as the struggle/harmonization with the anima/us, and
Campbell’s resurrection could be read as the birth of the self or the appearance of the
golden child in Jung. Where Campbell perhaps differs from Jung is in the lack of
differentiation afforded to the different characters which show up. The mothers, fathers,
friends, and enemies are not parts of one psyche, as Jung makes clear. One reason for this
would simply be that Campbell is no psychologist and he is merely analyzing the stories
as he finds them. I think the point where Jung would take issue with this way of thinking
is the point at which Campbell makes his analysis into therapy with the injunction to
“follow your bliss” or to “live out your myth.” But which myth ought I to live out? Are
they all just variations on the monomyth? And if they are why do we have different
myths at all? I think Jung would really take issue with such a blanket declaration. While
he wouldn’t disagree with the fact that one’s personal destiny might be mirrored in the
stories and myths, the work of analysis is necessary to find at what points the
unconscious identifies with these myths. This is not just a conscious decision, but one
that rises up during dreams, word associations, etc. Campbell’s statement that the boon
which the hero receives is ultimately an “expansion of consciousness” betrays again an
overemphasis on the conscious function, which is why he perhaps makes the transition
from scholar of mythology to popular therapist so fluidly. In analysis it is quite clear that
the figures of one’s psyche, anima, shadow, etc. do not arise out of consciousness even
though this may be the function which identifies them. With Campbell we see the first
example of a trend which I do not find helpful, that in which everyone is counseled to be
their own therapist, and therapy can be reduced to reading about something and then
simply choosing to apply it to one’s own life.
Conclusion

As with my criticism of many of these thinkers, their weaknesses often arise at points where they diverge from Jung, but often Jung himself was guilty of the same tendencies. For example, I believe that Jung also overemphasized the conscious function inasmuch as his system was a dualism between conscious and unconscious. While the unconscious was the home of the archetypes and the roots of libido, in order to progress one always had to make these figures conscious. Therapy and life then became a perpetual expansion of consciousness, as in the image from his autobiography of consciousness as a candle held out against the darkness of the world and the unconscious. The candle, he said, is small but it is all that we have. Owing to this dualism, the unconscious becomes both too distant and too intelligible. It is problematic that one always finds what one is looking for in the Jungian unconscious, which contains a limited number of archetypes, “as many as there are repeatable human actions.” So is the unconscious really un-conscious? Or is it simply, like a buried city, waiting there to be exhumed? It is interesting that Freud and Lacan always had topologies which were three tiered, and I think they were saved from many of Jung’s problems because of this, for Jung’s deep structural topology is not of four parts, or even three, but only of two, the conscious and the unconscious. As much as people accuse Freud of positivism I think this is really more true of his followers (the so called neo-Freudians) than of himself, who always held that there was a navel in the

118. The close connection between Quaternity and Duality is also emphasized by Frithjof Schuon when he says that “the Quaternity is but a development of the Duality Atma-Maya, Deva and Shakti.” Frithjof Schuon, The Essential Frithjof Schuon, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Bloomington: World Wisdom Inc., 2006), 357.
dream that was quite simply unknown. Ironically, Jung formulated his system as a reaction against what he saw as the overemphasis on science and structure in Freud and hoped that his collective unconscious would be “deeper” and more embracing of extra-scientific material than Freud’s unconscious. I think history has shown that the opposite occurred. Jung’s unconscious, with no third term to differentiate against, has had no choice but to mirror the conscious function, while in Freud’s renewal at the hands of Lacan we see something radically new at the conceptual and even experiential level (in objet petit (a), and in his formulations of the real). One proof of this is perhaps that, as little respect as Freud had for religion, Lacan, never disavowing his Freudianism, has become one of the 20th century’s most incisive commentators on Judaism and Christianity, and their relationship to modernity.

Although I agree with Tacey’s criticism of the Jung movement and the New Age I do not ultimately agree with his position that we need an “authentic New Age,” which he says is “primarily a primitive religion of the Great Mother.”[119] What he likes about the New Age, and what he thinks needs to be retained, is its ideal of the whole psyche, and its rejection of a view of evil in which evil is something impossible to integrate, which is how he understands the Christian version of evil and Satan—“impossible for the human psyche to integrate.”[120] He would rather have the New Age version which posits in the place of the Beast or Anti-Christ, “the Great Goddess or the Earth Mother. And not only

119. Tacey, _Jung and the New Age_, 54.

120. Ibid., 8.
one Goddess, but many, a veritable pantheon of ‘Lost Goddesses’. And yet, is this not just another attempt to “get back to where we were,” to avoid the real affects of our scientific, religious, and social revolutions because we just can’t stomach them? I am always critical of this kind of nostalgic yearning, for I strongly believe that it comes out of a shirking of our responsibility to work strenuously with the difficulties we presently have. On the back of Tacey’s book the New Age is touted as a popular movement with “increasing momentum” that is set to replace the “minority interest” of “formal religion.” But isn’t the New Age itself a “minority interest”? I think it is hyperbole to assume that the New Age movement is somehow our version of the medieval Catholic church, in which religion and society mesh seamlessly. The fact of the matter is that the path which the West has taken has introduced irrevocable psychic splits that are not going away, no matter how much we want them to. No matter how much all of us would like to experience life as an integral whole in which all of society strives towards the same religious and political goals, this will never be more than a pipe dream. And quite honestly, when we project this onto some ideal time in the past, whether that of Dionysian Greece or medieval Europe, we most often reveal more about our fantasies than about those eras. I would hold Tacey guilty of the sin of which Camus speaks when he says, in a quote that Tacey places at the head of one his chapters that “If there is a sin against life, it consists perhaps not so much in despairing of life as in hoping for another life and eluding the implacable grandeur of this life.”

121. Ibid.
122. Ibid., 46.
But the question for us is more narrow—What are we to make of this situation, in which quaternity seems to have all but disappeared in the Jungian field? This is not to say that Jungians don’t talk about it, but there is clearly nothing substantial being said that Jung didn’t already articulate, and more often then not Jung’s quaternity has been reduced in the direction of Hillman’s “vale of soul-making” or Campbell’s “monomyth.” I have, along the way, been pointing out places in which the shortcomings of Jung’s followers can be traced back to the master himself, and it is my opinion that Jungian thought in general is at a low level, what Tacey bemoans as new age populism, because there are serious defects in the foundations laid by Jung. When he breaks from Freud because of disagreements over the “sexual theory,” because he wants to claim aspects of libido beyond sexual concerns, he hurts himself on two fronts. First of all, he loses the resistance and tension which sexuality brought to the Freudian drama, which always allowed the theory to balance and correct itself. The fact that Lacan was able to affirm the sexual content of the Freudian field whilst conducting his radical forays into linguistics and mathematical topology is strong evidence for the authenticity of this foundation. Secondly, Jung gives himself too much to work with by broadening the definition of libido in the way he does. His theory becomes vague and points inexorably to the extreme expansion to which Hillman and Campbell subject it, not to mention the way that Jungian thought is manipulated in the talk shows and popular self-help books, in which the jargon of “finding your self” becomes nothing other than the seduction of the advertiser.
If we take a look back at the fundamental themes of quaternity iterated in our introduction—integration, femininity, the status of evil and materiality—we see that these themes are strongly present in almost all the thinkers who could be described as Jungian. The emphasis on the Great Mother which one sees in Neumann or Tacey is perhaps the best example of this, for in this figure, all of these concerns are gathered in one place—in a way the Great Mother is an amplification of the way in which Jung saw the Virgin, especially in the light of her high station after 1950. Yet there is a danger that this amplification becomes inflation (in Edinger’s sense); there is simply too much laid at the feet of this figure—by getting in touch with her, or by releasing her, we will usher in something akin to the Kingdom of God. The Men’s Movement did the same thing but with a masculine character, like Robert Bly’s “Iron John,” who resided in the depths of the male psyche, waiting to heal the wounded masculine soul. While at first glance there may not seem to be much difference between an emphasis on the Mary versus the Great Mother, but what drops out when we move from Jung’s historically centered discussion on the dogma of the Assumption to the purely “symbolic” viewpoints of Neumann (on the Great Mother) and Campbell (on myth in general) is the real dimension of the spiritual truth. That is, in treating these figures—whether it’s the Great Mother, Iron John, or Campbell’s hero—as unequivocally universal, one provides no way of rendering them any more substantial than an psychological illusion, as helpful as that illusion may be. I have already noted that the seeds of this are present in Jung, but Jung never let his quaternal formulation becomes completely bereft of a participation in the real, thanks to his historically centered research (in the shift from Gnosticism to alchemy, in the
theological and historical development of the church). It is this trend which Lacan (who claimed to be in the line of medieval realists) fights against when he demands that the psyche’s participation in the real cannot be unbuckled from the registers of symbolic and the imaginary without out serious psychological disintegration (we will explain in detail the realms of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real in the following chapter). As we look at Lacan, we should remember that much of what he says about the imaginary could refer to almost all of what Joseph Campbell says about myth. In general, Lacan has argued that Jung’s thought is almost exclusively concerned with the imaginary realm, at the expense of the real and the symbolic. While this criticism may be too strong at times, I think it can more accurately be leveled at most of Jung’s successors, who, in the name of retaining spiritual symbolism run the risk of cutting off the products of the psyche from the world of the real.
CHAPTER 4
THE QUADRILATERALS OF LACAN

“I have already asked the question here as to what the critical conceivable minimum is for a signifying scale, if the register of the signifier is to begin to organize itself. There cannot be a two without a three, and that, I think, must certainly include a four, the quadripartite. . . .”

Introduction

The quaternities we have looked at so far, various as they are, have all had at least one thing in common—they are all formulated as an expression of integrity and unification. They are associated with the circle, the triangle, and the square, in order to express this quality of being grounded in something stable. The tetractys of Pythagoras is stable because of the four points on which it stands. The mandala of Jung expresses the Self because it is a circle divided into its four most elemental parts. Even the monomyth of Campbell, while it does not understand itself explicitly as a quaternity, retains this purpose of the quaternity, that is, of return, healing, and wholeness. I think we can say that, throughout history, quaternities, and the number four in general, are utilized to get across these themes. Thinking about famous quaternities which we have not addressed here, such as the theme of the four evangelists around the cross, clearly they are grouped as such in order to communicate that the whole of Jesus’ life has been touched on. Also,

with the four modes of interpretation in medieval exegesis (see Henri de Lubac’s *Medieval Exegesis*), literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical, the purpose there was to access the universality of what scripture has to offer, from its most clear surface understanding (the literal) to the mysteries of the end times (the anagogical).

When we examine Sergius Bulgakov’s reading of Sophia in the final chapter we will return, in a way, to the familiar theme of quaternity as an expression of unity, but here in our examination of Lacan, the number four is put to a use diametrically opposed to what we have seen so far. That is, though Lacan uses quaternities (or quadrilaterals, as he calls them) almost as often as Jung does, they are (almost) never to express wholeness, but rather to encourage the reader to see the gaps involved in the formation of the subject. Where Jung’s formations are clean, in that they take care of the problems of darkness and evil, and guide one toward a complete and circular understanding of his thought, Lacan almost always works to undo any confidence and to introduce added complexity where before one was secure in a given interpretation. He will use graphs and visual aids but they are much more closely related to mathematical or logical analyses than they are to imaginary collections (such as a mandala). They do not gather together, but rather show the trajectories of dispersion and flight. Theoretically, Lacan is very critical of Jung precisely because he sees an overemphasis on the imaginary (a technical term in Lacan which we will explain) which results in an overemphasis on the ego’s power of understanding and collecting.
The L Schema and the Subject of the Unconscious

Lacan first became famous in the 1950s for his call to a return to Freud. While the psychoanalytic community in France would definitely have considered itself Freudian, Lacan felt that they had retained only surface elements of their founding father, stressing the second topography of superego, ego, id at the expense of thought concerning the first topography and the unconscious, as well as completely disregarding the death drive. It is only fitting, then, that we begin our look at Lacan with a quote from Freud, perhaps a rather surprising one in view of the emphasis he placed on ternaries—“I am accustoming myself to regarding every sexual act as an event between four individuals.”

It would be fascinating to interrogate exactly what this cryptic statement meant for Freud himself, but we will have to be satisfied to limit ourselves to the manner in which Lacan understood and expanded upon it. In Lacan’s version, it is not only in the sexual situation but simply in the dynamics of the subject itself that we always must posit at least four positions—“four points of anchoring seem necessary in order that the subject become manifest.”

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The easiest way to examine these four positions, which do not necessarily always go by the same name or have the same function, is to look closely at the quadrilateral represented in the L schema (above). In the L schema we have a box, more or less, with four corners. In each corner is a letter representing an aspect of the subject, which Lacan describes in this way: “S, his ineffable and stupid existence; a, his objects; a’, his ego, that is, his form as reflected in his objects; and A, the locus from which the question of his existence may arise for him.”

Let us start with a and a’. In Lacan’s understanding of the development of the psyche the child between the ages of 6 and 18 mos. first comes to awareness of herself through the mediation involved in what he called the mirror stage. The essence of the mirror stage is that the child first sees herself as presented in a “mirror” or some stand-in for a mirror, perhaps the image of their sibling, or even their own being reflected in the faces of their parents and caretakers—an image of a perfect, 

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integral whole. The essence of this image is that it presents a body that is in control of itself, a vision of unity. This is attractive to the infant precisely because this is a unity that she herself does not possess.

One reason this stage is so formative in humans is due to the phenomenon of prematuration, the extended time that human beings remain in a helpless state. And although Lacan pointed out the presence of mirror stage dynamics in the animal kingdom, like the fact that the gonads of a hen do not develop until it sees a member of its own species, even if only in a mirror, in human beings this stage bears on psycho-social development in that it addresses the lack of the happy and whole body the child sees in the “mirror.” If this lack seems to be given the lie by the child’s smile at seeing the mirror images presented to her in the form of other faces, fuzzy animals, and real mirrors, it is only because the child is starting to fantasize that these objects are her. If Lacan is right in saying that the experience of the infant is a kind of hell, the only comfort for the child is to find her being in an integral entity which does not suffer the same lack of bodily control, the same painful intestinal urges, the same barrage of sharp disconnected images.

This, at least, was how Lacan understood the importance of the teddy bear, or blanky, or whatever object it is in the child’s universe which takes on such a grand significance. For Lacan it is the mirror stage which lays the foundation for the ego, which is characterized by rivalry, aggression, duality, and imitation. The ego axis, the

5. “The experiment nevertheless acknowledges that it is a necessary condition for the maturation of the female pigeon’s gonads that the pigeon see another member of its species, regardless of its sex; this condition is so utterly sufficient that the same effect may be obtained by merely placing a mirror’s reflective field near the individual.” Lacan, Écrits, 77.
line which extends from a to a’ is thus divided between two ideals, which Lacan borrows from Freud: the ego ideal (ich ideal) which is what the child sees in the mirror, or in the outline of his friends, or the face of his parents, and the ideal ego (ideal ich) the internalized image of what she would like to be, based on what she has seen in the “mirror.” For Lacan, both the neo-Freudians and the Jungians conducted their analyses almost exclusively on this axis, the neo-Freudians because they saw themselves as imaging a strong ego to their analysands, and the Jungians because of the emphasis on the visual dimension, which for Lacan is mostly contained within the imaginative and constrained to the ego.

This is the whole difference between Freud’s orientation and that of Jung’s school, which latches onto such forms; Wandlungen der libido. These forms may be brought to the fore in a mantic, for they can be produced using the proper techniques (promoting imaginary creations such as reveries, drawings, etc.) in a situable site. This site can be seen on my schema stretched between a and a’—that is, in the veil of the narcissistic mirage, which is eminently suited to sustaining whatever is reflected in it through its effects of seduction and capture.6

The tendency of Jungians, and sometimes even of Jung himself, to let quaternities be reduced to dualities shows that it is this axis that is operative, for the ego sees everything in binary. But Lacan had no great love either for those who had claimed to inherit Freud’s mantle, whether it was the neo-Freudians who had immigrated to America (Löwenstein, Kris, Hartmann) and Americanized Freud, or the English school of object relations (Klein), who “by simply eliminating,” Lacan remarks snidely,

any and all reference to the symbolic poles of intersubjectivity in order to reduce analytic treatment to a utopian rectification of the

imaginary couple, we have now arrived at a form of practice in which, under the banner of “object relations,” what any man of good faith can only react to with a feeling of abjection is consummated.\footnote{Lacan, Écrits, 41.}

In the L schema Lacan does not refer to the ideal ego and ego ideal but rather \( a \) and \( a' \) which refers to the French word for other, \textit{autre}. The two most important things for us to note is that the ego finds its origin not in the self but in an other, and it is built fundamentally as an imitation of this other. The depth of sibling rivalry finds its meaning on this axis, in which the fight for supremacy can take on the intensity of a death match, in which there is only a winner or a loser, there being no mediator, no third term, to intervene, and in which such tremendous importance is placed on being liked or disliked, the latter occasioning complete disregard or violent dismissal. This should remind us of von Franz’s discussion of the number two, which is really the number of war, of the binary in which there is only victory or loss.

The other axis which we see is that of the Symbolic, which for Lacan, is the “only dimension that heals.” The first way in which it heals is by supplying the third term which can mediate between the endless mirroring rivalry of the imaginary dimension in which the ego finds itself. The symbolic introduces the agency of the Law which is experienced as an arbitrary imposition into the dialectic of the Imaginary. It is again represented by the letter A, but this time capitalized and read as big Other, or simply the unconscious, which is “the discourse of the other.”\footnote{Jacque Lacan, \textit{The Language of the Self}, trans. Anthony Wilden (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968), 27.} This Other is the repository of
language and law and is not a rival, as the little other is, but a master to be obeyed. It is connected with Freud’s super-ego in that it can be manifested as a voice to heeded, or as Lacan puts it, “the locus from which the question of his [the subject’s] existence may arise for him.”

The key to Lacan’s rise as an important, and extremely divisive, analyst was his emphasis on the Symbolic, a concept which was first fully fleshed out in his famous Rome report in which he underlines again and again the importance of the Word (representing the Symbolic) over the Imaginary, or alternately, nature:

>If for a symptom to be admitted as such in psychoanalytical psychopathology—whether a neurotic symptom or not—Freud insists on the minimum of overdetermination constituted by a double meaning (symptom of a conflict long dead apart from its function in a no less symbolic present conflict), and if he has taught us to follow the ascending ramification of the symbolic lineage in the text of the patients’ free association, in order to locate and mark in it the points where its verbal forms intersect with the nodal points of its structure, then it is already completely clear that the symptom resolves itself entirely in a Language analysis, because the symptom itself is structured like a Language, because the symptom is a Language from which the Word must be liberated.”

It should be noted that this very strong emphasis on the efficacy of the Symbolic is a feature of this era in Lacan’s thinking and is overshadowed by the register of the Real later on. One gets the sense, in the Rome report, that Lacan sees psychoanalysis as a discipline that, with a thorough analysis on the Symbolic axis, can effect a total cure. This


position becomes more nuanced, and less emphatic, as Lacan’s thought develops. As Philip Dravers notes, “Lacan’s path parallels Freud’s, for both began by believing the symptom to be entirely soluble to interpretation while later testifying to its ultimate indissolubility to analysis.”

We will discuss the importance of this shift when we discuss the *sinthome*.

If “the question of one’s existence” arises from the Other (A) the answer can only be articulated from S, which stands for subject, but which is also a play on the German *Es*, which means, it, or *id*. Lacan was always careful not to confuse Freud’s unconscious with his id. The unconscious is the seat of the Other, the place from which man is “constituted” or “inhabited by the signifier.”

The id, though, is the repository of the drives which, opposed to the loquaciousness of the unconscious, is “subjectively silent.” Lacan states that “the subject is the drives at some important level,” which is helpful for us in that, without going into the question of how to define the drives, we know that there is at the very least a distinction between the id and the unconscious, between the drives and the Other. It is the subject of these drives which one is aiming at, in a sense, in the analytic session in order to set it out onto the path of desire, which is always the Other’s desire, or alternatively, desire for the Other. And yet it is always

12. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 42.
important to stress that the subject (Es) cannot simply be reduced to the Other. While it is true that the Other speaks through the subject, subjectivising it under the law at the same time that it rescues the subject from obliteration under the violence of ego rivalry, if this subjugation was total, the situation would be not much more enviable than that of the ego axis. In other words it is very important that the Lacanian quadrilateral is such, that it is not a ternary, but that there is another possible position from which one can direct a question to the master himself.

Lacan gives us very few clear statements about the function of the quadrilateral as such. Often his statements on this subject (and, to be honest, on most subjects) are more tantalizing than lucid—as for example, when he says that, “a quadripartite structure can always be required—from the standpoint of the unconscious—in the construction of a subjective ordering.”

Jacques Alain-Miller, Lacan’s son in law and heir apparent to his thought, interprets this statement in the following way:

To restore the imaginary relation in the structure that stages it leads to a duplication of its terms: the other with a lowercase o being raised to the power of the Other with a capital O, the cancellation of the subject of the signifying chain doubling the ego. Symmetry of reciprocity belongs to the imaginary register, and the position of the Third Party implies that of the fourth, who is given, depending on the levels of analysis, the name of “barred subject” or dummy (mort).

While this perhaps opens up more questions than it answers, it seems that Alain-Miller is saying that the subject does not “really” exist at the level of the unconscious, that is, it is not a real partner to the Other in the way that the ego is a real partner to its alter ego, or as


Lacan says, “its objects.” But it is rather only at the level of the restoration of the “imaginary relation” that we can even consider there to be a fourth. Like a dummy in a game of bridge this is one that we have to posit, to act as if he were there, which is not to say that he does not affect the game, or perhaps even determine the outcome. As Bruce Fink puts it, “The analyst as ego has a partner, the dummy (or Other as language), and the analysand as ego has a partner too, his unconscious, whose hand is an unknown. The analyst’s goal is to get the analysand as ego to guess his own partner’s hand—that is, to divine what is unconscious in himself.”

We might want to surmise how to differentiate the status of S from that of the Other, for both are often characterized as being dead in some way. For instance, the guarantor of the Other as Law is the figure of the dead father, for it is his death which seals the law (as in the Freud’s myth of the primal horde). Lacan often refers to the laws of signification as in some way automatic, them speaking us instead of the other way around. It seems that the most important distinction between these two dead figures is that the Other holds his death out in the open for everyone to see. If the signifiers that reside there operate through us, they do it in a way that is not a secret to anyone—the rules of grammar can be learned from any book. But the hand of the dummy in bridge, what Lacan calls the Subject (of the unconscious) is a mystery to all the other players, even to the unconscious itself, which subjectifies it. I think we can say that in the analytic situation it is this mysterious dead man that is raised, it is him for which space is always being made. For he exists at the point at which the subjectifying by the Other fails, due to

a lack in the Other itself. The law, in other words, is not enough, or as Lacan would often say, “There is no Other to the Other.” Inasmuch as this silent Es is the aim of analysis, its death is a second death, or the death of the first death. The subjection which is the price of peace but which also has its failures, and which demands the death of a certain kind of life, is here put to the test, and while the former life is not perhaps wrested from its stony grip, the hope of a new kind of life is what energizes Lacan’s thought at this level.

Let us look at what Lacan himself says about this fourth partner that resides in the analytic situation:

One cannot reason from the fantasies the analysand gets propped up to the analyst’s person in the same way as an ideal player guesses his opponent’s intentions. There is probably always an element of strategy, but one should not be deceived by the metaphor of the mirror, appropriate as it may be to the smooth surface the analyst presents to the patient. An impassive face and sealed lips do not have the same purpose here as in bridge. Instead, the analyst enlists the aid of what in bridge is called the dummy [le mort], but he does so in order to bring out the fourth player who is to be the analysand’s partner here, and whose hand the analyst, by his maneuvers, strives to get the analysand to guess; such is the restraint—of abnegation, as it were—that is imposed on the analyst by the stakes of the game in analysis.¹⁹

So here we see that the fourth is the partner to the analysand, but what exactly does this mean? We have to refer back to the L schema to understand what is being said here, for the first players in this game are the egos of analysand and analyst. It seems that accessing these roles is not usually very difficult. The third player, the partner of the analyst’s ego, we can safely assume is the Other, the locus of which the analyst must know how to occupy. It is the fourth, the dummy, which corresponds to this Other, as we

see them on opposite sides of the symbolic axis in the L schema. This shift from the Imaginary to the Symbolic axis is a mark of the work of the early Lacan, before he started to talk very much about the function of the Real in the analytic situation (though this does not mean that the Real is not active here or that the early Lacan must be completely superseded by the later Lacan). Lacan felt most analysts kept the analytic situation confined to an interplay between two egos, and that analysis had turned into an arm wrestling match which demanded that the strong ego of the analyst subdue and conform the problematic ego of the analysand, with the final goal of “normalization” and successful genital love. Lacan did not deny that the analytic situation contained an ego dynamic, but he went to lengths to differentiate this dynamic from that which addressed the reality of the unconscious.

The ego to ego relationship is characterized by rivalry, imitation, and aggression, but also by a sort of (transference) love. When dominated by this axis the analysand will often try to become like her analyst, showing her that she does the same things, or has the same interests; or alternatively, a rivalry will be set up in which the analysand becomes obsessed with differentiating between herself and her analyst. This is a relationship in which love and hate might vacillate quickly between each other, like images between two mirrors. It was important for Lacan not to emphasize the rivalry of this dimension, but to bring out another type of relationship, which, instead of being modeled on sibling rivalry would take on a parent/child or teacher/student dialectic. Part of the importance of the analyst sitting behind and out of view of the analyst is to minimize the imaginative mirroring that is encouraged when we can quickly read the expression of the other’s face.
and set ourselves in context to what we see there. The “impassive face and sealed lips” refer to the necessity of the analyst’s ego to withdraw in order to let the Other play the dominant role. The relationship then changes into one in which the Other is the law to be obeyed, in which obedience and a mysterious power replace the rivalry and imitation of the imaginative realm. We could also read this as a return to the realm of childhood in which one must learn how to live with a law that is absolute and seeming arbitrary, the Word of the parents. The kind of speech that is accessed here, and hence the desire, will be of the order of speech that is learned, sometimes under duress, as opposed to the speech that is manipulated and self-conscious. At this level the analyst is listening for slips of tongue and difficulties in speech which reveal the analysand’s relationship to the Other, and how that relationship has instilled itself in (unconscious) patterns of speech and thought, which are the only patterns that the analyst can access.

We are still trying to answer the question of what exactly the fourth is, this player in the analytic drama which is both dead (as le mort) and dumb (as in the “dummy”). Although I have already identified it as the analysand’s analog to the Other of the analyst, Lacan also says this concerning it: “But what is certain is that the analyst’s feelings have only one possible place in the game, that of the dummy; and that if the dummy is revived the game will proceed without anyone knowing who is leading it.”20 I understand this to mean that the feelings of the analyst must be hidden, or even dead, (or at least dumb), but which does not mean that they are simply eradicated. What is more confusing though is that they should take the place of the S, which is both the subject (of the analysand’s

unconscious) as well as his id, the seat of the drives. It seems he is saying that the feelings of the analyst are actually active in this subject, and that the S is not autonomous or acting alone, but that it is very closely tied up with the being of the analyst. This is similar to the way in which Fink reads the L schema under the logic of set theory:

While each of the two parties to the analytic situation can be characterized individually by the whole of the L schema (with its four positions), putting the two different parties together in the in the analytic game leads to a logical reduction. This reduction is akin to a union in set theory, for $a$ and $a'$ for the one collapse into $a$ and $a'$ for the other—the little other (or alter ego or “semblable”) for the one party being the other party’s ego, and vice versa—and one subject becomes associated with S (the subject of the unconscious) and the other with A (the Other). As Lacan puts it there, “this is why I teach that there are not only two subjects present in the analytic situation, but two subjects each of whom is provided with two objects, the ego and the other, the latter beginning with a lowercase o. Now, due to the singularities of a dialectical mathematics with which we must familiarize ourselves, their union in the pair of subjects S and A includes only four terms in all, because the relations of exclusion that obtains between a and a’ reduces the two couples thus indicated to a single couple in the juxtaposition of the subjects.”

It seems he is even saying that if one had a different analyst one would have different drives. This might be going a little far, for it could be that Lacan is just stressing in a roundabout way that the analyst must hide his or her feelings, that they must not take center stage, and that if the dummy is revived, if these feelings are put out in the open (perhaps taking on ego characteristics?), then the analytic situation will start to become chaotic—although even here it is not totally clear that it is a bad thing for there not to be anyone “knowing who is leading it.” At the very least we can get a taste for the highly intersubjective quality that Lacan evokes, in which the other’s being always affects the

being of the subject, whether it is on the level of imitation or of adherence to some law, or even at the emotive level, which he is probably equating with the drives.

**The Four Discourses**

Subjectivity takes on many forms in the work of Lacan, and if the L schema introduces some of the intra-subjective complexity in his thought, the four discourses show us the different positions that can be occupied in a variety of discursive setups. Although Lacan does not say that there are only four discourses possible in the universe of discourse (he actually hints that one could theorize four or eight more) it seems his choice of four is dictated partly by his preference to talk about subjectivity and inter-subjectivity with a minimum of four terms.

![Structure of Discourse](image)

**Figure 8 Structure of Discourse**

In addition to their being four terms ($, S^1, S^2, a$) there are also four positions (agent, other, product). The rotation of the terms through the positions is what gives us the four discourses.
What we see here is the discourse of the master, and in this discourse the position of the agent (always in the upper left hand slot) is filled by $S^1$ which stands for the master signifier, the non-sensical signifier, which is an arbitrary word that establishes the terms of the world of discourse and seems to base itself on nothing but itself. As we will see, this is an illusion, but quite an effective one for those who know how to play this role. A master does not use language bequeathed to him by another, but rather he creates it _ex nihilo_ (or at least this is what he would have us think)—from this perspective the greatest masters are simply those who have created the most words. Shakespeare and the hundreds of words he introduced into the English language, many of which are commonplace now, immediately comes to mind, as does James Joyce, who in his reverence for the bard perhaps went a little overboard. Truly, *Finnegans Wake* creates thousands of words, but how many of them will ever be used by others?²²

To the right of the position of the agent is the other, and in the context of the master’s discourse, we can also speak of this as the position of the slave. The arrow represents that the agent is addressing itself towards the other. In this particular discourse

²² It is interesting to note that Lacan was quite interested in both of these “masters” and made use of quite of a few of Joyce’s made up words (literature, chaosmos, etc.), and of course we have already come across one who put the Joycean “monomyth” to work.
it is occupied by $S^2$, which stands for all the other signifiers which “serve” the master signifier, and which are organized around it in the universe of discourse. If we think of Ptolemaic astronomy the master signifier might be something like “the earth is the center of the solar system,” and then we could imagine that the complicated epicycles which had to be employed to “save the appearance” of this master, or, we might say, to further the illusion that the emperor is clothed, were the other signifiers, the universe of discourse, or, simply, knowledge, a common definition Lacan gives for $S^2$. When the master signifier falls the other signifiers fall with it, as of course happened when Copernicus and Kepler made their discoveries:

Don’t we realize that, by exalting the center, heliocentrism is no less of a lure than seeing the earth as the center, and that the existence of the ecliptic probably provided a more stimulating model of our relations with truth, before it lost much of its interest when it was reduced to being no more than the earth bowing assent?23

Of course, Lacan himself was a master in his own right, and he surely had his disciples, who lapped up the neologisms that he gave them (Other, objet a, “Woman does not exist”, “The unconscious is structured like a language” . . . ) and put themselves to work for him. He often gave his students, many of whom were leading thinkers in their own

23. Lacan, Œuvres, 674. Lacan actually thought that the Copernican revolution was not so special, because though Copernicus placed the sun in the middle, the fact that he maintained the notion of a middle at all showed he was still living under the sway of the old metaphor. The epicycles he still had to use to justify a circular orbit are proof of this. The real revolution was Kepler’s, because he discovered the elliptical orbits, which finally could explain the situation without the use of epicycles. For Lacan the overriding metaphor of the old system was the need for a center, for circularity, and for the wholeness attendant upon that fantasy.
fields, assignments and readings lists, which they eagerly took up in service of these exciting new ideas promulgated by the master signifier.

Just below the other is that which is produced by the address of the agent to the other. In the case of the master’s discourse what is produced is \( a \), often referred to as object a, or objet petit a. This \( a \) is to be differentiated from the \( a \) and \( a' \) which we came across in the L schema. The latter were in the imaginary realm but the former represents a new concept entirely (one which Lacan held to be his most important contribution to psychoanalysis). Objet petit a is a very complicated and multi faceted notion which Lacan constantly changed and revised. We will not go into the many different ways in which this matheme can be understood, but will limit ourselves to how it functions in the discourses. In the master’s discourse it can be understood as surplus meaning, that is, the intangible something that a master gives off, which is impossible to account for within the existing matrix. People often say of Shakespeare’s plays, for example, that they are inexhaustible, or that it would be impossible to say what it is about them that makes them great. If we use the analogy of master and slave, objet a would be the profit that the slave earns for the master, the fruit of their labor, which of course is appropriated by the master. Bruce Fink writes this position as product/loss, because what is produced for the master is lost for the slave. Lacan himself summarizes the relationship between the terms in this way: “as \( S^2 \) is instated, \( S^1 \) is retroactively determined, \( S \) is precipitated, and the Other’s desire takes a on a new role: that of object a.”

defined such that their meaning can only identified in relation to the meaning of all the other terms. The master signifier, though it is “primary” here, is only retroactively determined. In the case of *Finnegans Wake* this means that Joyce’s neologisms, all falling under $S^1$, will only find meaning when the academics, purveyors of $S^2$ as knowledge *decide* what their meaning is. The terms can in no way be isolated from each other, a feature which is typical of Lacan’s thought in general (as well as structuralism in general), as when Ragland says of his three registers: “Lacan taught that the Borromean knot depicts the Imaginary intersected by the Symbolic, whose impact is Real.” And even though *objet a* is the remainder, that which succeeds the other terms, in the game of desire it is primarily cause: “Object a can be understood here as the remainder produced when that hypothetical unit breaks down, as a last trace of the unity, a last reminder thereof. By cleaving to that rem(a)inder, the split subject, though expelled from the Other, can sustain the illusion of wholeness; by clinging to object a, the subject is able to ignore his or her division.”

The final position is that of the truth, and in the masters discourse the truth is played by the barred subject, $. Fundamentally, the master must hide his own split subjectivity in presenting himself as whole and vital. We could also say that the truth is always what is unconscious about the agent. The fact that the master signifier is in truth a divided subject is another way of illustrating Lacan’s maxim that “there is no Other to the


Other”—the Other is also divided, or is marked by a lack, the same lack that marks any subject in language. When Lacan stressed the importance of Descartes’ contribution to the understanding of the subject, he pointed out the split that is inherent between the cogito and certainty—“the subject of the unconscious manifests itself, that it thinks before it attains certainty . . . . . . the correlative of the subject is henceforth no longer the deceiving Other, but the deceived Other.”27 In order to safeguard thinking (which for Descartes would have been conscious but which for Lacan is mostly unconscious), Descartes had to put certainty somewhere, so he put it in God, who, nevertheless, could be deceiving us. This is a proposition that Descartes immediately rejects, but as the psychoanalyst would ask, why would he bring it up in the first place? Lacan understands the modern subject as essentially Cartesian, as having the guarantee of its truth elsewhere (Freud’s andere shauplatz), but instead of a deceiving other, we have an other that is deceived, one that has a hole in it. It’s not that God doesn’t exist, says Lacan, he is simply unconscious.

When we give the terms of this discourse a quarter spin in the counterclockwise direction we have what Lacan calls the University discourse:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S^2 \\
\hline
S^1 \\
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
a \\
\hline
S \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 10 University Discourse

Here, S\(^2\), or knowledge, is in the position of the agent. In Fink’s discussion of this discourse he surmises that Lacan seemed to have agreed with the argument that the university often came to function as sort of an arm to the “military-industrial” complex, as a rationalization of that power. From a somewhat Marxist perspective, then, this university discourse addresses itself to the surplus, the capitalist’s profit, produced by the workers in a society: “Knowledge here interrogates surplus value (the product of capitalist economies, which takes the form of a loss or subtraction of value from the worker) and rationalizes or justifies it.”

What is produced or lost here is the divided subject—divided, we could surmise, from the fruit of his very labors. This discourse is closely connected with the discourse of the master because what knowledge justifies is the master’s ownership of surplus value (or jouissance, enjoyment, as Lacan often said).

We might think of the way that, in the wake of a great thinker, a mass of secondary literature arises which puts forth a certain version of that thinker, but one that is decidedly limited in comparison to the “original.” Lacan, by pointing to Joyce’s statement that *Finnegans Wake* had so many “enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries,” suggested that he wrote *Finnegans Wake* precisely in order to generate that discourse about him. Such criticism could just as well be leveled at the Lacanians, and I think I have shown how the followers of Jung, in an effort to justify his thought, often just ended up watering it down. In the position of truth in this discourse is the master himself, the master signifier, who is repressed when he is talked about. This is the logic

behind the bumper sticker often seen today: “Jesus, save me from your followers”—In other words, it is Christians, $S^2$, who are most likely to obscure their master, $S^1$, precisely by talking about him.

To give the structure another quarter turn brings us to the discourse of the analyst:

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a} \\
\hline
S^2 \\
\hline
S^1 \\
\end{array}
$$

**Figure 11 Analyst’s Discourse**

In the analysts discourse objet $a$ is in the position of master or agent. It initiates the action. But what does it mean for surplus value, or *jouissance*, to imitate the action, to direct itself to $S$? And how, in this action, does it get the barred subject to produce new master signifiers? How does it get the patient laying on the couch to be, if only for a brief moment, a Shakespeare or a Joyce? It may help here to examine other ways in which Lacan talked about objet $a$. He said, for example, that it was the libido as organ, that it was an undead organ, and he even compared it to the afterbirth that is the product (which is lost) in a biological birth. Mother cats, of course, eat up this afterbirth, precisely because it is so rich in life, which is a nice image of what a good capitalist does with surplus profit—he reinvests it. Fink describes this objet $a$ as “pure desirousness”\textsuperscript{29} that is aimed at the split subject with the intent of unleashing the subject’s own desire, her own desire to make more. . . . what? Well, it doesn’t really matter what, for in the analyst’s

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 135.

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discourse, verbal creativity itself seems to have a very high value (just as “expanding the economy” seems to be valued as an activity in itself), but only when it produces what could be called a master signifier, something genuinely new, not determined by the reigning unconscious discourse. As Dylan Evans says, “That the subject should come to recognize and to name his desire; that is the efficacious action of analysis. But it isn’t a question of recognizing some thing which would be entirely given . . . In naming it, the subject creates, brings forth, a new presence in the world.”

If the split subject is split between conscious and unconscious, and between death and life, when it is presented with a life beyond life and death, this undead organ, it births a new creation. One reason Lacan calls this the analyst’s discourse is because this is the way in which he understood Freud’s successes. That is, they were instances in which Freud was able to situate himself as objet a in order to elicit a new Word from his patients. Early on Freud realized that he could not heal anyone by adopting the master’s discourse, in which he delivered interpretations from on high (or if he did achieve success in this way, it was short lived). He realized that he had to evoke the interpretation from the subject herself, that a successful interpretation was not fitting a case into a matrix but of the subject creating a new matrix (of thought and of discourse) for herself. Inasmuch as objet a is also referred to as refuse and trash, as not only a valuable surplus, but also a worthless one, like human afterbirth, the analyst’s discourse takes on the sense of a sacrifice. The analyst must take the position of refuse, of something to be discarded by

the analysand who instead chooses to make something new, to abandon her analyst and start a new life.

The analyst’s discourse is a picture of what it would be like if, instead of the cat eating the afterbirth, the afterbirth ate the cat, in the sense of the object becoming a question to the subject; something like, What is this life? What have I lost? Why are life and loss synonymous? At one point Lacan refers to Socrates as being the object a for his interlocutors, especially Alcibiades in the Symposium. And what does Socrates do if not present himself as interminable life, always questioning, never resting, always somehow out of reach, and not at all afraid of death? In fact, quite certain that death is a gateway to a much more interesting life.

The final discourse that Lacan discusses is that of the hysteric, in which the split subject is in the place of the agent:

$\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\hline \\
a \\
\hline \\
S^1 \\
\hline \\
S^2
\end{array}$

**Figure 12 Hysteric's Discourse**

This discourse is, in more ways than one, the polar opposite of the university discourse, for whereas that discourse purposes to protect the sanctity of the master, to rationalize his arbitrary pronouncements, the hysteric directs her questions precisely to this master, challenging him to prove what he says, looking for holes in the whole that he presents. The result of this questioning is knowledge—not the kind of knowledge which rationalizes, but the kind which Lacan associated with genuine science. Again, the
difference would be the way in which an epicycle (bad knowledge which justifies a nonsensical master signifier) differs from the hypothesis of elliptical orbits (good knowledge which results from an unhesitating interrogation of the sacred truth of the master; here, the word of the ancients as well as the authority of the Catholic church grounded in the scriptures). Science, then, proceeds not because it knows something, but because it finds the problem in what we claim to know. Einstein formulates the Special Theory of Relativity, for example, only by refusing to discard the problems associated with an all-pervasive ether. Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle might be seen as the ultimate scientific/hysterical statement, that if the precise momentum of a quantum particle is known, the position cannot be known, (and vice versa)—basically that knowledge can never be completely self-contained, there is always a lack in it, and it is always subject to the questioning of the hysteric. The related principle of Heisenberg, that of the observer effect, answers the question of where that lack originates, namely, in us, when we direct our attention to such material.

According to Fink, the process of analysis demands that an analysand be “hystericized” in the course of their treatment—that is, they must be brought to a point where they are questioning the symbolic authority under which they live. Remembering our discussion of the L schema this is perhaps what it means to separate from A (something very close to S\textsuperscript{1}), to question the very source of one’s understanding of

31. It seems that the terms may change their meaning depending on which discourse they are in and what position in the matrix they occupy. When S2 is in the position of agent it functions to prop up and rationalize, but when it is in the position of product, it comes as a result of a destruction of that very rationalization.
existence and being. It seems that part and parcel of this hystericization is that the patient
take the analyst as their master signifier, their stand in for the Other, and that in
overcoming this master, in considering them as refuse, or in exposing the truth of the
master (his own being as a split subject), the hysteric makes and finishes her own
analysis. She utters the Word which allows her to separate from her analyst, her Other,
and to do something new. We see this in the rules Lacan laid down for the training of
analysts. Namely, that a person had to undergo their own analysis and then, in what was
called the Pass, relay the results of this to two people, who then had to present the case
before a panel. The success of the analysis is not based on what the analyst says about it
but rather what the analysand says. And her formulation cannot be in the form of the
university discourse in which a rule is learned to be passed on to another through
automatic language, but her account must be tantalizing enough for her two interlocutors
to be able to pass it on in their own words to the ruling body. That is, the analysand’s
conviction must be authentic enough to convince others on the basis of words alone,
capable of not only producing one word, $S^1$, but a whole discourse, $S^2$, which is why
there are two people to whom she relates her story. It should not bypass our attention that
the pass involved a quaternity: the analyst, the analysand, and the two “judges,” or,
alternatively, the analysand, the judges, and the body to whom they report. It is not
untypical for Lacanian quadrilaterals to be equivocal in this manner.

To be hystericized is in some way to be feminized, in the sense that one must take
on the lack which characterizes Woman, not as gender or sex, but Woman in relation to
the phallus (Lacan talked about feminine and masculine structure in the sense that it
would be perfectly possible for a male to possess feminine structure and vice versa). In discussing the Edgar Allan Poe story “The Purloined Letter” Lacan notes the importance that the Queen holds in the (quaternal) context of the three men vying for possession of the stolen letter: “It is significant that the letter which the Minister addresses to himself, ultimately, is a letter from a woman: as though this were a phase he had to go through owing to one of the signifier’s natural affinities.”

Even though the “goal” of analytic treatment is to turn the neurotic into a Master capable of creating ex nihilo, of taking control of their own life, getting there actually involves the destruction of a Master and the concomitant knowledge that Masters are feeble, and that phalluses are fallible—and by extension, that one’s own mastery has a hole in it. This is in some way to turn the “penis envy” of Freud on its head—it is not just women who do not have it anymore. It is also perhaps to go beyond what Freud considered to be a limit in psychoanalysis. As Dylan Evans notes: “Freud came to see the castration complex as a universal phenomenon, one which is rooted in a basic ‘rejection of femininity’ (Ablehnung der Weiblichkeit). It is encountered in every subject, and represents the ultimate limit beyond which psychoanalytic treatment cannot go.”

But with Lacan there is the sense that in hystericizing a subject one accepts what was heretofore an unacceptable lack, which may be a brief explanation of the Lacanian four—the beyond of the Oedipal trinity in the form of life after the castration complex


Le Sinthome

So far we have looked at the quadrilateral of the L schema, and the quadrilaterals involved in the four discourses. Although I want to withhold my interpretation of exactly what these formations mean in light of Jung’s quaternities, I think a couple remarks may be made concerning the relationship of these quadrilaterals to the thought of Freud, which was usually expressed in ternaries. First of all, while Lacan completely grounds himself in the texts and terms of Freud, he also clearly formulates his theory to address the problems and dead-ends of Freud’s thought. This kind of hysterical questioning should not surprise us as Lacan referred to himself as a “perfect hysteric, that is, one without any symptoms.” Whereas Freud referred to the castration complex as a “bedrock” that analysis did not have the power to supercede, Lacan, while not directly challenging this statement, seems to loosen up the conclusions that can be drawn from it. In the same way that the four discourses literally rotate around each other, castration, which Lacan refers to in terms of a pact with the Symbolic, does not necessarily have to be experienced as a straight-jacket—there can be movement, freedom, and even health without denying the limits imposed on us by consistent unconscious formations.

The sinthome is a term of Lacan’s which I think expresses this dynamic in a powerful way, and that Lacan adopts towards the end of his life, in the 1970s, at a time when he became very interested in the mathematical field of topology, as well as the work of James Joyce. Lacan’s thought during this period is notoriously difficult, dense, and allusive, and there are probably as many ways to conceive the sinthome as there are writers writing about it. What is clear though, because Lacan clearly says it himself, is
that *sinthome* is just the pre-modern way of writing “symptom.” In other words, he is laying out this new concept as a play on one of the real effects of language, homophony, since *sinthome* and symptom are more or less pronounced identically in French. It is a difference which can only be divined in writing, not in speech, which was the primary way in which Lacan communicated his thought. This is related to the fact that Lacan formulated this concept as he worked through the writings of Joyce, coming to the conclusion that Joyce, though probably structurally a psychotic, saved himself from subjective dissolution through writing, and through making a name for himself via his art. The notion of *sinthome* is also very closely related to death, in that, for Lacan, his *sinthome* would not be written until after his death, for it would be hidden in his speaking.

Lacan held that in Joyce’s subjective world there was a *carence paternelle*, that is, a deficiency of the father function such that the Name-of-the-Father had not been instituted as a stable anchoring point around which meaning could coalesce (and dissolve); and thus Joyce was in danger, as are all psychotics, of losing his grasp on the minimal texture of reality and socially structured existence. What distinguishes a neurotic from a psychotic is whether or not the Name-of-the-Father (*le nom du Pere*) had taken hold (something which, it seems, must happen at least before puberty sets in). For the neurotic the Name-of-the-Father has been established, and, so, whatever other problems they might have, they are not in peril of losing this minimal grip, something which is established through language. Or, to say it another way, the real of trauma and death will always be mediated by the register of the Symbolic, for which the Name-of-the-Father is
the instituting bond. In a way the Name-of-the-Father is both a no and a yes. It is a *non*, (a homophone for the *nom* of the *nom du Pere*) to the pleasurable bond between mother and child and to the insulating fantasy which determines the child’s universe, but it is a yes to life under the reality principle to which the rest of the world has acquiesced. The psychotic, though, by virtue of this missing link, is in danger of exposure to a Real that is unmediated, such as the voices heard by a schizophrenic or the visions seen by a paranoiac.

**Figure 13 Borromean Knot**

In the Borromean knot pictured above the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real are linked together in such a way that should one register be unhooked the whole thing would fall apart. In the case of Joyce, Lacan felt that he suffered from a “deficiency in the linkage of the three ‘rings’ of psychic normalcy,” but it was precisely his writing with which he was able to save himself from psychosis and to “make his

name”—Joyce—which of course was the name of his father. The shift from symptom to *sinthome* was, for Lacan, the turning of a proper name, like Joyce, into a common noun, like Joycean, from a name that is solely particular to a particular which has acquired some sort of universal socialized meaning. This is what is meant by the phrase “making a name for himself,” and we can see how, in the case of Joyce, it was the necessary supplement to the lack of such a name in his psychic structure.

The details of how Joyce does this through his writing cannot concern us too much here. A real answer would simply take too much time, but let it suffice to say that, especially in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s language is as close to the workings of the unconscious, as Lacan defined it, that literature has given us. Its ravelings and unravelings seem to imitate the knots, drawn on blackboards but also created with string, which possessed Lacan in the last stage of his teaching. What I do want to define further in the context of Joyce is this shift from symptom to *sinthome*. How is this effected and what does it mean? The symptom, as we have it in Freud, is that which analysis is trying to dissolve through speech, whether it be a fear of horses or the inability to speak in one’s mother tongue—the reason people originally came to see Dr. Freud was that he might eradicate their symptoms. Joyce, though, was one who refused to undergo psychoanalysis, even when it meant he lost the support of a wealthy patron, one Edith Rockefeller who thought that Joyce would do well to be analyzed by Dr. Jung in Zurich (Rockefeller herself had undergone analysis with Jung and had lavished a great deal of

35. Lacan took some pleasure, no doubt, in the Joy in Joyce, which translates into German as nothing less than *Freude*.
financial support on him). Joyce would hear nothing of it, and while he did send his
daughter to Jung eventually, Joyce had nothing but contempt for the practice as a whole
(especially after Jung had his daughter placed in the asylum where she would spend the
rest of her life). The famous line from *Finnegans Wake* about being “yung and easily
freudened” is pretty clearly a sarcastic dig at the world’s two most famous
psychoanalysts.

So why, if Joyce was so much opposed to psychoanalysis does Lacan end up
learning so much from him? I believe it is because in Joyce he sees someone doing
something with his art that up to that time he saw as possible only in analysis, that is, a
real restructuring of the subjective core of the psyche at the only level in which this is
possible, the level of language. Joyce took his symptom, which was simply the fact that
he was not anchored in the register of the Symbolic, and created a world in which he
could live in lieu of the one we call real. He basically did what Lacan said had to be done
with psychotics, for one could not instantiate the name of the father after puberty but one
could help them form an imaginative world that protects them from an intrusion of the
Real. But is this operative for any others besides psychotics? What about “normal”
people, that is, neurotics, who have their problems despite the fact that the Name-of-the-
Father, in their case, “stuck”? I think *sinthome* is a notion that can be extended to
members of all three of the subject divisions, neurotics, perverts, and psychotics precisely
because, even though the Symbolic is properly knotted in most cases, it nevertheless is
not whole. There is always a lack in the Symbolic which Lacan notated by his matheme

S(%), the signifier of the lack in the Other. In Joyce’s case the lack of the Other (Other being often synonymous with the Symbolic, language, and that which the Name-of-the-Father represents) meant something different, inasmuch as the Other was simply lacking! But in a certain way the question is the same for all of us—it is one of how we come to terms with the fact that nobody, neither mother, father, church or state, has it figured out, but they are all lacking at some level. It is the point where the Other is lacking that the Real impinges upon our lives. The importance of the symbolic is that it can give a name to this lack, hence the signifier of the lack of the other. The name it gives is first and foremost the name of the father, who, following Freud, is only effective as lawgiver upon his death; yet the trauma of that death is softened by the appearance of the name.

In the final phase of Lacan’s teaching, there is a sense in which everything he had fought against—the ego, the fantasy of sexual harmony, a positively confident view of human inter-subjectivity—are allowed to find a place within his system. I have already mentioned his criticism of those schools of psychoanalysis which leaned too heavily on the ego and its imaginary axis. While Lacan never repudiates this criticism, and never preaches against the importance of the Symbolic, he also never said that the fantasies of the ego would be completely done away with. One of his well known descriptions of the end of analysis is when “the fundamental fantasy is traversed,” which clearly does not mean that one does away with it, but rather that one moves across it in a certain way. This is consistent with Lacan’s structuralism which emphasized relativity and movement over an absolute choice between opposites (such as Symbolic over Imaginary, which would be a choice constrained to the Imaginary axis). As Fink summarizes: “The traversing of the
fantasy is the process by which the subject subjectifies trauma, takes the traumatic event upon him or herself, and assumes responsibility for that jouissance.”^37 An even stronger statement by Lacan of the end of analysis is that “the experience of the fundamental phantasy becomes the drive,”^38 which leads us to believe that the fundamental fantasy, a core constituent of the ego, is necessary and central for a “successful” end to psychoanalytic treatment. The difference here is that there would be movement between the registers of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary, as opposed to a fundamental fantasy that acts as sort of a wall against the Real. Lacan imagines a fantasy that is real, that actually finds itself able to take action, as opposed to simply hallucinating that action.

One of Lacan’s most famous statements is that “il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel”—there is no sexual relationship—which commentators tell us should be understood as saying that sexual relationships always fail to fill the lack, to make one integrated and happy, as they seem to promise. But in this final phase of his teaching it seems like he provides a different way of thinking: “En effet, si le non-rapport relève de l’équivalence ,c’est dans la mesure où il n’y a pas équivalence que se structure le rapport. Il y a donc à la fois rapport sexual et il n’y a pas rapport. Là où il y a rapport, c’est dans la mesure où il y a sinthome, c’est-à-dire où l’autre sexe est supporté du sinthome.”^39 Lacan does not say here that two people relate directly to each other (unmediated), and thus achieve happiness, but that when “the other sex is supported by the sinthome” there

37. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 63.
can be something like a relationship in the form of an equivalence. In other words, it may be the case that, as Lacan states, “the sexual rapport is a relation between sinthomes.”[^40] I believe this is what he means by equivalence, that when we are at the level of sinthome, sexual partners have a mode of relating to each other which is not based on the fantasy of complementarity and inequality of the “sexual relationship.” But equivalence has a peril of its own, as it is a situation which “makes the harmony of desires conceivable, but not devoid of danger. For when desires line up in a chain that resembles the procession of Breughel’s blind men, each one, no doubt, has his hand in the hand of one in front of him, but no one knows where they are all going.”[^41] As in our discussion of the dummy in the game of bridge it is unclear what being led by one that is ignorant amounts to. Is it an image for an authentic seeking after truth? But perhaps it’s just blind ignorance—or perhaps, it is both in a way, that when the subject sets out on his own he never really knows where he is going, and that situation, far from being a cause of jubilation, should make one pause.

Luke Thurston relates this new understanding of rapport with a revival of the role of the ego, and looks to Freud for support, noting that, “Freud makes it obvious that the change at the end of treatment, or a general recovery, does not depend solely on the revelation or decoding of the unconscious, but to a far greater extent on a decision of the

[^40]: Jacques Lacan, quoted in *Re-inventing the Symptom*, 54

And also: “The business of the analysis is to secure the best possible psychological conditions for the functions of the ego; with that it has discharged its task.” I understand this to mean that the very thing which made a successful analysis impossible at the beginning, an over reliance on the ego, is now the sign of a successful analysis. One’s ego can operate without undue repressive action; in fact, one’s ego can function to liberate, not perhaps, “directly” but through an understanding of one’s own unconscious structure. As Lacan says: “To know what to do with the symptom, that is the end of analysis,” and even more surprisingly, he then associates the cogitation of the ego with jouissance—“Ce qui pense, calcule et juge, c’est la jouissance.” This thinking is a savoir faire that concerns lack, because the symptom is always concerned with a lack of wholeness, but instead of that being an unacceptable state, it is recognized as the sine qua non of a specifically human type of happiness, perhaps approaching a Nietzschean gaiety, as Thurston notes, “Instead of any regret, addressed to the Other as a demand for sense, resulting in the ‘moral cowardice’ known as sadness, the ab-sense of the sinthome embodies what Lacan terms a gay scçavoir.”


43. Ibid., 64.

44. Ibid., 65.


Counting in Lacan

In this section I would like to examine what different Lacan scholars have had to say about counting and the number four in Lacan. Many scholars understand the importance of the number four in his work especially in the light of the shift from the trinities of Freud, though Ragland also points out the importance of trinities for him, saying, “the structure of mind is not binary, Lacan argued, as early as the 1950s, as certain mathematicians and philosophers would claim, but triadic or trinary.” Nevertheless, that triadic structure is almost always challenged by the omnipresent quadrilaterals with which Lacan explains this structure. There is no consensus, though, on how we should understand the quaternities of Lacan, whether in the terms of some kind of “unconscious counting,” or set theory, or topology. Dylan Evans points that “Lacan argues that anxiety arises at that moment when the subject is poised between the imaginary preoedipal triangle and the Oedipal quaternity,” a statement which seems to see Freud’s Oedipal setup as only a trinity in the one sense (the Imaginary) whereas it is a quaternity in a different, and stronger, sense. This is typical of a certain way of thinking about numbers in Lacan, according to a logic which sees a “plus 1” in every structure. In other words, the Oedipal setup of mother, father, and child is already a quaternity because in order to recognize it as a trinity one has to be outside of it to a certain extent, which in this case would probably be the position which Lacan names the phallus. The “plus 1” is a


condition that characterizes counting in general, in which one can always add one more. This logic is evident elsewhere in Lacan such as in the study groups, or cartels, which he organized for his students and that, as Evans points out, were “ideally a group of four, with a supervisor as a *plus-un*.”

Ragland, in an essay exploring unconscious counting, says that in Lacan “the telling of one’s story is the unfolding of the subject’s quadrature.” In this essay she goes systematically through the numbers 1-7 in order to determine each number’s unconscious valence. She makes it clear, though, that the schema is imaginary in the sense that the chronology she describes it with would not be a conditioning factor in all senses of unconscious counting. Her “first” number is actually zero, which

Would represent an Imaginary conjunction of presence and absence (Symbolic and Real) at a point 0 of desire where human need is subjected to conditioning by the symbol and by effects. Between 0 and six months of age, an infant identifies with primary objects, making 0 the number connoting elemental ur-fantasies.

This represents the period of time before what Lacan calls the mirror stage sets in, a time of chaotic perception for the infant, when he or she suffers from an overload of word and image, due to an inability to order this material, and thus fend off a good deal of it. We should note that the way in which Ragland is counting, there is already an ambiguity here as to whether this should represent 1 or 0. We can also think of this stage (or this “number”) as a pre-number, as the necessary precondition for any counting whatever.

49. Ibid., 20.

50. Ragland-Sullivan, “Counting from 0 to 6,” 42.

51. Ibid., 44.
She describes the transition from zero to one in this way: “Zero gives over to an Imaginary number 1 when the infant attains a sense of body unity by mentally identifying with Gestalt exterior to itself between six and eighteen months of age. . . . one is also the number of sorrow, for the identificatory illusion of being a totality is false.”

We are now in more familiar Lacanian territory, that of the Imaginary, in which a certain totality is established, the totality and integrity of the image seen in the mirror, but that image is illusory and false, threatening always to fall back into chaotic nothingness. We can also associate this 1 with the master signifier S1 which, if we remember from our discussion of the master’s discourse, provides an anchor for that discourse, but at the expense of the disclosure of his split subjectivity. One-ness in Lacan is almost always a ruse, though not an altogether unhelpful one.

Just as there was ambiguity between 0 and 1, there is also ambiguity between 2 and three, for the number 2 is expressed upon the arrival of a third term:

Imaginarily speaking, number 2 denotes the post-mirror phenomenon of splitting of the subject. This split, internalized as repression or the “desire not to know” occurs when a third term intervenes to teach the infant that it is Other than the objects or signifiers with which it has identified.

Ragland’s point here is that the infant, or probably toddler at this point, does not want to eschew its identification with its objects, it does not want to go to school without its teddy bear, without his or her sense of oneness:

52. Ibid., 44-45.

53. Ibid.
The Imaginary number 2 becomes number 3 along the chain of events that take place between eighteen months and five or six years of age. During this period, a grammar is acquired, the brain lateralized, fictional identity assumed, and sexual difference learned. The ego is solidified as a narcissistic structure from which differentiation can be modulated. During childhood and adolescence, number 3 connotes the Oedipal gender myths which position mother, father, and child in terms familial and cultural concepts of masculinity and femininity. . . . Number three is on the side of thanatos, that which reveals limitations caused by the injection of prohibition and law into symbiotic (erotic) jouissances. 

If number three is on the side of thanatos it is not exactly the case that number four is on the side of eros, but, according to Ragland, four is in some way the acceptance of the fact of castration and the Oedipus complex, the proof of which is the act of duplicating that heritage in marriage and children. As Ragland puts it:

From an Imaginary perspective, numbers 4, 5, and 6 would be seen as a logical progression (synchronically speaking); a symmetrical inversion of numbers 3, 2, 1. . . . number 4 would be the number of exogamy. While number 3 would denote a process of individuation away from the primordial Other, number 4 would mark a distance from the childhood family. Number 3 would mark an intrasubjective effort, while number 4 would emphasize substitution or exchange. Four would entail an adult reshaping or extension of the oedipal structuration fixed in childhood, through a type of marital bonding. . . . exogamous relations seek to re-create the Imaginary illusion of wholeness—the One—when in reality they repeat the disharmony and dissymmetry caused by Castration: number 2 or One minus.

Number four then is not a healing or an overcoming of the tension instituted by the Oedipus complex, it is simply the decision to live with one’s symptom as one has

54. Ibid., 46.

55. Ibid., 49-50.
inherited it—as Lacan says, “the symptom can only be defined as the way in which each subject enjoys [jouit] the unconscious, in so far as the unconscious determines him”\(^{56}\)

The numbers zero through three are foundational in a way that the other numbers are not, making the four an extra in some way: “0 to 3 represent what is written in childhood: the Real conditions of jouissance which will delimit adult life, these conditions being the ‘necessary which never stops writing itself.’”\(^{57}\) Ragland counts up to seven in her imaginary schema, with five being an “inversion” of the oedipal triangle (five and three both having the same distance from the four) that occurs in having children, the number six is the image of posterity in grandchildren, and then the number seven is a sort of absolute limit, the number of fading, an eternal sabbath, which Ragland takes from remarks Lacan made about the importance of the number seven for the Hebrews: “Lacan adduced two examples to point to the importance of 6 and 7 in daily life. Jehovah distinguished himself from his sway over the six days of the week by adding a seventh day. That is, number 7 denotes the capacity to count up to 6 and infer one more number beyond.”\(^{58}\) It seems that Lacan considered the number six a natural limit for unconscious counting and that seven was a sort of absolute sheath around this limit. He says in one place that, “the unconscious can count to six because it cannot find the number two again, except via the three of revelation.”\(^{59}\) But he also stresses the

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57. Ragland-Sullivan, “Counting from 0 to 6,” 57.

58. Ibid., 53.

59. Ibid., 57.
difficulty of counting this high and it seemed that he associated this kind of work with advanced mathematical operations, and the logic of set theory.

One of the interesting things about Ragland’s schema is the way in which the number four functions as sort of a fulcrum balancing two triangles. I have also noticed this in certain formulations of the charkas (when the number of chakras is seven) in which the fourth chakra, the heart chakra, seems to balance an upper and a lower trinity. I think this could be a helpful way of understanding the number four in Lacan, especially as it is associated with the sinthome. It is not something which cures someone or overcomes the oedipal conflict, it doesn’t even get rid of the symptoms that one was so bothered with in the first place. Yet there is healing in that fact that, by replicating one’s symptom, symbolized here by marriage and children, one has found a way to live with them. Of course one’s children (however one wants to think of children) will also neither be perfect, but perfection is clearly not the point for Lacan.

In Stuart Schneiderman’s book, Death of an Intellectual Hero, written not long after Lacan had died in 1980, we’re given another version of unconscious counting with some similarities to Ragland’s. Schneiderman does not give us a rundown of numbers, but rather a helpful definition of an unconscious number, and its foundation. As with Ragland’s description of 0 (which is also the first number), there is first and foremost a lack—of order, of control, one oneness. In other words, the first number in Lacanian unconscious counting is the number of lack, that which everything we mean by the
number one excludes. This can be understood in the way that signifiers relate to each other in the unconscious, as Bruce Fink describes:

At every step, at least one number is excluded or pushed aside; we can thus say that the chain works around it, that is, that the chain forms by circumventing it, tracing thereby its contour. Lacan calls these excluded numbers or symbols the caput mortuum of the process, likening them thereby to the remainder left at the bottom of a test tube or beaker as an alchemist attempted to create something worthy from something lowly. . . . the chain never ceases to not write the numbers.

Or it may be used in the sense of set theory in which brackets are used to show that counting, like language, is not simply “natural” but suffers under its own limits and logic:

Alienation engenders, in a sense, a place in which it is clear that there is, as of yet, no subject: a place where something is conspicuously lacking. The subject first guise is this very lack. . . . the process of alienation may, as Jacque Alain-Miller suggests, be viewed as yielding the subject as empty set, { }, a set which has no elements, a symbol which transforms nothingness into something by marking or representing it.

These references give us an entrance in to the way that Lacan understood unconscious counting—it was always connected with language as it functions in the unconscious with the logic taken not from algebra or economics, but from set theory and topology. We might even argue that time travel and the mechanics of relativity are an important lens through which to read Lacanian counting in that there is never forward movement (counting up) without an accompanying retroactive action (counting back):

At the same time it is also an affair of the One, since the One does not exist in and of itself, but emerges only in the repetition of an initial trait, therefore at the level of the two, from whence it retroactively installs itself as the origin of the chain. At the same time something is effaced,

60. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 27.

61. Ibid., 52.
erased, rubbed out, or barred in the very structure of this movement and it is here that the split subject, the subject of the unconscious, emerges to subsist as the precondition for the elaboration of any structural sequence. . . . What Lacan stresses . . . is that such a scansion organizes its own impossibilities, introducing a hole, a residual place within the chain which thereby becomes the cause of the structure itself. Here, Lacan defines this process as the *caput mortuum* of the signifier, thereby referring to the residual deposit—one which we can retroactively designate as the of jouissance—produced in the process of symbolization, while also indicating the deathly effects inscribed by the phallic function.  

At the beginning of counting, then, there is a fundamental inability to count oneself—one is always missing something, and that the most important thing, as in the story Lacan tells of the boy who exclaims that he has “three brothers, Ernst, Fritz and me.” But as Alain-Miller’s image of the empty grave suggests, this is not a completely depressing situation, for the grave may be empty, but there is nothing more suggestive of life than a grave with nobody in it. Schneiderman points out that this image can be represented by the brackets used in set theory:

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The count begins with the empty set and it means that the set of the empty set is one, that is to say, the empty set is written in the brackets that are used in mathematics to designate a set. And you may know that, in order to count to two, you take the set composed of the empty set and the set of the empty set, of 0 and 1, if you like.  
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This is clearly a rather complicated way of counting, but Schneiderman’s point is that the foundation of this kind of counting is a lack, the empty tomb or the empty set. Hence the


confusion between 0 and 1 in Ragland’s schema. Yes, the 0 is not a number proper, but it is the foundation for that counting, and is, in a sense, something.

A slightly different way to approach the quaternities in Lacan is to look at the influence of Claude-Levi Strauss on his thought, on which topic Evans states that, “The emphasis on the quaternary first comes to the fore in Lacan’s work in the early 1950s, and is perhaps due to the influence of Claude Levi-Strauss, whose work on the structure of the avunculate shows that the basic unit of kinship always involves a minimum of four terms.”

Levi Strauss, of course, is the father of structuralism and we can’t underestimate his influence on Lacan, especially as concerns Lacan’s definition of the Symbolic. Though it is argued that Lacan rejected structuralism at a certain point, which may be true, something like his L schema undoubtedly shows a structuralist influence, in the way that the terms take on meaning only in their relation to each other (just as do the signifiers in a language) as well as in the way in which truth is manifested when there is a change of position or of discourse, say, from the hysteric to the analyst. This is what Lacan means by “combinatory” in the following quote:

The L of the calling-into-question of the subject in his existence has a combinatory structure that must not be confused with its spatial aspect. In this respect, it is the signifier itself that must be articulated in the Other, especially in its quaternary topology.

To support this structure, we find here the three signifiers where the Other may be identified in the Oedipus complex. They suffice to symbolize the significations of sexual reproduction, under the relational signifiers of love and procreation. The fourth term is given by the subject in his reality, foreclosed as such in the system and entering into the play of

64. Evans, An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, 158.
signifiers only in the form of the dummy \textit{mort], but becoming the true subject as this play of signifiers makes him signify.\textsuperscript{65}

Lacan keeps the Oedipal signifiers which Freud has bequeathed him, that of birth, marriage, and death, but they are now truly part of a structure, the logic of which we discussed in the first part of this chapter. One reason, perhaps, that we see so often the quaternal structure in Lacan, is that, while the Oedipal triangle spelled out some kind of limit for Freud, which he marked off with the castration complex, Lacan introduced the dummy (the subject as the dead man) to represent this limit but also to set it in motion and to loosen up its deadlock. He thus performs the logic of the plus-one on the very terms handed to him by Freud. Thus, in addition to the three elements of the Oedipus complex (mother, child, father) Lacan often speaks of a fourth element, sometimes saying that this fourth element is death, and at other times that it is the phallus.\textsuperscript{66}

I don’t think it’s too important that we decide finally what to call this fourth element, for as I have shown, it is called different things in the different quadrilateral formations provided by Lacan. It is perhaps simplest to just maintain that as “plus one” it is very closely implicated in the trinity of Imaginary, Symbolic and Real which occupied Lacan his entire life:

The base unit of structure to which Lacan refers here is the borromean triadic associative unit of the Imaginary (identificatory), the Symbolic (language and social conventions), and the Real (effects whose cause is repressed excitation or trauma). Indeed, Lacan called this topological unit structure itself, not metaphor. and this structure functions

\textsuperscript{65} Lacan, \textit{Écrits}, 460.

\textsuperscript{66} Evans, \textit{An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis}, 158.
topologically insofar as it is knotted by a fourth order—the order of the knot that belongs to each of the other three and also holds them together.  

Here we have a situation in which the fourth is really nothing other than the trinity of the human subjectivity functioning “properly” (but not normally) or according to its *sinthome*, which we can understand in a positive sense as going beyond repression and the castration complex.

**Quadrilaterals vs. Quaternities**

How does Lacan’s quadrilateral differ from the quaternities of Jung? In many ways they are actually similar in that, first of all, at the level of duality we have a situation that is characterized by imitation, rivalry and aggression. This is what Jung calls the confrontation with the shadow. Then also, with the implementation of the third, the Other for Lacan, and the anima/us (or transcendent dimensions) we have the bearer of peace into a tumultuous situation. I believe it is with the characterization of the fourth term that the differences become very interesting. For whereas in Jung the fourth term of any quaternity tends to close off the quaternity, to seal it up, to integrate evil, or to make something whole that was lacking, in Lacan it is the opposite that is the case. The fourth in Lacan will almost always work to produce a lack, to set desire off on a path that is endless, to be rid of the notion of wholeness, and even happiness, which then becomes a pretty fantasy of the dialectic of the ego.

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In the later Lacan one does not want to unleash the unconscious (as in Jung) but rather he looks to get some freedom from the automatic function of language, described as “the mortification the signifier imposes on his life by numbering it.” This is perhaps why defining the 4th, or defining the “end of analysis” in Lacan is so difficult, for he wanted that aspect of his thought to be beyond language in a way. This seems to be part of what’s going on with the emphasis on mathemes, topology, and Joyce, all of which have a somewhat tortured relationship to “normal speaking.” So could it be that all of the complication in Lacan boils down to the fact that he considered vitality and psychological health (terms he would never use) to simply be beyond language? Yes, if at this point we turn to the matter of ethics, and to the problematics of human action beyond speech, but No, if we are so naïve as to think that language is not implicated in the fantasy of a “realm beyond language.” Ultimately, I feel that the Lacanian quadrilaterals add something very important to the quaternity and to the “4” as it has been formulated by Jung and his followers—while not completely eschewing the hope of harmony or psychospiritual health, Lacan construes the “end” (goal) of analysis as a situation in which lack


69. Or perhaps to be beyond unconscious language, which brings us to another possible point of connection between Lacan and Joyce. In one of his many critical comments towards psychoanalysis Joyce complains about all the “fuss and bother about the mystery of the unconscious, what about the mystery of the conscious?” (http://www.lacan.com/lacinkXI3.htm) Here Joyce is perhaps pointing to the mystifying tendencies of psychoanalytic jargon, in which an interpretation from an analyst is simultaneously obscure and unassailable. When Lacan refers to the functioning of unconscious language as “automatic” in opposition to the action of the drives (see the 1964 seminar), he is not simply refusing the unconscious for the conscious, but he is, like Joyce, pointing out the dangers of an infatuation with “unconscious knowledge.”
and otherness are never relativized or completely overcome. We can affirm that “there is no sexual relationship” at the same time that we strive for an “equivalence” at the level of the *sinthome*, realizing that human life is structured by a necessary lack which involves the perpetual fantasy of wholeness. While it is true that reading Lacan is difficult (that was the way he “preferred it”), I find him to be a necessary corrective to Jung, the reading of whom can at times be too easy, and whose quaternities can be too neat, one example of which is his picture of sexual difference, where the shift from men to women is simply effected by a “vice-versa.” That is, men have an anima, while women have the animus, with these two figures viewed as complementary to each other, thus painting a picture of the relationship between the sexes as complimentary (what the male lacks, the female supplies, and vice versa). Even though Jung does not cover over the agonistic struggle involved in relations between the sexes, clearly this theoretical model would contribute to a simplification leading one to assume that problems in a sexual relationship were simply a matter of an insufficient complementarity, that the partners involved simply hadn’t figured out how to fill in the lack of their other. Jung’s thought, because it is expressed in circular images and mythological motifs, lends itself to our fantasies, just as the tales of the Brothers Grimm lend themselves to the fertile imagination of children. Lacan recognized the dangers of this, which is why he used mathemes to “formalize” his teaching such that it could be passed on with a minimal amount of the dualizing hyperbole so characteristic of the Imaginary register. Has Lacan succeeded? Not perfectly, I think, for, though this is an area I have not addressed in this work, initially the most receptive group to Lacan’s thought in this country were film theorists who were
excited about his notion of the mirror stage and the gaze. Much of this work, I feel, partook heavily in the kind of reductionist theorizing which Lacan tried to protect his legacy against. Although many have complained that the translation of his seminars has been unnecessarily delayed by his son-in-law (only half, if that, of the seminars have authorized English translations) one of the motivating factors for Jacques-Alain Miller is clearly a mistrust of those excited to appropriate Lacan for their own ends. The fact that it is a clinician, Bruce Fink, who has been granted the most access to Lacan, and who finally came out with a complete translation of *Écrits*, shows perhaps a certain mistrust of those not educated in the illusory tactics of the Imaginary.

Although I do not have the space to give a full elucidation of Lacan’s theory of sexual difference, much of what he has to say about feminine sexuality fits in very well with how we have been talking about the 4th in his work. To make a brief comparison with Jung, instead of seeing male and female as complementary, Lacan saw them as supplementary, such that love was to “give what one doesn’t have to someone who doesn’t need it.” In other words, love, or the relation between the sexes, is a matter of adding something (which could very well be a nothing), not filling a gap. Lacan would call the latter view a male fantasy, while the former would be on the way to a feminine sexuality, which, surprisingly, if it is not free from lack (and little is in Lac(k)an) it seems to treat lack as a positive entity (in line with Freud’s dictum that the unconscious doesn’t say “no,” and also in line with the yeses which Joyce puts in the mouth of Penelope at the end of Ulysses). Again, this is in the realm of the equivalence of the *sinthomes* which we

have already discussed. Because Lacan sees feminine sexuality (or the logic of the 4th) in a structurally different way from what he calls “phallic jouissance” or masculine sexuality, while providing precious little fodder for the imagination due to his use of mathemes and graphs, the kind of reductionist theory of sexuality which seems to result from Jung’s theories (and as we saw with Judith Wehr, is open to charges of misogyny) is defended against.
CHAPTER 5
THE SOPHIOLOGY OF SERGIUS BULGAKOV

Introduction
In this chapter we will turn to the work of a Russian Orthodox theologian by the name of Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944). Though Bulgakov wrote his most important works over sixty years ago, his theology has only become a serious topic of discussion in the English speaking world within the last ten years or so. Many of his most important works have only been translated very recently, and not a few have never been translated into English. But before going into his work I would like to address why it is that, in this final chapter, I’m turning to a theologian when my topic has largely fallen within the purview of psychoanalysis. First of all, I think the work of the two psychoanalysts most important for this thesis, Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan, were both instrumental in showing the important and varied points where theology and psychology overlapped. Especially in Lacan’s use of theologians such as Aquinas and Augustine, we are really at a point now where we need to rethink the way these two disciplines might interact with each other. Secondly, in a way I’m really returning to theology in that the theories of Pythagoras, the mandalas of the Plains Indians, and the quaternities of the Hindus, all have a very strong theological context. Not precisely in the Christian sense, but one of the themes in the work of Bulgakov is precisely how it is that “pagan” thought concerning the spirit world has to be considered alongside the Christian revelation. So in a way I am returning to a
theme that I opened with and hopefully bringing out aspects which go beyond simply seeing those quaternities as precursors to the Jungian theory of the psyche. Throughout this chapter we will see topics on which Bulgakov and Jung converge, and I think one of them is clearly the relationship between Christianity and other religions. While Jung’s answer was very much in line with a tolerance and universalism strongly influenced by Hindu thought, Bulgakov strives to understand other religions from the vantage point of the Russian Orthodox Church, at times straining the limits of what his superiors could accept. Both of them renew themes that had in the past been condemned as heretical by the church, both East and West, but whereas Jung is clearly not worried about simply criticizing the church as being closed minded, Bulgakov wants to re-articulate certain notions (especially from the Gnostic tradition) in order to rescue for Orthodoxy what was genuine in them.

I will not propose to give here anything like a general overview of Bulgakov’s thought, but will limit myself to speaking about what he did with the concept of Sophia, or Wisdom, the “daughter of God,” as he called her, for it is this aspect of Bulgakov’s work which really draws comparisons with Jung and with quaternity in general. What makes Bulgakov so interesting in this context is that he seems to be in tune with the general issues which bothered Jung, such as the lack of femininity in the Trinity, and the way that the church has dealt with evil. For both thinkers it is the “4th,” which Bulgakov refers to as Sophia, which is necessary to solve these problems. In his early theological

works Bulgakov actually refers to Sophia as a 4th “hypostasis” or person of the Trinity, but I think we can attribute this language more to the influence of the great Russian Theosopist a generation prior to him, Dmitry Solovyov. It is a terminology which he later abandons for a more nuanced way of speaking about the relationship, such that Sophia is no longer a hypostasis, though she is still “hypostatizable.” This did not stop certain hierarchies within the Orthodox Church from claiming that, even with this revision, he was still guilty of making the trinity into a quaternity. For our purposes, we will not look so closely at the niceties of the theological discussion, but we will rather focus on the radical and creative take on some of the fundamental themes of quaternity that he introduces, especially in comparison to Jung’s thought. For Jung, it was the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which in many ways functioned as a sort of goad pushing him towards his quaternal formulations. He saw the Trinity as fundamentally an exclusionary concept, and all the things which really excited Jung, the feminine aspect of the soul, nature, the problem of evil—all of them were banned, so he complained, from the Christian Godhead. It is these same topics which Bulgakov addresses from the perspective point of the Christian tradition as he inherited it from his Russian Orthodox upbringing, soaked as it was in the Greek Fathers, as well as his philosophical/theosophical education which stressed thinkers such Jacob Böhme and Frederich Schelling. In a way all the concerns of Jung are gathered up in the central topic which Sophiology addresses—how it is that creation shares in the life of the creator. That is, how to understand the distinction between the three, the Godhead as Trinity, and the fourth, creation, that which is not God, and yet strives for Him.
A Short History of Sophia

The roots of Sophiology are in the Hebrew Bible, in passages in Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiasticus, and the pseudepigraphical books of the Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Jesus Ben-Sirach, which book Bulgakov calls a “sort of metaphysical commentary on Proverbs.” Of Proverbs 8:22-31 Bulgakov says that “there is no longer any doubt that [it] contains an interpretation of wisdom as somehow divine and quasi-hypostatic, though not a person.” He translates verse 22 as: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old,” a translations which Aidan Nichols notes as acceptable but which should be acknowledged is different from the more common English translation of, “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work.” Bulgakov’s translation reflects his belief that Sophia is not the first of created things, but actually, like the Logos, uncreated. Two New Testament verses that Bulgakov mentions as important for Sophiology should be cited here. In Ephesians 3:8-10 Paul writes:

Although I am the very least of the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

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3. Ibid., 26.

Here we see one of the important themes in Bulgakov’s Sophiology, that there is a “hidden” dimension to wisdom, and that its mystery is for the good of “all things,” all the “rulers and authorities,” the church being the mediator of this hidden Wisdom. The other verse is from Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth:

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (I Cor. 1:20) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” (2:7)

So the message which Paul preaches is a heavenly Wisdom, but not one that is purely cut off from human understanding, as perhaps a dualistic Gnosticism would have it, but one that has been revealed to us, and is accessible via the cross of Christ. In Christ heavenly Wisdom condescends to enter into the world and transfigure it. While the early church fathers mostly interpreted these passages to be referring to Christ in his capacity as Logos, the 2nd person of the Trinity, Bulgakov thinks that we need to make a strong distinction between Logos and Wisdom (although, from a slightly different perspective, he does associate Divine Sophia with Christ and creaturely Sophia with Mary5). One reason is that Wisdom, both in Greek and Hebrew, is as feminine noun and when personified, whether in the Jewish or Christian traditions, was depicted as feminine; whereas the Logos, of course, was thoroughly male, both in his divine and earthly form. There is also a tradition in the East of icons of Wisdom as well as churches dedicated in her honor, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople being the most famous. When Bulgakov was exiled from Russian in 1922 on the “Philosopher’s ship” as an intellectual

incontrovertibly out of line with the ideology of the Bolshevik government he visited the Hagia Sophia and relates in his autobiography how strong an impression it made upon him.

Apart from these sources, Bulgakov discusses in great detail the Platonic elements in such early theologians as Origen and even Augustine, that great stumbling block for Eastern Christians, elements which he considered as precursors to thought on Sophia proper. In fact, reading Augustine alongside of Bulgakov illuminates how much of the Platonic traditions has been quietly weeded out of theology in the West. The following quote from Augustine’s Confessions abounds in Platonic imagery fused seamlessly with Christian orthodoxy, as well as showing itself a surprising precursor to many themes in Bulgakov:

I make a sacrifice of praise to him who sanctifies me, for the beauty which flows through men’s minds into their skilful hands comes from that Beauty which is above their souls and for which my souls sighs all day and night. And it is from this same supreme Beauty that men who make things of beauty and love it in its outward form derive the principle by which they judge it: but they do not accept the same principle to guide them in the use they make of it. ⁶

The themes of something divine and eternal that is both above and within us, that is not expressly designated as God but which is clearly God’s domain—this is precisely the subject which Bulgakov addresses in his Sophiology, in which Beauty and Wisdom are very closely related, like the right and left hands of God. At times he argues that Beauty

(or Glory) and Wisdom are interchangeable, and he quotes with approval, at least once per book, Dostoyevsky’s dictum that “beauty will save the world.”

Besides these Biblical and theological sources, the other stream from which Bulgakov’s Sophiological thinking flows is one rooted in the Platonist tradition, namely, a certain strand of Esoteric German Idealism of which Jacob Böhme is usually considered the fountainhead and which, through the streams of English mystics such as Jane Lead and John Pordage, eventually came to be a strong influence Russian Freemasonry, and through that school to the direct predecessor of Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Pavel Florenensky, and Vladimir Solovyov. Although Bulgakov to my knowledge does not speak much of Böhme and that school, and he may not have know them very well or at all, his immediate predecessors such were not as leery of the kind of Gnostic and theosophical though which Böhme et al. were examples of. And though Bulgakov himself would not have wanted to be associated with these, clearly heretical, figures, my position is that his writings on Sophia in a way redeem, or at least clarify, the thought of one like Böhme, or even a more marginal (theologically speaking at least) figure like William Blake, who beyond being heretical can be, at their worst, just confusing and obscure. In emphasizing his own orthodoxy and supporting these claims with Biblical and traditionally accepted sources, he allows us to reconsider voices that have been marginalized in the past, but without having to condescend to a maddening obscurantism. The best example of this is probably what Bulgakov does with Origen’s “heretical”

7. Bulgakov, The Unfading Light, 140.
notion of *apokatastasis*, often referred to as universal salvation, something we will examine at the end of this chapter.

Perhaps the biggest single philosophical influence on Bulgakov, and the direct source of much of the important non-theological or quasi heretical material concerning Sophia, was his fellow Russian Vladimir Solovyov, a tireless writer and religious thinker, a close friend of Dostoyevsky, and someone who brilliantly integrated Western and Eastern sources into a grand view of Christian and universal ecumenism. Hans Urs von Balthasar called him “perhaps second only to Thomas Aquinas as the greatest artist or order and organization in the history of thought.” Solovyov was not as worried about the demands of orthodoxy as Bulgakov (he was not, like Bulgakov, a priest) and in his language Sophia *did* function as a fourth hypostasis. Where Solovyov butted up against orthodox theology Bulgakov tweaked his thought, but in the general outlines of his Sophiological vision, Bulgakov stays very close to him. Balthasar gives a general statement of this shared vision in the introduction to a Solovyov anthology:

Solovyov’s aesthetic is nothing less than this: the progressive eschatological embodiment of the Divine Idea in worldly reality; or (since the Divine Spirit is indeed in and for the itself the highest reality, while the material being of the world is in itself no more than indeterminacy, an eternal pressure toward and yearning after form) the impress of the limitless fullness and determinacy of God upon the abyss of cosmic potentiality. This also means the bringing into submission, the conquest, of the non-divine on the basis (in Baader’s terms) of the image of God already printed upon it. This is the complete triumph of God’s omnipotence, which can manifest his plenitude and totality and cause it to prevail even in what is opposed to it—in what is finite, separated, egotistically divided, evil.”


9. Ibid., xvii.
In the work of this great Russian syncretist everything from Hindu thought to Gnosticism is integrated into a grand vision of Christian unity through Sophia who is,

The eternal feminine in the world, the eternal object of God’s love; it is the essence of the world, gradually moulded, elevated, purified, emerging in its proper selfhood in the primordial image of the Church, the Panagia, the spotless virgin and mother of Christ, but then broadening out to become the real principle of the whole of redeemed humanity and creation.\(^\text{10}\)

The notion of *apokatastasis*, already mentioned, is clearly in evidence here in that the church will simply be the guiding light to the salvation of the world and cosmos.

Solovyov’s connection of Sophia with Mary is also clearly evidenced in the work of Bulgakov, as is the notion that Sophia is the “essence” of the Godhead, especially in the sense that the essence of God is expressed through creation and through love. Coming from the perspective of Western theology what is fascinating about the nature of the work of these two Russian thinkers is how tightly their dogmatics are interwoven with their aesthetics. We see this not only in their writings but also in their lives, as both men claimed to have direct mystical experiences with Sophia that directed the course of their lives and works.

**Divine Sophia**

Such are the sources for Bulgakov’s thought on Sophia, but the importance of this thought really arises from his creative re-working of this sometimes obscure tradition into

\[\text{Ibid., xxv.}\]
the dogmatic edifice of Christian theology, both East and West.\textsuperscript{11} In the hands of Bulgakov Sophia is described under two general forms, Divine Sophia and Creaturely Sophia. Divine Sophia goes under many names, but for the sake of simplicity we will limit our discussions to the descriptions which directly relate to the quaternal themes already discussed. One description Bulgakov gives of her should be immediately recognizable under the quaternal characteristics of inclusion and holism, for he describes her as the \textit{ousia}, the Being, of the very Godhead, in distinction to the persons, the hypostases of the Father, Son and Spirit:

The first part of the dogma, that is, the doctrine of the relationship between the three hypostases with their hypostatic qualities and distinctive features, has been to a certain extent elucidated in the process of the Church’s dogmatic creativity. But the other side, the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity, as well as the actual conception of the substance or nature, has been far less developed and, apparently, almost overlooked.\textsuperscript{12}

It is important here that we do not think that Bulgakov is saying something like that Sophia is the divine Trinity taken as a whole, in the way that the encircling of the divine AUM in Hinduism is an actual fourth state. In fact, Bulgakov reminds us that this very position, in the thought of Gilbert de la Porrée, was ruled out by the Council of Rheims in 1147. The church concluded then that, “\textit{Divinitas sit Deus et Deus Divinitas}, God is

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\textsuperscript{11} Bulgakov was clearly the most well-versed in Western theology of all of the Orthodox theologians of his day, and perhaps of the past two centuries. Nevertheless, he is chided at times by Aidan Nichols and Rowan Williams for giving short shrift to certain important Western thinkers, such as Augustine and Aquinas.
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Divinity and Divinity is God.” But Bulgakov, in a typically nuanced way is claiming that this does not rule out the fact that the nature of Sophia, who is “not God, but divinity,” has not been fully thought out. What makes Bulgakov’s claims about Sophia different from Porrée’s heresy, is that Bulgakov is not attempting to redefine the nature of the Trinity, or even the nature of created being—he is not trying to add something to God—but he is claiming that there is a border zone (or better, a background), an intermediate concept, that has simply not been discussed, or in the name of fighting against heresy, has been simply thrown out with the heretics, a matter of tossing the baby with the bathwater. In this same vein Bulgakov also uses the language that Sophia is the “nature” of God, the very world in which the Godhead lives. And that nature is the Love which defines the Godhead, but a love which is of a different description than the Love of the Trinitarian persons for each other—“But besides that which is personal there can be a love which is not. . . . in the love of the Godhead for God.” What he is saying is that in the love of any of the persons of the Trinity for each other there is a personal love, but this does not rule out the fact that there is also an impersonal face, or even grounding to this Love, and that this is Sophia, the very environment in which God lives, or in the words of Augustine (speaking of sapientia creatas, created wisdom), “the rational

13. Ibid., 36 fn.
15. Ibid., 35.
intellectual mind of God’s pure city, our mother, the heavenly Jerusalem, a city of Freedom, which lasts eternally in heaven.”

The distinction that Bulgakov makes is quite fine, and shows the degree to which he was committed to bringing Sophianic thought into the folds of orthodoxy. The following reveals the extent to which he was determined that Sophia not be viewed as a 4th:

The nature of God (which is in fact Sophia) is a living and, therefore, loving substance, ground, and “principle.” But, it might be said, does this not lead to the conception of a “fourth hypostasis”? The reply is “certainly not,” for this principle in itself is non-hypostatic, though capable of being hypostatized in a given Hypostasis, and thereby constituting its life. But, it might still be urged, would this not result in “another God,” a sort of totally “other” divine principle within God? Again we reply, no; for no one has ever attempted to maintain such an idea in connection with the divine Ousia in its relation to the hypostases, while the very conception of Ousia itself is but that of Sophia, less fully developed.

and also, from a book often considered his magnum opus:

As divinity, Sophia is nonhypostatic (is not a “fourth hypostasis”), but she is eternally hypostatized in the Holy Trinity and never exists nonhypostatically or extrahypostatically. She belongs to the divine trihypostatic Person as this Person’s life and self-revelation. She exists in herself, but not for herself.

In his position that Sophia is not a person he allows her to be the provenance of all the members of the Trinity, to be “hypostatized” in the movement of the Father, Son, and Spirit, without being solely identified with one of the members, which he said happened


with the early fathers who, in fighting the Arians, shared with their enemies the point of view that the Wisdom mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures always referred to the Logos: “The Arians and the anti-Arians who attempted to equate wisdom with the Son, by their very attempt deny wisdom both to the Father and the Holy Spirit.” In a sense we can say that Wisdom is an attribute of the Godhead, but Bulgakov wants her position to be more elevated than that—she is more like a fundamental attribute without which God would not be God. At times he describes Wisdom and Glory as being like the right and left hands of God, intimately tied up in the very relatedness of the members of the Trinity to each other, where the action of the Son is revealed as Wisdom and the work of the Spirit is to crown creation with Glory.

Inasmuch as she expresses the essence of God, Sophia is also intimately linked with God’s creativity, for Bulgakov was adamant that creation was not simply an arbitrary or accidental event that resulted from a divine whim:

The notion, freely accepted by Aquinas and others, that God, by virtue of this “freedom” of His, could have refrained from creating the world must be rejected as not appropriate to His essence. If God created the world, this means that he could not have refrained from creating it, although the Creator’s act belongs to the fullness of God’s life and this act contains no external compulsion that would contradict divine freedom.

Even though Bulgakov was adamant that God does not need the world and that God is completely satisfied in the love that flows between the three persons, this love is of the nature to spill out beyond itself—as the nature of the ocean is to transgress its


shores—and God desires to share this love with something that is not God, namely that which He has made: “The Godhead in its divine liberality, in self-renouncing love, longs for what is not itself, not divine, and so goes forth from its selfhood in creating.”

Love, for Bulgakov as well as for other theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas and Pseudo-Dionysius, was fundamentally ecstatic, in that it causes God to reach out beyond God’s self to create and relate to non-divine reality, at the same time as it allows created beings to reach beyond their own limits and be united to their creator. So while Bulgakov is perhaps not saying anything that certain of his predecessors, both East and West, haven’t already said, the conclusions he draws are, I believe, novel. The fact that ecstatic love is the nature of God, and that the creation we know is the result of this nature means, for Bulgakov, that in some way this creation has always existed with God, not as a separate person or hypostasis but in some way as a living reality, a heavenly Jerusalem, uncreated and eternal.

In 1935 the Sophiological aspects of Bulgakov’s theology was judged heretical by the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church Abroad (not, incidentally, Bulgakov’s own jurisdiction). They felt that Bulgakov made Sophia a fourth member of the Godhead, turning the trinity into a quaternity. Many of Bulgakov’s arguments concerning the “hypostatizable” nature of Sophia are the result of this condemnation, and his struggle with the Orthodox authorities no doubt forced him to articulate his views in different ways. The following long quotation is perhaps one of his most creative attempts to find a

way to express the fundamental distinction between Trinity and Sophia, in a way that would remain within the bounds of orthodoxy:

The entire Holy trinity in its tri-unity “is Sophia” just as all the three hypostases are in their separateness. But we should be clear in this connection what we mean by “is.” The connecting word “is” here unites the tri-hypostatic subject with the predicate. The subject is a Hypostasis which, according to its nature, possesses being and which discloses this being in its nature. Nevertheless this predicate, as the content of the subject’s natural life, does not contain within itself the Hypostasis as such, but only reveals it. And Sophia, in this sense, once more, is not a Hypostasis, but only a quality belonging to a Hypostasis, an attribute of Hypostatic being. Therefore we should point out a very important peculiarity of such statements as the following; The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Trinity “is” either Ousia or Sophia. Such a statement cannot be reversed. We cannot on the basis of the foregoing argument affirm the converse in which the place of the subject would be occupied by the Ousia-Sophia, and the place of the predicate by the hypostases; for instance: “Ousia-Sophia is the Father, Son, etc.” Such a statement would simply be untrue for it would contain the heresy of impersonalism as regards the Holy Trinity.22

This passage, it seems to me, is simply a commentary on I John 4:8, which states that “God is Love.” God is, of course, Father, Son, and Spirit, but that is not to say what God is. What God is is Love, and not just the personalized aspects in which the Father is the Lover, the Son is the Beloved, and the Spirit is Love (as per Augustine). For in a sense, the nature of Love disappears, or is obscured, when it is acted out by these persons. Bulgakov’s point is that there still remains an essence of Love that has yet to be sufficiently thought out or revealed. Bulgakov has a very high understanding of the importance of history, such that that the image of perfect love was given in the event of the cross, but this has not yet been sufficiently understood. History is simply the process

of coming to understand what that Love means, and of course, as in the new command of John 13:34, how we are to participate in that love by loving God and by loving others: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

Creaturely Sophia

It is at this point we must distinguish between Sophia in her divine and creaturely aspects, between “Divine Sophia, the eternal proto-ground of the world, and the creaturely Sophia, the divine force of the life of creation.” Bulgakov says that, “the Divine Sophia exists in eternity, in a unitary integral act, whereas the creaturely Sophia is submerged in temporality and becoming, in ‘nothing.’” He connects the Divine Sophia, here, to something like Platonic Ideas, which introduce that which is neither God nor creation, but God’s Idea(s) in creating: “The patristic and scholastic conception of the sophianicity of creation comes down to the recognition of prototypes, proorismoi, in God. ‘Ideas,’ or ‘prototypes’ are, so to speak, the plan of creation sketched out by the Creator.”

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23. It should be noted that in earlier writings he actually did consider Sophia to be a fourth hypostasis. He says in The Unfading Light (1917) that “Sophia possesses a personality, a face; it is a subject, a person, or, to use the terminology of theology, a hypostasis. It is of course distinct from the hypostases of the Holy Trinity, it is an individual reality of another order, a fourth hypostasis. It does not share in the intra-divine life: it is not God, and so does not turn the Trinity into a quaternity of hypostases.” Bulgakov, The Unfading Light, 135.


25. Ibid., 55.

26. Ibid.
divine Sophia is this heavenly Jerusalem, this perfect prototype of creation, which as the line from Proverbs says, was “with God when God was creating” the creaturely version of this image, which Bulgakov understands as creaturely Sophia, this earth. The yearning that humans feel, their confused desires, are always and ultimately for transfiguration into Divine Sophia: “‘Liberation’ from bondage to ‘futility’, sophianic illumination, transfiguration into beauty, is what every creature thirsts for; but for this very reason the ‘speech’ of creation is tongue-tied.”

This does not mean, though, that creaturely Sophia is fallen simply by virtue of being created (as in the Gnostic myths of fallen Sophia). If we were to look at Bulgakov’s cosmogony we would see that he does not consider the fall to be a pre-human event, it is not something that occurs just because all of a sudden matter, that which is not God, is created. No, for Bulgakov, when God created the world he had always in his mind (in divine Sophia) to crown it with the glory of man and woman. And though it was a work “in becoming” it was by virtue of its origin in the very mind of God that it was able to evolve towards God—“the wisdom of God is at first only present in the world’s potential,” as Aidan Nichols notes. And thus it played its role in the divine life to the extent of its abilities. Just because “creation groans” for its life in God does not mean that it is in a necessarily sinful state. We should remember that Adam, before he fell, also experienced want, he was lonely before God made him a “helper.” Ultimately, the root of


sin is the turning away from man’s divine vocation, losing sight of our destiny to share in
the life of God, this very life being Sophia. As Nichols says, “Our struggle with the
disordered passions comes from the collapse of our God-given vocation, not the other
way around.”

We see here a very important way in which the concept of Sophia allows
a theologian to understand sin and the fall in a way which does not just reduce the
conversation to one of morality and self-discipline. Rather, Bulgakov is rescuing a way of
thinking that has for centuries been associated with Gnostics or Occultists, this notion
that separation from God (being other than God) is a sin in itself. But there is a small and
important difference in the way that Bulgakov presents this theme. For him, the Fall was
not a “necessary evil” as it was for Jacob Böhme, and yet nevertheless, once the Fall
occurs God reacts to it in such a way that more good than evil comes out of it. What
saves Bulgakov from simply being a Gnostic is that he always makes sure to distinguish
between Trinity and Sophia, between the divine life itself and the world in which this life
is played out, between the love that flows within the trinity, and the “love of this love”
which is the reflection that Sophia is.

In Bulgakov’s notion of creaturely Sophia we can see a similarity with the
theology and thought of Theilard de Chardin, in which the evolutionary process is a sign
of erotic striving towards its goal and maker. And this in itself is good. It is only when the
microcosm of this creation, man, turns away from his deepest calling to return to God,
that we can say a fall occurs. And because man is the crown of creation, when the crown
falls it takes everything with it—“Man has same role for the creaturely wisdom as the

29. Ibid., 62.
Word in his proto-humanity has for uncreated Wisdom. So if something goes wrong with man, something will go wrong with the world as well. This is why, when Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, it is precisely the act of reproduction that is punished. Woman will bear children in pain and man will gather the fruits of the earth only by the sweat of his brow. Bulgakov understands this to mean that Adam and Eve, from the beginning, needed the rest of humanity in the form of all their progeny, to accomplish their destiny of bringing the earth into union with God, and their Paradise was the fact that they could do this, they could participate in the fruitfulness of nature and their own bodies. So when they fall, it is precisely this need and ability to reproduce which they become ashamed of—they are ashamed to create, to be at the surging head of the evolution of all of nature, in Nichol’s words “to live out the life of Godmanhood.”

Bulgakov’s understanding of the fall and of original sin is not so different from Augustine’s, whom he criticizes more often he praises. Because of the fall man’s divine image has been covered up by an unavoidable stain, his will has been twisted, and so no matter how much he strives for Divine Sophia, he is always left wanting. That is, except in the rarest of instances when the human creative power is given the ability to touch its Divine source:

When the soul wants to sing, it comes out with inarticulate and discordant sounds. Only in those geniuses who are the ambassadors, the plenipotentiaries, of the human race does this inner quality of genius show

30. Ibid., 47.

31. Ibid., 88.
itself outwardly, this hidden but universally shared quality which is our real and substantial participation in Sophia.\textsuperscript{32}

For Bulgakov this ability to creatively connect creaturely and Divine Sophia was a prerogative of all humanity, in a way all of nature, but due to Humanity standing at the head of nature, it was really through an artistic appropriation of creaturely sophianic potential that the world has the hope of glory: “All are beautiful, endowed with genius, sophianic in the ground of their being, their ideality, their vocation; but alas, they are not so in their concrete existence.”\textsuperscript{33} What is the nature of this “concrete existence” this creaturely Sophia? Nichols shares with us his understanding of the answer that Bulgakov gives:

He begins from the affirmation, “Man shares in the world of God.” That means of course, he shares in the Wisdom of God, which we have seen can also be called the heavenly Theanthropy, the Godmanhood of the Word. The Wisdom of God can be called the heavenly Theanthropy because divine Wisdom is centred in the Godmanhood of the Word, for the Word is not only God but also, in a special way, the Prototype of man, who will be made in the image of the Word: something that can be said of no other creature. Now because creaturely Wisdom reflects the Uncreated Wisdom, the world which results from God’s creative work will be centred on man, the image of God, precisely because the uncreated Wisdom is centred on the Prototype of man the Word in his proto-humanity.” Nichols \textsuperscript{42}

Though Divine Wisdom is something that every member of the Trinity shares it is “centred” is the second person of the Trinity, in the way that the Logos takes on flesh and brings man to share in that Divine Love. In other words, for us, Divine Wisdom is most revealed in the person of the Son, not only intellectually but in the very way in which

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\item[32.] Bulgakov, \textit{The Unfading Light}, 139.
\item[33.] Ibid., 140.
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human flesh has been changed by his incarnation; bringing us to the conclusion that it is not Sophia that is a fourth hypostasis, but that, through her, men and women are granted subjective existence, a person-ality that is hypostatic yet separate from the Trinity, though imaged upon it—in other words, it is humanity that is the fourth hypostasis.

**Humanity as the Fourth Hypostasis**

The Orthodox authorities never censured Bulgakov for calling *Humanity* the “fourth hypostasis,” perhaps because they were tired of censuring him, or perhaps because they did not feel that this fourth infringed upon the sanctity of the holy three-ness of the Trinity. Nevertheless, for our purposes this is perhaps the most interesting facet of his work. Bulgakov writes that, “Adam became ‘as one of us, to know good and evil’ (3:22) not only in his fall. He was created ‘as one of us,” as a hypostatic image of God, as a *co-I* of the Holy Trinity, as the creaturely—and in this sense the “fourth”—multi-hypostatic human hypostasis, which is called to have and is capable of having a *personal* relationship with God.”

And then:

> In God, creation is an act of ecstatic love, in which He goes outside the bounds of the Holy Trinity, into “nothing,” and there draws out of Himself the “fourth,” creaturely hypostases, created in His image, that is, first of all those upon whom the gift of love has been conferred.

In my opinion Bulgakov’s emphasis on the divine nature of Adam and Eve’s origin and destiny is a very necessary voice in today’s theological circles. It seems to be coming at

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35. Ibid., 155.
just the right time, as well, now that the project of ressourcement in Catholic theology, especially in the work of Henri de Lubac and the aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar have started to make Western theology more amenable to the idea of deification (theosis) which has always been central in the East, and for which Sophiology is simply its most articulate champion. Rowan Williams and Aidan Nichols (among others) have recognized the importance of this aspect of Bulgakov’s thought for theology, and John Milbank has, with the online publication of his latest essay “Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon,” seems to have done the same for philosophy. It is worth quoting the entire first paragraph from this essay to get a scope for how momentous he feels that the contribution of Russian sophiology is:

At the dawn of the 21st century, it increasingly appears that the most significant theology of the two preceding centuries has been that of the Russian sophiological tradition. Latin theology within the same period has been characterized by a gradual recovery of a more authentic tradition, rooted in the Church Fathers, the earlier to High Middle Ages and the better contributions of the Renaissance legacy. This recovery eventually became focused on an attempt to recover the sense that there is no great gulf between creation and deification, since humanity, and even the cosmos through humanity, has always been orientated in its fundamental being towards receiving the gift of supernatural grace. In this way it opened up the possibility, even if it has never completely been followed through, of restoring the integral links between theological and philosophical discourse. The Eastern tradition, on the other hand, had never posited such a gulf, because it had never given rise to the Western problematic concerning the relation between nature and grace, reason and revelation. Although it was indeed much corrupted by alien scholastic influences, and even by certain rationalizing trends of its own engendering, it was still possible for Vladimir Soloviev and other religious philosophers in the 19th century to resume a mode of thought in which the philosophical and theological were seamlessly fused.36

Milbank sees in sophiology a way out of the impasses to which Western theology and philosophy has come, between relativism on one side and dogmatism on the other, by virtue of the championing of a project that has been on slow slimmer in the East since the days of the Greek Fathers—the idea of Theanthropy or Godmanhood, and the sense in which all of humanity can be represented together as one being, as Adam or Christ. Unfallen Adam, as I’ve mentioned already, was for Bulgakov not incapable of communion with the Divine. He was created for this purpose and was receptive to the “supernatural grace” which allowed him to participate in the Godhead. It is of course this high station which Christ restores to mankind, and it is through our sophianic connection with Christ’s “Godmanhood” (Theanthropy), which is the way that the Divine Sophia manifests in the Logos, that we may take the title of “4th hypostasis:

All created things have a supra-eternal, uncreated proto-image in the Divine Sophia. In particular, such a proto-image of the creaturely Adam and of the whole human multi-unity is “the heavenly man,” humanity in God, which is precisely the Divine Sophia, the Father’s self-revelation in the Son and the Holy Spirit. 37

This statement takes us a level deeper into the complicated and fluid way that Sophia relates to Trinity. First of all, we have to remember that Wisdom is part of the nature of each person within the Trinity, but that each person plays a different role in regards to that nature. The Son, taken from a certain perspective is the Divine Humanity, because He is God taken on the form of a man, but when this is looked at in terms of the

movement through the terms of the trinity, that the Father and the Spirit also play a part in this Divine Humanity, then it is Sophia which is called the Divine Humanity, for, in a more general way, she expresses the Love which we see when the Trinity creates, when it brings something, human flesh, outside its Life into the very core of its Being—“Here, the Holy Trinity in Unity, or the Unity in Trinity, renounces, as it were, in its sacrificially kenotic love the possession of the divine world for itself and allows this world to have its own being.”

Sophia is the “‘Body of God’ in its integrity” and even though she herself in not a fourth hypostasis within the Trinity, there is a sense in which man himself functions as a fourth—“with reference to man as the image of God, they express not only a blessing command addressed to man, but also God’s own action and self-determination, the progression of the Holy Trinity itself into the domain of the creaturely-hypostatic being of the ‘fourth,’ creaturely hypostases.” What is important to realize here is that this personal (hypostatic) nature that is given to humanity comes not from Sophia but from God—“natural being is created on the basis of the Divine Sophia, whereas the image of the divine hypostasis is created in personal being.” And although people are clearly created through the kenotic love of God and not divine, humanity is nonetheless given the opportunity to play a part in divine life, to become “adopted children of God” as Paul

38. Ibid., 50.
39. Ibid., 80.
40. Ibid., 93.
41. Ibid.
says in Galatians 4:5. Does this make a quaternity, then, of the Trinity? Still I think we would have to answer this question, no, although Bulgakov does the most of any theologian to show how close God draws man to him. The fact remains, though, that the Trinity, “the sacred number three,” will always be distinguishable from that which it adopts, as a “fourth hypostasis” and that which is its nature, in Sophia. We will always have to say that man is “as a fourth” or acts “like a fourth,” because the nature of the Trinity is unchanging in itself, however much it may share its divine life and love with the relative nothingness that is created being.

**Universal Restoration and the Holy Grail**

In his Sophiology Bulgakov was clearly unafraid to challenge the strictures of Orthodox theology. He was equally bold in his eschatology, especially in his affirmation of the doctrine of *apocatastasis*, or universal restoration, the doctrine which holds that all souls will eventually be brought to God and united with Him, that “all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:6) The 3rd c. Egyptian theologian Origen famously held this position and was famously censured by the church after his death for doing so. Bulgakov’s version of this theory is intimately tied up with his Sophiology, for the Divine Sophia has no recalcitrance and thus in the fullness of time we can hope that the earth and all its people (creaturely Sophia) will one day be transfigured into the form of the Divine Beloved, with all rogue elements eventually calling Christ Lord. One of the images which Bulgakov used to explicate this vision was that of the holy grail, and

42. Ibid., 92.
because the grail for Jung was also a symbol of the universal quest for wholeness and salvation, it provides an interesting point of comparison between the two thinkers.

At the beginning, though, we must admit that they approach the grail from opposing directions. For Jung, the grail, the mythic cup which caught the blood of the crucified Christ, was just one instance of an archetypal form, namely, of the treasure of great worth, the boon of psychic wholeness, communal health and wealth. For Bulgakov, who like Jung set aside the question of the myth’s historical veracity, the grail was not a chalice at all, but simply the whole world. As Boris Jakim (Bulgakov’s translator into English) says, “The grail is not discussed with reference to the legends surrounding it, but is seen by Bulgakov to be the Earth itself, soaked with the blood (and water) of Jesus.”

In this way, the world of creation which itself suffered under the Adamic curse, receives the seeds of its transfiguration. It is as profound as if the very molecular structure of the earth and matter itself was transformed by the touch of the 2nd person of the Trinity. This is symbolized in the ancient tradition that the cross was rooted in the skull of Adam, and that “a drop of divine blood fell on it.” Bulgakov fleshes out the comparison between Adam and Christ, between old world and new, not just as regards the salvation of the church (symbolized by the blood of the Eucharist), but as regards the destiny of all the earth:

Out of the side of the old Adam was created woman, who tempted him to fall. But the wound delivered to humankind from Adam’s side is


44. Ibid., 30.
healed by the spear wound in Jesus’ side. The blood and water that flowed into the world abide in the world. They sanctify this world as the pledge of its future transfiguration. Through the precious streams of Christ’s blood and water that flowed out of His side, all creation was sanctified—heaven and earth, our earthly world, and all the stellar worlds. The image of the Holy Grail, in which the holy blood of Christ is kept, expresses precisely the idea that, even though the Lord ascended in His honorable flesh to heaven, the world received His holy relic in the blood and water that flowed out of His side; and the chalice of the Grail is the ciborium and repository of this relic. And the whole world is the chalice of the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail is inaccessible to veneration; in its holiness it is hidden in the world from the world. However, it exists in the world as an invisible power, and it becomes visible, appears to pure hearts who are worthy of its appearance.45

We cannot fail to see here the belief of the Renaissance alchemists and syncretists who so excited Jung, that the cross of Christ was effective in saving man, but that it was responsibility of man to extend this salvation to the entire cosmos. In the cross, God came down to man, but in the alchemical Marriage Feast, man must ascend to heaven, or as Pico della Mirandola says: “This is the peace which God established in the high places of the heaven and which the angels, descending to earth, announced to men of good will, so that men, ascending through this peace to heaven, might become angels.”46

Of course there are some important distinctions to make here as well. For Jung, universal salvation was not conceived of in the Christian context. It was more in the fashion of a Plotinian or Hindu sense of “All returning to All.” In this way Bulgakov is closer to someone like Pico and probably most of the medieval alchemical thinkers in that he never rejects Orthodox belief. But whereas they looked to fit Christ into the alchemical neo-

45. Ibid., 33.

46. Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man
http://www.cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/Mirandola/
platonic vision, Bulgakov does the reverse. Bulgakov is here working with a classic theological distinction, that between the visible and invisible church in which, as the tradition has it, some ostensibly in the visible church may be absent from the invisible church and vice versa. But he is also making a more radical distinction between the blood of the Eucharistic chalice which nourishes the members of the visible church, and the blood which has been collected by the Grail, the earth itself, which effects an “invisible” transformation that, in the fullness of time, will transcend the distinction between visible and invisible, when that which is hidden will be brought to light and “all things are subjected to him” (I Corinthians 15:28): “For the Church, the body of Christ, is not only the ‘community of the faithful’ but also the whole universe in God. Even as the human being is a microcosm and the world is an macrocosm, so the realm and power of the Church extends to the entire universe. All of nature thirsts for the body and blood of Christ and receives them in communion in the blood and water that flowed out of His side when He was on the cross.”

The transfiguration of the world which is such a strong theme in the work of Bulgakov must always be understood in the sense that man is a microcosm of the world as well as its crowning achievement, as in the first chapter of Genesis, and that what happens to man also happens to the universe. This, of course, is also a common theme in Jung, but I think there is an important distinction to be drawn between the two thinkers in this regard; for with Jung, whether we are speaking of the Grail or the theme of the microcosm/macrocosm, these subjects are utilized to display that the structure of the

47. Ibid., 34.
psyche is universally homogenous, with the reality of this world bearing little importance. With Bulgakov the transfiguration of the microcosm/macrocosm is a real event with a real destiny and a real prototype in the divine realm. There is nothing psychical about it, and it is telling how rarely Bulgakov uses any kind of psychological language. In a way the distinction is that between a system like Hinduism which ultimately questions the real-ity of the world, and Orthodox Christianity which holds as dogma that the world is real, whether for good or ill, or both. But Bulgakov’s point is that, because creation is rooted in Divine Sophia, to allow for the eternal existence of ill will and hell would be an affront to God’s power.

One way in which we could understand this divide between Divine and Creaturely Sophia is to look at the two stories of creation which begin the Bible, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2-3. In the first there is no mention of sin or of prohibition. Adam and Eve are told to reproduce and to rule over creation. This would be a picture of creaturely Sophia with humanity at its head, microcosm and macrocosm under obedience to its maker. Its numerical emphasis shows us a sort of mathematical purity unlike any other portion of the Bible (unless we count the proliferation of 7s in the book of Revelation as the 2nd coming of the first creation story). But then, inexplicably, chapter 2 begins a new version of this creation story in which not only is the numerical device gone, but there is a malevolent serpent, a negative prohibition, and a naïve couple who can’t get through one day without disobeying their God and committing the first mortal (literally) sin. The rest of the Bible clearly follows from the second story as opposed to the first, but never forgetting the promise glimpsed in that forgotten text, the promise of eternal life, of
happiness, of a creation that knew no pain. Bulgakov references this distinction, as well as the distinction between Divine and creaturely Sophia, when he says that, “the entire second chapter speaks of the all-man or man in general. Only in chapter 3, after the fall, does the particular man Adam appear, and then Eve.”

Eastern theologians have done a better job, as Milbank claims, of not losing sight of the first creation story, and of never letting arguments of secondary importance, such as that between grace and reason, overshadow the matter of first importance, which is that man is destined to be deified by God—“Ye are Gods,” says Psalm 82:6, a verse often quoted by Bulgakov. One of his arguments for universal salvation is that the lack of it would be a serious flaw in the God who created men and women precisely in order to commune with Him—“Created by God and belonging to God, the world will return to him.”* Even allowing for human freedom, we must, he says, affirm that ultimately the punishment of hell can not be on the same level as the rewards in heaven; ultimately, the former must end while the latter continues:

In discussing heaven and hell, one should remember that, although this judgment is personal, is rendered upon every person, it is also universal (“all nations”), for Christ’s humanity is one, and the destiny of everyone is connected with the destiny of all; everyone is responsible for all. One certainly cannot accept the incongruous and monstrous idea that, having received and become absorbed in their “reward,” the righteous immediately forget their brothers suffering in hell. Can it be that the revelation of the God of love will cause their hearts to freeze in self-love and make them lose even that degree of mutual love which they had before the universal resurrection?


And also:

Heaven does not exist in its fullness as long as and insofar as hell exists. . . The eternity of God’s presence, the eternal sun of justice, Christ are revealed equally in heaven and in hell, in both the bliss of the called and chosen and the torments of the called but rejected.”

But it’s not just that the eternal existence of hell is an affront to God’s majesty. Paul Gavrilryuk lists a number of problems that Bulgakov enumerates if a version of apocatastasis is rejected, including that:

The permanence of hell entails the eternal dualism of good and evil; the grace and mercy of God cannot be permanently resisted by free creatures; perpetual punishment is not commensurable with the finite crimes committed in time; the idea of perpetual retributive punishment leads to an anthropomorphic and unworthy image of a vengeful God; the ontological and moral unity of humanity does not allow for the eternal separation of humankind into the two separate groups of the saved and of the permanently damned.

The first three arguments have to do with the integrity of God while the last (the 4th, interestingly enough) has to do with the integrity of man—man, that is, in his microcosmic sense of being at the head of all creation. Just like it would be inconceivable that God’s plan, that He would be in communion with all of His creation, would go awry, it is also inconceivable that mankind could suffer an eternal scission. I’ve mentioned before how this sense of man as a microcosm was very strong in the esoteric Christian tradition, but it was also prevalent in the mystical Jewish strand known as

51. Ibid., 489.

Kabbalah (and, of course, thinkers like Pico freely educated themselves from both streams). A Talmudic story which Giorgio Agamben cites is the orthodox Jewish version of something approaching the notion of *apocatastasis*, and perhaps an implicit influence on a thinker like Bulgakov:

According to the Talmud, two places are reserved for each person, one in Eden and the other in Gehenna. The just person, after being found innocent, receives a place in Eden plus that of a neighbor who was damned. The unjust person, after being judged guilty, receives a place in hell plus that of a neighbor who was saved. Thus the Bible says of the just, “In their land they receive double,” and of the unjust, “Destroy them with a double destruction.”

What is interesting here is that the quotes from the Bible would tend to strengthen both the sense of personal punishment and reward, as well as the dissociation between the saved and the damned. But the way the Talmud interprets this goes against that “plain” sense, for in putting an extra place next to the saved man, would this not cause in him a feeling of mercy for his wretched neighbor? And in doing the same for the damned soul, would this not provide some comfort to know that his neighbor is saved? There is almost a sense that a portal between the two worlds has been created here. Clearly we cannot argue that the Talmud is arguing here for universal salvation, and yet in a way that is delightfully Talmudic, a question is raised: What is the nature of eternal life? Can the wrath of God which the Bible shows us truly last forever? Is there not a bond between men and women, between neighbors, that will perhaps appeal to the merciful side of the Creator?

Bulgakov’s notion of universal salvation is predicated on an understanding of evil that is traditional, one can even say Augustinian, and yet takes that traditional starting point in a direction that is far from traditional. Concerning evil, he says:

Evil is empty and impotent; it is finite. Its creative activity in the world is parasitical, because it lives in symbiosis with being, is nourished by shadows of being, is a semi-being. Evil loses the very foundation of being after the separation of good and evil. Evil is not eternalized as a result of this separation but, on the contrary, is ontologically annulled in the parousia. “The prince of this world will be cast out” means that he will remain in his proper emptiness, impotent and sterile, incapable, as a parasite, of creative activity, condemned in his illusory nature. 

So, for Bulgakov, evil is bound to cease existing at some point, simply by virtue of the fact that it is not substantial and Good is. Good is while evil is not. While I do not explicitly disagree with Bulgakov’s arguments, I do not think he gives enough credit to creaturely freedom. This is, of course, the classic theological argument against universal salvation, that it infringes upon the freedom of men and women to say no to God’s love. While Bulgakov does extensively discuss creaturely freedom in many of his books, but especially in *The Bride of the Lamb*, I don’t believe it is something that can be argued away. In my opinion, a more nuanced position, somewhere in between Augustine’s and Bulgakov’s is needed, something along the lines of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s, who simply reminds us that it is our hope, as well as God’s, that “All might be saved.” To declare it unequivocably, though, is perhaps to go too far.

At first blush one would think that on the issue of *apocatastasis* Bulgarian would be in agreement with someone like Jung, for whom the circular nature of such an idea

would prove to be attractive. This would be incorrect, and in fact, this might have been the aspect of the theologian’s thinking which Jung would have objected to most strenuously—precisely because it treats evil in the traditional manner (as privative), something Jung always fought against. I already covered, in the second chapter, Jung’s arguments against the *privatio boni* position, in which he vehemently holds forth against the idea that evil is not as substantial as the good. While his view of the universe is very circular and in this way would fit with at least the general contours of *apocatastasis*, the idea that good overcomes or conquers evil would be repellent to him.

**Sophia and the Jungian Quaternity**

Now that we have looked at the notion of Sophia in Bulgakov, what can we say about how it fits in with Jung’s idea of quaternity? First of all, we should remember that the Jungian quaternity is, first and foremost, a *psychological* model. Sophia, on the other hand, is a divine reality that Bulgakov sharply distinguishes from psychic elements. Now, inasmuch as she is described as the “world soul” she does participate in psychic realities, and here Bulgakov would not argue with my saying that soul and psyche often cover the same ground (this is evidenced, too, in the work of people like James Hillman and Thomas Moore, for whom the connection between soul and psyche is much emphasized). Sophia in her largest role is so much more than psychological precisely because she plays an important part in the very nature of Divinity—she is God’s “nature” and she is the idea of creation, and its perfect beginning and end, uncreated and eternal. Yet are not Jung’s quaternities extended past the merely psychological, all the way to the “macrocosm” in a
way that is similar to the “world soul” of the Sophiologists, if not to Bulgakov’s Sophia? Yes, in a way, he does extend the parameters of quaternity so that when he describes the nature of man as fourfold (as in his discussion of Schopenhauer) he is also referring to the nature of the universe, something that is clear in his alchemical tomes, in which the whole point of the elucidation of the four primal elements is to show that not only is the psyche quaternal, but the universe is as well. And yet this universal quaternity, whether evinced in alchemical terms or Gnostic/mystical ones, always bear the imprint of its psychological origins, in that even the universal quaternity, the macrocosm, is always characterized by mutability and illusiveness, like the dream images that scatter upon waking. So, whereas for Jung the universal quaternity is influenced by the psychological one, for Bulgakov it’s not only the fact that the universal quaternity influences the psychological one, but that the divine aspect of this fourth, Divine Sophia, permeates from the very Godhead to influence both the universe and the crown of that universe, Man/Woman as Divine Humanity. So perhaps the biggest difference between the quaternities of these two thinkers is that for Jung both material and spiritual entities tend to be described as psychological and illusory, while for Bulgakov these things are real (and, ultimately, Divine/Human).

This is an extremely important difference, issuing down into the most profound metaphysical divides. What is interesting to me is the extent to which, this divide notwithstanding, Jung and Bulgakov are focused on so many similar issues, and even come to the same conclusions on some of them. Take for example the notion of Satan’s eventual inclusion in the realm of the blessed. While the language is theological, Jung
would agree with the general premise, that Satan cannot be absolutely excluded from the
nature of God and reality. Of course, he would say that any exclusion that Satan has
suffered has only been the illusion of exclusion (because psychologically the fourth is
always present), and that it is the maintenance of such an illusion which causes psychic
(and terrestrial) unrest. These differences notwithstanding, the general necessity for
inclusion of the satanic is vitally important for both thinkers. But even here we have to
point out the further difference that “inclusion” would not be the preferred term from the
theological point of view, for of course the very definition of “satanic” involves a
rejection of God, and Satan will only be “included” when he too is transformed, or
converted. Jung would not want to go this far, because for him good and evil are in
eternal creative tension, in the spirit of the line from Goethe’s Faust he often quoted, and
which he associated with the form of the mandala: “Formation, Transformation, Eternal
mind’s eternal recreation.”55 It is the eternal give and take, back and forth, between
dualities, between good and evil that, in a Heraclitean fashion, is the cause of all there is.

The issue of feminine sexuality is another place where we see a similar
divergence as well as convergence between these two thinkers. For Bulgakov the picture
of perfect sexuality is expressed between Sophia and Christ in that the former is the
spiritual truth of femininity and the latter of masculinity, with Mary’s archetypical
femininity very much tied in with the nature of Sophia here. It was important for
Bulgakov that the relations between men and women in earthly life reflect the erotic love
that was expressed not only within the trinity (in which feminine “reception” was also

55. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 237fn.
active) but between the 2nd person of the Trinity and Divine Sophia. In this way Bulgakov provides for a more inclusive theology and anthropology as concerns the place of women in creation and the church. His theory of sexual difference, though, is not controvertible, as Jung’s is. In other words, Sophia and Logos, men and women, are not simply complementary to each other, but, similar to the manner in which Lacan discussed sexual difference, there is a sense in which Sophia loves Logos in a different way than Logos loves Sophia—“Different in its mode is the love of each of the hypostases for the other hypostases: the love of the Holy Trinity for its nature, Sophia; the love of Sophia for the Holy Trinity; and the love of God for His creation and the love of creation for God.”56 In a (perhaps too) traditional vein, Logos is always dominant in a sense over Sophia, and in a way so are men dominant over women in earthly relations. And yet, like the articulation of St. Paul’s, this is based on a kenotic mode of being, in which dominance is expressed through service, as in Paul’s advice that wives ought to:

Be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:22-27, NRSV

Though men are to be obeyed by their wives, the criterion for obedience is the man’s own sacrifice. Bulgakov would be quick to point out the Sophiological ramification of Paul’s instructions here, in which it is clear that Christ’s sacrifice is precisely what elevates the

church to its prototype in Divine Sophia. But this moves in both directions, for “the Divine Sophia herself, in her content as the divine world, is the kenotic self-positing of the three hypostases.” It would be the subject of another paper to examine exactly how this might map onto Lacan’s ideas, in which the phallus is always central, giving existence (inasmuch as it represents the master, however implicated), alongside the fact that feminine sexuality is able to overcome some of the limits of castration and male obsessions not by rejecting castration or the Symbolic order, but precisely by fully accepting those strictures, in a way which men (psychically speaking) often find impossible.

While Bulgakov affirms differences in how the members of the Trinity love each other and how Sophia loves, he also affirms that “all of it is love,” which I understand to point to the underlying kenotic mode of all love, but especially Divine love. In this sense he would be closer to Jung than to Lacan, at least in the kind of language he uses, which expresses perfect unity, not between men and women, but between male and female “essences.” Bulgakov elaborates on this concept in his book on John the Baptist:

The Forerunner’s virginity is more than a factual state as it is defined in Revelation: “These are they which were not defiled with women” (Rev. 14:4). This is, in a certain sense, already a liberation from sex and its ardors. This does not mean, of course, that the difference between the male and female essences has been abolished: These essences are primordial, and only their union expresses the fullness of God’s image in man: “God created man in his own image, . . . male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27). This difference is affirmed and eternalized by the Divine Incarnation, where the Woman gives birth the male Infant. And

57. Bulgakov, Bride of the Lamb, 49.

58. Ibid.
John, as a bearer of virginity, also did not stop having the male essence, just as the Ever-Virgin did not stop having the female essence. But these differences became subjugation to sex only as a consequence of sin, when the luminous bodies of our progenitors were clothed in coats of skins after the fall.⁵⁹

Here we are in a realm where it is perhaps difficult to make comparison with psychoanalysts such as Jung and Lacan, for, even though Bulgakov speaks of “essences” these are not first and foremost sexual but rather spiritual. Sophia, for example, is “virginity par excellence, as the energy of spiritual integrity, or chastity.”⁶⁰ Bulgakov would, I think, look at the views of the psychoanalysts as concerned solely with men and women in their fallen, sexual state; and, while he might not disparage such a project, he would probably want to claim that when we speak of Sophia as feminine and Logos as masculine, we are speaking of something categorically different.

As I mentioned in my Introduction part of Bulgakov’s importance lies in his desire to bring into the fold of Christian theology elements from esoteric, mythical, and alchemical traditions which have, the vast majority of the time, been at odds with the church’s accepted teaching. Though there is a strong Sophiological tradition within the Christian Scriptures and (less so) within the history of theology, Bulgakov also brought in Sophianic thought developed in un-orthodox sources, from Faust to Egyptian religion. Whereas someone like Jung was aware of the cross-pollination of these kinds of sources, much of the New Age and Jungian writing on Sophia by subsequent authors tends to see


⁶⁰. Ibid., 39.
Sophia simply as a goddess figure diametrically opposed to Christianity and its
Trinitarian God. I suggest not only going back to Jung’s Sophia, but also reading
Bulgakov back into Jung, to draw out even more the profound Christian implications of
Sophia.

Jung, of course, was aware of Sophia as a figure in both Christian and pagan
sources and included her in his schema of the four phases of anima development:

Four stages of eroticism were known in the late classical period: Hawwah (Eve), Helen (of Troy), the Virgin Mary, and Sophia. The series
is repeated in Goethe’s Faust: in the figures of Gretchen as the
personification of a purely instinctual relationship (Eve); Helen as an
anima figure; Mary as the personification of the “heavenly,” i.e., Christian
or religious, relationship; and the “eternal feminine” as an expression of
the alchemical Sapientia. As the nomenclature shows, we are dealing with
the heterosexual Eros or anima-figure in four stages, and consequently
with four stages of the Eros cult.”

It was part of the brilliance of Jung to be able to consider these diverse sources together,
without letting himself fall into simplistic polemics. Bulgakov’s argument that Sophia is
(or should be) articulated from even deeper levels of Christian dogma would only
strengthen Jung’s point here, and would even seem to be implied in the way that Jung
places three Biblical characters next to one pagan character. Following Jung’s own logic
of quaternity as fundamentally a three-plus-one structure, should not Sophia, as the
culminating figure in this quaternity, be read as both deeply Christian and
unapologetically universal?

61. C.G. Jung. The Practice of Psychotherapy: Essays on the Psychology of the
174.
CONCLUSION

At fifteen my heart was set on learning; at thirty I stood firm; at forty I had no more doubts; at fifty I knew the mandate of heaven; at sixty my ear was obedient; at seventy I could follow my heart’s desire without transgressing the norm.

--Confucius

In this final section I would like to look at some of the possible futures for the notion of quaternity. It seems to me that the quaternity as it was developed by Jung and carried on or transformed by his followers has in many ways run out of steam. Due to certain errors in its initial formulation, it has a tendency, as I have shown, to collapse into dualisms, or even into a monism (of consciousness, no less). I think Lacan’s criticism, that the mandalas and quaternities of Jung are primarily, or even solely, linked to the Imaginative register, is accurate, and that while this does not mean that they can therefore tell us nothing beneficial, I think it does mean that the Jungian vision of universal truth communicated via these quaternities is perhaps too simplistic. Nonetheless, we have to credit Jung for bringing the notion of quaternity and the importance of the number four into the general consciousness and for addressing the Christian Trinity in the way that he did. It is clear that the themes of wholeness and inclusion which are addressed by quaternity are central for many discussions going on today, and are addressed constantly in many different arenas, inside and outside of the academy. I think this is as it should be, and I am not a supporter of those philosophers who would attempt to replace identity with difference, or wholeness with fragmentation (in the name of a debased
deconstructionism). In agreement with David Tacey, I think we have to take even the excesses of the New Age movement very seriously, as a sign of a deep seated desire of humanity (Bulgakov, as well as other Orthodox theologians such as Vladimir Lossky, would say this is simply the feeling of the destiny of humanity for communion with God). The question of the future will involve the liminal space between three and four and will be about crafting identities that are not exclusionary in the old sense. It will be about creating something new that bears an openness to all life regardless of religion or ethnicity. All these things which Jung was trying to articulate with his quaternities will continue to be the important topics of the foreseeable future. But it is crucially important that we discuss them in the proper way, and I think the trajectory initiated by Jung and culminating (in many ways) with Joseph Campbell, needs to undergo a serious shift.

I see two important roads for the future of quaternity, one pertaining to Lacan and one to Bulgakov, and more broadly, Christian theology. What Lacan gives this discussion is the recognition of the fantasy element in quaternity, which sees evil as merely a mirror image of the good, and reduces experiences to a play of images and illusions. For Lacan, there is something real—a “kernel”—at the heart of human reality that does not have an opposite and that can’t be reduced to an image. While resisting the imaginary this kernel of the Real yet partakes in the Imaginary and in the reality of language, or the Symbolic.

As pertains to Bulgakov, we must open up the horizon of Sophiology to make more connections with the realms of philosophy, theology, and psychoanalysis, freeing it from the constraints of both a (potentially) too narrow Orthodoxy and a (invariably) too broad Theosophy. If theology is talk about God, at its heart Sophiology is simply talk
about Wisdom, the highest wisdom of all being wisdom of God, salvation, and eternal happiness. And how could this be a topic which we limit to a certain discipline like theology, or even to a certain arena like the academy? Sophia needs to be understood also in terms that open up to the wider world and to the world that does not identify as Christian, and it needs to perhaps been seen as a variation on the art of the *philosophia perennis*. I am not saying that Sophiology can be divided from its Christian heritage, for at its core it is a Christian concept with roots in the Jewish experience. But these are both universal religions, and so the necessary goal must be to understand universality in a new way (or perhaps in an old way which has never been grasped). What needs to be avoided is the reductionism that has occurred in both Jung and Jungianism in which all religions are fundamentally the same, and a religion is valid only if it accords with a certain psychological pre-formulation. This kind of pseudo-liberalism is actually much more prone to blind exclusion in the way that it does not seem to realize the very specific temporal and cultural characteristics which determine the psychology being used, making the universal religion something that, in Jung’s case, is very much a 19th c. protestant version of progressive Christianity. One sees this in certain Jungian formulations such as the statement by Edward Edinger that, “the task of psychological development is no less than the redemption of God by human consciousness.”¹ At this point the monism of consciousness collapses a so-called liberal worldview into an unreflective Enlightenment rhetoric.

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If we refuse to accept Jung’s condition of quaternality in discussing human religion and psychology, we should do it in the name of quaternity. We should be more open to the way Lacan uses the fourth, in which a quaternity can express unification not despite, but because of fundamental internal structural differences. The reason why so many of the Jungian quaternities collapses into dualities is that they imagine quaternal unity as a return to the unity of the pre-differentiated One. But these two types of unity must be clearly contrasted. The unity of the One is simple and is characterized by homogeneity. Outside, perhaps, of mystical experiences, this state is unknown to us, yet it exercises a strong pull on us as a fantasy of return. That is, in a world marked by the wars and truces of the twos and threes (see my section on Von Franz) the absolute peace and unity of the One is seen as very attractive. But, as Lacan notes, “[the unconscious] can only refind the two via the three of revelation,” which I understand to mean that the simplicity of a dualism (which clearly takes part in the fantasy of complementary harmonization) can only be pursued (and it is always being pursued) by moving past it, by breaking with it in the “three of revelation.” This is something that the Jungians have not really elaborated on; even for Von Franz the fourth is simply a return to the earlier unity of the One, as evidenced by her use of Maria Prophetissa’s alchemical axiom, “Out of the One comes Two, out of Two comes Three, and from the Third comes the One as the Fourth.” But here we should follow Lacan’s impulse and demand that the four, if it is to be allowed unity, must incorporate the breaks that exist between the registers, such as the break between the Imaginary and Symbolic. When the Father utters his “No” and the

child is separated from the imaginary and blissful union with the mother, that separation cannot be undone. Now, the Imaginary still exists, and in a way that is not necessarily weaker, but it now works, we might say, negatively, under prohibition. We might also say that it truly becomes Imaginary at this point, for it is now opposed to the reality principle of the father and the “outside” world. Prior to the institution of the Symbolic or the reality principle, the Imaginary covered the space of all three registers. As Ragland-Sullivan says, “Lacan once described early corporeal images as belonging to an unsymbolized Imaginary. Later he would refer to these as Real.”³ The Imaginary was law and it was Real. Only with the appearance of the Symbolic proper does the Imaginary register really come into its own as representing “imaginary” as opposed to real.

So what would it look like to incorporate the breaks inherent between the registers in a unifying fourth? I would like to address, in the following pages, three of the characteristic issues of quaternity that we have discussed—the problem of evil, the place of the feminine, and the status of matter—and give four corresponding examples that will perhaps provide a way forward in this discussion.

Quantum mechanics has taught us that it has become untenable to hold a monolithic view of matter. We can view it and describe it from different perspectives, but the description that is given from one perspective may very well be at odds with another, equally valid, description. So light can be looked at as either a particle or a wave, descriptions which are heuristically powerful in different ways, but neither of which answer all the questions that the structure and existence of light poses. According to

³. Ragland-Sullivan, “Counting from 0 to 6,” 43.
Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle one can ascertain either the velocity or the position of quantum particles, but never both at the same time. I would like to suggest that this holds equally well in discussing quaternal issues. It could very well be that a description given from one register or level of a quaternity simply does not make sense when articulated from another register. If we take Lacan’s three registers as an example, from the standpoint of the Imaginary the father’s no/name is to be reviled (hence, Oedipal jealousy), but from the standpoint of the Symbolic this obstacle turns into a gate, an entranceway into the human world, into language and speech. So even though a son may be intensely jealous of his father his entire life, it would surprise no one should he eventually emulate this same father, if he should “grow up to be like him.” This is called equivocation, and it was an important signifier for both Freud and Lacan, as Stuart Schneiderman points out: “The symptom has a wording, as Freud said, and we intervene in relation to the wording, rendering it equivocal, rather than offering another or better meaning. This latter procedure can only feed the symptom.”

This kind of perspectival shift can be applied to the problem of how quaternities deal with evil. Theologians have long struggled with the antinomy which results from the fact that Christians claim to be simultaneously sinners and saved. The Orthodox church in its emphasis on the deification of man has put the problem in the Imaginary, seeing sinners in the light of their (eventual) salvation and return to the One that is God. Roman Catholicism has tended to locate the problem in the Symbolic, by surrounding sins, the confession of them, and the details of the resulting afterlife with clear guidelines enforced

by an hierarchical authority structure. Theologians like Luther could be said to have emphasized the real aspect of this conundrum by pointing to the paradoxical nature of this state in his dictum, “Simul justus et peccator;” and Protestantism in general could be seen as locating the problem in another feature of the Real: God’s wrath, and the corresponding human guilt with no clear sense of how to shrug off this guilt, short of dying. The acute anxiety suffered by such hyper-Protestants like the Puritans is always a sign of the Real, and of objet a, the object as it exists in the Real, or as Lacan says, the “lack of lack”—it is when God is too close, suffocatingly so, where there is no place to turn from His righteous anger (at that proximity we can’t tell anger from love).

Psychoanalysis, it could be argued, would have never existed were it not for this cultural matrix which arises with Protestantism.

Universal salvation, even though it was a strongly held doctrine by many in the early church, was doomed to be considered a heresy because it radically occludes the dimension of the Symbolic. How can a pastor preach on the theme of universal salvation to a congregation which he is trying to convince not to lie, not to steal, and not to commit adultery? They simply wouldn’t take their sins seriously if forgiveness was inevitable. We could locate this heresy in the Imaginary due to its positing of a unity that seems to be that of the undifferentiated One. Heresies in the Imaginary tend to accomplish too much. If all is one, we have nothing to worry about, no reason to come to church, and no reason to conduct ourselves in a more upright fashion. This was the gist of my criticism of the way that Bulgakov articulates the doctrine—even if it’s true, one can’t say it like that. So how does one say it? How does one articulate this doctrine without, so to speak,
breaking the (Borromean) rings? For starters, I would suggest we look at the problem in the Lacanian way that I have been doing, demanding that the doctrine isn’t simply stated univocally. It is from the standpoint of the Symbolic that the doctrine is most difficult to uphold (which is perhaps why it is not surprising that this doctrine has been squelched most definitely by the Roman Catholic church, with its revival coming from Orthodoxy, in thinkers like Solovyov and Bulgakov, as well as Protestant breakaways such as Unitarian Universalism). From the standpoint of the Symbolic the doctrine can only be stated as a hope, which, in fact is the way it is formulated in Scripture: “God. . . who wants all men to be saved” (I Timothy 2:4). This is how the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar approaches it in his book *Dare We Hope “That all Men be Saved?”* From the standpoint of the Imaginary, the doctrine seems quite natural to posit, seeing as the Imaginary is the register from which we attempt to achieve a unified ego ideal. Orthodox theology even allows for such a unity “at the beginning,” before the fall of Lucifer. But theologians also maintain that this fall is impossible to revoke, impossible to apologize for—it is like the “no” of the father which forever separates the mother and child.

The Real tends to be characterized by impossibility, paradox, the lack of lack (which produces anxiety), and extreme consistency—the Real is that which “always returns to the same place.” Our apprehension of it is marked by anxiety but also *jouissance*, which is a kind of sublime joy beyond the pleasure principle, where, if it is unmediated, can quickly turn to horror. As the Lacanian critic John Muller says, the Real “has no gaps or lacks. . . . . . to live in the real means then to experience not just ‘loss of self’ but an unbearable plenitude; the term ‘jouissance’ catches the ecstatic quality of it
but not the horror.” Looking at the issue of evil and particularly at the possibility that evil might be finally conquered by good in an *apokatastasis*, it is clearly Christ’s status as simultaneously damned (because he takes on the mantle of human sin) and saved (because hell and death cannot hold him) that places him in the Real. At the same time he takes on and avoids punishment. Thus, his status is questionable. But, because of the dogma that Christians make up the “body of Christ” their status is equally questionable, and so looking at the issues from the standpoint of the Real brings us back to where we started: inasmuch as Christians participate in the “life of Christ,” they are both damned and saved. We haven’t solved the problem, clearly, but we can at least dismiss the kind of naïve distinction which would grant a confident salvation to one and an irrevocable damnation to another.

If we place the Son in the Real, the Spirit would here be best situated in the Imaginary. As the Comforter and *Paraclete* his job is to defend his clients against all charges, his trump card being that the blood of the Lamb washes away any and all sins. The scriptural passage which would perhaps make us pause on this point would be the reference to the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29), the precise meaning of which has never been agreed upon. But could there be a sin which the Spirit would not defend, could there be a case in which the spirit would turn prosecutor? Perhaps it would just be the choice to defend oneself, which would be tantamount to rejecting the mediation of Christ. Obviously the church has always considered sinners to be just that, those who have rejected the saving grace of God’s Son. The question for Bulgakov would be

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whether they ever get a chance to review that decision, to see the folly of their ways, and request a retrial. In an earthly court, where one is tried, convicted, and punished, such a scenario would be unlikely, but would the Father of Mercies be limited in such a way? Bulgakov imagines that at some point, even the prosecutor himself, Satan, will give up his doomed cause and allow himself to be comforted.

If the Spirit is defender, the Father is the judge, and though the Spirit gives mercy we can’t assume that the Father’s justice is so easily swayed. He must give voice to the prosecution as well, and, like in the book of Job, He seems to respect Satan’s role in things as the father of lies, who will provide the test that the faithful need to pass. Here, the fundamental lie is that one can represent oneself, that, at the bottom of things, one is capable of holding ones own, and thus, not really in need of the grace and love of God. Thus the Father demands justice, not for the sake of justice, but for the sake of love—and only love which is freely chosen is love at all.

In this schema, the Father is associated with Lacan’s Symbolic, the Spirit with the Imaginary, and the Son with the Real. The traditional Western way to conceive of this problem, especially as we’ve used the analogy of the courtroom to guide us, would be to see the Son as the sacrifice offered by the judge himself to pay the penalty of the accused. There is nothing wrong with this way of formulating the problem, but we must sense that the analogy betrays a serious limp at this juncture. If the Son pays the penalty of the accused, this means that the accused has been judged guilty, and the Comforter has failed in his defense. And whoever heard of a trial which ended in someone taking the punishment for another person’s crime? In a courtroom, never. But in a room behind the
courtroom, out of the way of prying eyes, when the judge sits down with all the parties involved (perhaps in a way similar to the conversation between God and Satan in Job 1?), we could imagine such a scenario taking place. Substituting the plea bargaining room for the courtroom would also make the conversation more Lacanian, for though the positions of discourse are well defined for Lacan, they are more flexible than we find them in the traditional theological models—it would be possible for the judge to speak in the prosecutor’s voice, and for the defender to utter an accusation. It is true, I think, that, as one commentator says, “Lacan uses the juridical model for psychoanalysis,” but I think its also true that Lacan places great importance on the movement of discourse, for “love is the sign that one is changing discourses.”


How does one understand this courtroom drama from the point of view of the Son? As we mentioned before, inasmuch as we’re placing the Son in the Real, we are going to be faced with a contradictory situation, which is exactly what we see when Christ dies for all humankind, yet, the condition for this free gift being accepted is that each person must love their neighbor as Christ has loved them (John 13:34). So is it a free gift, or is it not? Does Christ lessen the burden of the Jewish law, or does he actually make the law more binding? This is the dynamic that is revealed right at the beginning of the gospels, in Matthew’s sermon on the mount, when Christ with one hand proclaims beatitudes to the poor and oppressed, while with the other tells them that to even think of committing a sin is as good as committing it. And if God’s sacrifice of his Son is his final plan to save humankind, how is it possible that it could be so easily refused, and the
“hope” of I Timothy 2:4 be so easily dashed? Is it possible that God might not get what He wants?

There is no neat harmonization of the different perspectives here, such as we would expect in a Jungian quaternity, but what we have is something more along the lines of how Lacan conceived the fourth, as opening up and even complicating the relationships within the triadic structure. Opting for the language of plea bargain over straight juridical speech, we could see how another Sophiological concern could come into play here, which is the idea that mere men and women have a role to play in this divine comedy. In Sophiology, the role of creation is not passive, but created beings are invited into the bargaining room, where they are presented with the possibility of re-enacting the sacrifice of Christ—men and women (as the crown of creation) following the Great Commandment to “love as Christ has loved.” So, unlike the parable of Lazarus and Dives, Sophia envisions an opportunity for Dives to go to hell in Lazarus’ place.

I would suggest that the standpoint of the Son is also the standpoint of the universal man, of all men and women comprising one being, as in the well known *Adam Kadmon* figure of the Kabbalistic tradition. Biblically, this comes out in Revelation 13:8 which speaks about the lamb being slain “from the creation of the world,” as well as in the apocalyptic imagery of the Bride of the Lamb. Here we have divine humanity in its fullest state, or as Bulgakov says it, the union of the essence of man (Christ/Logos/Lamb) and the essence of woman (Sophia/Church/Bride of the Lamb). At this level humanity goes one way or the other, but everyone goes together.
The Real is also a place of opposites, the unconscious which Freud describes as never saying no, not because no cannot be uttered but because the unconscious allows yes and no to coexist, the unconscious saying yes to no. This contradiction describes the state of Christ who, in a way, is both saved and damned. If Christ puts himself up for the punishment that created beings deserve, it means he takes the damnation which men and women deserved. But because Christ is God, it is impossible for hell to hold him. I would argue that we should not just look at Christ’s cry from the cross as an isolated incident which he endured for a brief moment to then be reunited with his father forever. No, this is part of the economy of the Trinity, that the love which flows between its members is a love which makes room for the devastations that is separation. And so the cry from the cross reverberated “from the creation of the world.”

This is just one example, concerning the problem of evil, of how unity at the level of the four might appear. This is both Sophiological and Lacanian in the way that it does not so much try to articulate a fourth distinct from the other registers, but merely attempts to articulate clearly the relationship and perspectives of the three registers. A similar exercise might be performed on an issue that is currently dividing the ranks of the Anglican communion and that will function as our example concerning the place of the feminine, namely, the controversy surrounding homosexuality and women priests. Should we allow women to be ordained? Should the church consecrate homosexual alliances? The conservative answer is no on both counts, but I would argue that this reply comes from a view of gender and sexuality which only reads the desired unity between the sexes in terms of a strict duality as opposed to a quaternal logic. Men are supposed to fill one
role, while women fill another, and their coming together in marriage takes part in the fantasy of a lack being filled, of two parts that are made for each other. But, just like the Jungian dualities, this affords a further collapse into a bland monism, for when two become one, there is no room for difference, there is no room for the ruptures which characterize a true quaternity. But, as Bulgakov would point out, though he would perhaps hesitate to agree with my interpretation, the model for Christian sexuality is not one based on the “fit” between male and female genitals, but is based on the marriage of the Lamb and his Bride, the marriage between the Trinitarian god and the creation He has made in His image. This is a theme that Lacan harps on insistently, that what makes us different from the ancients is that the worldview opened up by our science gives us the possibility to not “participate in the fantasy of an inscription of the sexual link,” which determined the science, astronomy, and love making of the ancients—the idea that the universe can be harmonized on the model of two halves making a whole. But the theological model, as well as Lacan’s construction, is radically heterogeneous. When Lacan says that there is no sexual relationship (*il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*), he is saying that complementarity is a hoax, and to say that a woman is fulfilled by a man or vice-versa, is to speak solely from the Imaginary register, which is radically challenged when we look at the symbolic and real aspects of the sexual relationship. From the standpoint of the Symbolic the sexual relationship is radically lopsided, for one partner must “be” the phallus that the other desires to “have.” We must keep in mind that this language of the phallus has just has much to do with knowledge and the quest for it, as it does with

7. Ibid., 82.
sexual desire. But Lacan’s point is that men and women desire differently, and their desires don’t necessarily have to match up. And, there is nothing stopping a biological female from desiring like a man, and vice versa. This is of the nature of the Symbolic, which is not constrained to biological conditions. And while a theologian might complain here that I have simply abandoned the realm of theology, this same kind of gender bending also happens when both men and women are described as constituting the Bride of Christ—at the level of the Symbolic all Christians are supposed to love Christ as women. In Lacan’s formulae of sexuation the male is destined to choose between phallic jouissance and mystical jouissance, while the woman seems to be able to equivocate between these two, to have her cake and eat it too. Is this not similar to the manner in which God has all the love He needs within the divine community, and yet still desires to create and to love His creation? Very few Christians would disagree with the statement that the love of God for his creation and that creation’s love for God are very different, that they supplement, not complement each other. So why should not human love involve the same impasses and opportunities?

And finally, in order to address the issue of matter, we could look at the rhetoric that surrounds environmental issues, and ask if applying a similar kind of quaternal emphasis might not rescue the discussion from certain predictable deadlocks. With this issue especially we have to be careful that we don’t confuse reality with the real, a confusion Lacan sees as endemic to the modern scientific worldview. In this view, all criteria for truth has to come from the objective facts of science, and be made verifiable by repeatable experimentation, concluding that what is real is empirically justified reality.
which can be more or less appraised by one’s common sense. This view espouses a strong duality between what is real (reality) and what is imaginary (religion and metaphysics). The latter is tolerable, just as long as it doesn’t step on the toes of the former, which trumps, in every case, that which can never be “proved.” Yet Lacan’s point—and this is something quantum mechanics has also revealed—is that our view of what objective reality is like is not without its imaginary component. And so the matter that is interrogated by science is not merely presenting us with immutable physical laws, but in its very quantum undecidability also partakes in a real that cannot be reduced to verifiable reality.

But it is not just the empiricist who is imagining things in his construction of “reality.” The New Age rhetoric which is so often evoked to speak in the name of ecology is almost wholly constrained within the limits of the Imaginary, which we can see in the use of such terms as “mother earth” that clearly evince a desire for the pre-differentiated One. Their (politically) conservative enemies use, unsurprisingly, language borrowed from the Symbolic. We are not one with nature but are rather charged with having dominion over it. It is not for Nature to use us, but we are here to use it. Instead of saving the whales, the bumper sticker is changed to say “Save the humans!” Both viewpoints are limited by their over-reliance on the language of one register, and ultimately, their rivalry expresses a purely imaginative relationship. To use theological language we might say that the “liberals” are imbalanced towards the Spirit, where the Spirit functions as an avatar of the Romantic world soul, the glue which holds all creation together, as in the Hindu conception of Prana; but the “conservatives” borrow the stern
visage of the Father who looks to tame that which is unruly and impose order and
discipline where there is none. The viewpoint of the Son, which I would again associate
with the Real, complicates things a bit. In the Biblical narrative this Son, who was the
medium of creation, and with his Father, Lord of it, decides to humble himself before that
which he made, to be killed by his creations, and hung up on a tree, the ancient symbol of
nature and phallic partner of the Goddess—the carpenter being slain by his very creation.
The answer that the Real gives to the question of matter, then, is that it is not possible to
separate oneself completely from the stuff of which one is composed; there is an
inscrutable difference which both joins and separates humankind from “mother earth.”
This is something that proponents of the liberal and conservative views agree to ignore.
Further, the unity between humankind and nature exists not in spite of its breaks, but
because of them—for Christ, as the prototype of Divine Humanity, only expresses his
lordship over nature by dying for nature. So it is incorrect to say that there is merely a
relativity here that puts a halt to further conversation. No, the relationship has a structure
and a logic to it, and that which is undefined within it does not therefore preempt
responsible action.

Slavoj Zizek says that the “Real. . . is not the antagonism which distorts our view
of the perceived object through a partial perspective. . . . The Real as impossible is the
cause of the impossibility of every attaining the ‘neutral’ non-perspectival view of the
object.”8 In other words, the very fact that when it comes down to it one can’t decide
whether light is wave or particle, or whether quantum particles really exist or do not, this

undecidability precisely is the dimension of the Real, and we must integrate such an
“obstacle” into the way we understand the world. This obstacle is the rejected cornerstone
of which Jesus says, “The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will
crush anyone on whom it falls” (Matt. 21:44 NRSV). Quaternities must be constructed to
leave a space for this stone, this “missing fourth,” fully realizing that it will break one
into pieces. But this brokenness describes a situation in which it is possible to bring the
pieces together again, to formulate a new discourse as a sign of perseverance in times of
trial. Attempting to avoid altogether the troubling situation which the obstacle presents is
to invite the disaster of being crushed.

What I have attempted in this brief conclusion is the articulation of possible
quaternal logics, hoping to avoid both the dualism which plagues so many Jungians as
well as the relativism which Lacan and his followers are (almost always wrongly)
accused of. In the tradition of Jung, when I speak of quaternities I speak about giving
ultimate answers to the most important questions in the search for meaning, wholeness,
and healing; but I would also hope to remember that these efforts must partake in the awe
which Aristotle saw as the foundation of all seeking after Wisdom. So if an answer in the
Real is inconclusive, it ought nevertheless to lay down a track in the direction of that
which is trackless, boundless, and never ceasing to amaze.
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