

Carl Jung's understanding of the psyche grants validity and meaning to the potentially nebulous reality of symbol and metaphor. According to Jung "[t]he images of the collective unconscious place a great responsibility upon a man. Failure to understand them, or a shirking of ethical responsibility, deprives him of his wholeness and imposes a painful fragmentariness on his life." (Jung 1989: 193) This paper compares two experiences of what Jung called figures of superior insight. The first figure is from Jung's own experience of Philemon. Aiwass, the second figure, was experienced by Western Esotericist Aleister Crowley. Given the depth and breadth of both thought and publications attributed to Jung and Crowley, only the most cursory introduction will be presented as to how the figures first appeared to them and the contribution such contact made to each individual. While this may indeed be a cursory review, given the magnitude of impact these figures of superior insight can have on an individual's life I think it necessary and valuable to learn all we can about these inspirational and potentially disruptive portions of the human psyche.

Jung led a fascinating life and arguably the most fascinating period of time, at least for our present concern, fell between 1913 and 1916; a period of time that was marked by Jung's traumatic separation with Freud. It was at this time that Jung began to delve deeply into his own psyche. Plagued by vivid dreams and fantasies, Jung engaged in a practice that would come to be known as active imagination.

The actual genesis of Philemon is to be found in an earlier series of dreams and fantasies. The specific fantasy in question begins with a large

subterranean crater where Jung felt as though he “was in the land of the dead.” (Jung 1989: 180) Jung saw two figures at the base of the crater, deep beneath the earth; one figure was a white bearded old man and the other was a beautiful young blind girl. To Jung’s astonishment, the old man identified himself as Elijah while the girl introduced herself as Salome. He also reports that the couple had a rather affectionate black serpent with them. Jung was wary of Salome but found Elijah agreeable as he “seemed to be the most reasonable of the three and to have a clear intelligence”. (Jung 1989: 181) Closely following this fantasy, another fantasy figure evolved from Elijah. This figure was the “Egypto-Hellenistic” “Gnostic” “pagan” Philemon. (Jung 1989: 182) In the fantasy, Philemon appears as an old man with the horns of a bull and the wings of a kingfisher; in his hand he held four keys. (Jung 1989: 181)

Philemon would come to prove to Jung that there were portions of the psyche that operated in an autonomous manner. Jung held conversations with Philemon and discovered that “[p]sychologically, Philemon represented superior insight.”<sup>1</sup> (Jung 1989: 183) In essence, Philemon was a link between Jung as conscious individual and the realm of the unconscious. Philemon was neither wholly conscious, that is to say under the sway of the ego, nor was he fully unconscious. Philemon, and in extension Jung, lived in a state of neither/nor while in contact with one another.

In Robert Romanyshyn’s succinct essay, “Alchemy and the Subtle Body of Metaphor”, Jung’s relationship with Philemon is analysed in a way that grants the

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<sup>1</sup> Deirdre Bair gives the translation as “superior knowledge”. (Bair 2003: 291) Translation nuances aside, if taken in a Gnostic light, both knowledge and insight have a similar resonance.

figure a unique and substantial reality. Philemon's reality was not limited solely to Jung's psyche nor was it entirely independent from it. Romanyshyn brings to the fore several important questions regarding the nature of Philemon:

What shall we call this subtle presence of Philemon who is neither a factual object in this world . . . nor a subjective idea in Jung's mind which he projects onto the world? What is the nature of the subtle body of Philemon who is neither thing nor a thought? Philemon haunts the garden of Jung. He plays on the border of the real and the ideal, hovering like some great being of light, a vibration which at one moment seems substantive like a particle and at another moment without substance like a wave. Philemon is an imaginal being . . . Philemon, I would claim, is the subtle body of metaphor. (Romanyshyn 2000: 32)

Romanyshyn suggests we are to view Philemon as a subtle body that is neither real in the sense of possessing a quantifiable tangibility nor wholly subjective. Jung emphasises the fact that rather than over intellectualise what Philemon and the whole fantasy meant, it was better "...to let the figures be what they were for me at the time—namely events and experiences." (Jung 1989: 182)

For Jung the fantasy involving Philemon was separate from himself:

Philemon represented a force which was not myself. In my fantasies I held conversations with him, and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. (Jung 1989: 183)

As mentioned earlier, Jung also states that psychologically Philemon represented superior insight. (Jung 1989: 183) The insights possessed by Philemon were significant enough to put Jung in a position of concern for the possible devaluing of his ego when Philemon would "appear" yet ultimately Jung acknowledged that Philemon acted as a *guru* and guide of some importance. (Jung 1989: 183-184)

Romanyshyn presents the following description of the relationship between mind and soul within the context of the neither/nor logic of metaphor:

The *neither/nor* logic of metaphor, the logic of the third between matter and mind, the realm of the soul, requires that one must give up the notion of being able to attribute with final certainty that the epiphany of meaning belongs *either* on the side of consciousness as experience, *or* on the side of the world as an event. The *either/or* logic of the mind is undone in the *neither/nor* logic of soul. (Romanyshyn 2000: 35)

Because Jung was open to the realm of metaphor, Philemon presented himself in a beneficial and, at times, disorienting manner. For Jung the relationship with Philemon was a necessary though ultimately transient one.

The impact of the experience of Philemon and the preceding fantasies was important to Jung's theoretical developments. While Elijah and Salome could be seen as representing the loss of Freud and Sabina Spierenrein (Rowland 2002: 9) Jung remained focused on the autonomous nature of the figures. Salome represented an anima figure to Jung while Elijah was a wise old prophet. According to Verena Kast "today we would call Philemon an animus figure, a representation of the archetype of the wise old man. Even when Jung is talking only about the anima figure and the wise old prophet, his fantasy can be seen as a personification of the couple, animus and anima, being constellated in his psyche." (Kast 2006: 114) From a larger perspective, Jung's volitional dive into the tenuous regions of the unconscious confirmed for Jung the value of both the unconscious contents of the psyche and the necessary role of the ego in making sense of the fantasies and figures that populate the unconscious. The

experiences of Aleister Crowley, whom I would claim to be another investigator of the metaphorical realm, were both similar and divergent from Jung's.

Since his birth in 1875, there has been as much energy invested in attempts to warn the world of Aleister Crowley's inherent perverted and satanic nature as there has been in proselytizing his role as the Prophet of the New Aeon of the Crowned and Conquering Child. Crowley's most balanced biographer, Richard Kaczynski, concisely summarizes Crowley in his paper *Taboo and Transformation in the Works of Aleister Crowley* with the following statement: "Spiritual polymorph, sexual omnivore, psychedelic pioneer, and unapologetic social misfit, Aleister Crowley cut a scandalous figure in his Edwardian heyday." (Kaczynski 2000: 171)

The typical litany of accomplishments attributed to Crowley usually include: mountaineer, explorer, accomplished chess player, author, occultist, and perhaps most essentially, a poet and mystic. Our present interest in Crowley lies with his poetic and mystic inclinations brought together in his experiences with a figure known as Aiwass.

As Jung's experience with Philemon was preceded by personal psychological stress, we find Crowley's experience with Aiwass preceded by a growing sense of chaos in his life. In 1902 Crowley was in India training intensely in various branches of *Yoga*. In April of that same year he commenced a climb on K2 and collaborated with Rodin on a collection of poems based on Rodin's art. In 1903 Crowley purchased an estate along Lock Ness in order to undertake an intense six month ritual known as the Abramelin Operation and,

apropos to Aiwass, Crowley impulsively married Rose Kelly, sister of artist Gerald Kelly (1879-1972), so as to liberate her from an impending and unwanted marriage. This period of Crowley's life was also punctuated by various and ongoing spiritual crises that would follow him along his travels.

In 1904 Crowley and Rose were in Cairo as part of a rather gruelling honeymoon trip—a portion of which Rose was actually present for. After a series of synchronistic occurrences Rose, apparently in a trance state, instructed Crowley to communicate with the messenger of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, a form of the Egyptian god Horus. He was instructed to enter his temple for one hour between noon and 1:00 p.m. for three consecutive days. Crowley sat at his desk and waited for something to occur. At 12:00 p.m., April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1904 the first words of *The Book of the Law*, a work that would become the central holy book of Thelema, Crowley's philosophical religion, were uttered by Ra-Hoor-Khuit, through Aiwass to Crowley.

Crowley describes the voice of Aiwass as being “of a deep timber, musical and expressive, its tones solemn, voluptuous, tender, fierce or aught else as suited to the moods of the message.” (Booth 2000: 184) Aiwass spoke English that was “free of either native or foreign accent, perfectly pure of local or caste mannerisms...I had the strong impression that the speaker was actually in the corner...” (Kaczynski 2002: 102) Crowley consistently denied that Aiwass was a part of his subconscious (Crowley favoured Freud's theories), or that he was other than an independent and autonomous figure. In a commentary on Chapter Two verse nine of *The Book of the Law* that purports that all existence is pure joy

(Crowley 2004: 39) Crowley states: “In any event, it is surely a most overwhelming proof that Aiwaz is not myself, but my master, that He could force me to write verse 9, at a time when I was both intellectually and spiritually disgusted with, and despairing of, the Universe, as well as physically alarmed about my health.” (Crowley 1996: 97) For Crowley, Aiwass was and would remain an autonomous figure.

Philemon not only helped to heal Jung, or rather helped Jung heal himself; he was also a source of inspiration and insight. This dual role of healer and muse is also evident in Crowley’s relationship with Aiwass. Aside from being a stabilising factor in Crowley’s life, Aiwass was also the direct source of *The Book of the Law* and the inspiration for the entire collection of *The Holy Books of Thelema*. (Crowley 1983) The books range in length but each was written at a feverish pace while in a *samadhi* like state and reflect Crowley’s own spiritual initiations and, from an analytical psychological perspective, contact with archetypal images. Aiwass was for Crowley his Higher Genius or, to use the term Crowley preferred, his Holy Guardian Angel. This figure symbolises a personal link with the Divine or in non-theistic terms the totality of reality. The relationship between Crowley and Aiwass is reflected in *Liber 65* unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately depending on your perspective, I do not have the time to recite the entire *Liber* but I would be remiss were I not to offer a sample of Crowley’s relationship with Aiwass. Here the ecstasy of contact with Adonai, a term used by Crowley to represent his Holy Guardian Angel, is metaphorically represented by the eating of a grape:

And the grape fell ripe and rich into his mouth. Stained is the purple of thy mouth, O brilliant one, with the white glory of the lips of Adonai. The foam of the grape is like the storm upon the sea; the ships tremble and shudder; the shipmaster is afraid. That is thy drunkenness, O holy one, and the winds whirl away the soul of the scribe into the happy haven. O Lord God! let the haven be cast down by the fury of the storm! Let the foam of the grape tincture my soul with Thy light! Bacchus grew old, and was Silenus; Pan was ever Pan for ever and ever more throughout the aeons. (Crowley 1996a: 96-97)

Even in old age Aiwass remained a source of inspiration and joy. In 1946 Eliza Butler interviewed Crowley for her book *Myth of the Magus*. Butler asked Crowley if he had ever had blinding visions of beauty, glory and truth. At that point Crowley picked up his copy of *The Book of the Law*, the book dictated to Crowley by Aiwass, and read a passage. When Butler looked up from her note pad she saw Crowley crying; he whispered to her 'It was a revelation of love.' (Kaczynski 2002: 442-443)

For Jung, the experience of Philemon marked a particular moment in his life and as a scientifically minded empiricist he would have been in an awkward position if he were to continue congressing with Philemon in his professional life. Crowley, equally at home within the parameters of the Western Esoteric Tradition and the realms of metaphor, had no need to divest himself of the company of Aiwass. Crowley, the epitome of a personality that tended toward extroverted extremes, founded a religion around his experience of a figure of superior insight. The language utilised throughout texts like *The Book of the Law* are at times bombastic and inflated; the same type of language is found in Jung's *Seven Sermons to the Dead* as well as when various archetypes are constellated. In

the case of the former it was Aiwass who presented the text to Crowley while in the latter it was Jung who delivered the message, in the style of language that Philemon may have used, to the legions of dead that plagued him.

I will not speculate as to what motivated Jung to view *The Seven Sermons* to be a sin of his youth and why Crowley, for whom “the word of Sin is Restriction” (Crowley 2004: 31) founded a philosophical religion around his text. Obviously contact with figures of superior insight has a potentially chaotic impact on the ego-complex. I could simply say that Crowley was caught up in the turbulent recesses of the unconscious and that his subsequent problems in life stemmed from his inability to differentiate himself from his unconscious influences whereas Jung, as Bair states, “left the inner world of Philemon and went on to other, more active involvement in the outer world when he realized he could never show the world the ‘raw material’ of the *Seven Sermons*: ‘That would be like prophesying and that goes against my grain.’ (Bair 2003: 295) While prophesying may have gone against Jung’s grain it was a major concern in Crowley’s life. Though Jung may have avoided the label of mystic and prophet he did occasionally apply his personal experiences of archetypal images to his universal theories of psychological maturation. (Rowland 2002) Crowley’s personal experiences from within the constructs of the Western Esoteric Tradition were also imposed onto the larger system of Thelema. What, then, do these personally influenced theories require of us? What are the ethics that these figures, both the imaginal and objective, impose?

Jung labelled the process of personal development and psychological maturation *individuation*. For Crowley, following the constructs of the Western Esoteric Tradition, the term initiation has similar implications with his term “True Will” which reflects a more specific and essential initiation. Figures such as Philemon and Aiwass can either contribute to this process of development or they can hinder the attempt.

Jung refers to individuation as being the “high ideal, an idea of the best we can do”. He relates this sense to the early Christian idea of the Kingdom of Heaven being within the individual. Jung indicates that at an elemental level of this ideal there is the notion that “right action comes from right thinking, and that there is no cure and no improving of the world that does not begin with the individual himself. To put the matter drastically: the man who is pauper of parasite will never solve the social question.” (Jung 1928/1938: 226) There is a dual notion to individuation. While individuation does focus on the individual and their unique nature there is also a societal requirement. Christopher Hauke summarises this conflict between the individual and society in his *Jung and the Postmodern*. Hauke states that “[i]ndividuation is about the dual struggle of the subjective with, on the one hand, the ‘inner world’ of the unconscious in all its infantile, personal and collective aspects, and, on the other hand, the struggle with the ‘outer world’ of collective society” (Hauke 2000: 169) Edward Edinger indicates that “[a]ny step in individuation is experienced as a crime against the collective, because it challenges the individual’s identification with some representative of the collective, whether it be family, party, church, or nation.”

(Edinger 1986: 26) There are risks to individuation such as inflation, rigid individualism, social despondency, not to mention being swept away by the alluring metaphorical worlds of the unconscious. There are similar risks and similar boons to Crowley's understanding of initiation and True Will.

*The Book of the Law* reveals Crowley's interpretation of the Western Esoteric Tradition in much the same way as *The Seven Sermons* reflects some of Jung's most important contributions to psychology. Crowley, or more accurately Aiwass reveals that "Everyman and every woman is a star." (Crowley 2004: 25), that "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." (Crowley 2004: 31) and that "Love is the law, love under will." (Crowley 2004: 34) The implications of these central tenets of Thelema are beyond the scope of this short paper. Suffice it to say that the term *will* used in the aforementioned citations represents more than personal volition or hedonistic desire; will, in this case refers to the True Will. Crowley attempted to communicate a sense of a whole individual, free from imposed social and psychological fetters, when he used the term will. Every star or individual has a unique orbit but one must work diligently to fully understand and appreciate that orbit and though the stars are unique they are also part of the cosmos and interact with other heavenly bodies. Crowley's use of the term "love" is a total union with reality where individual and other become blurred. While Jung may not have emphasised this mystical unity in his notion of individuation, I cannot help but to think of his use of the *unus mundus* in his alchemical writings. The entire process of individuation, initiation or discovery of one's True Will implies that there is a requirement to not only work toward

becoming whole on an individual level but to appreciate and accept the “other” too; it is in relation to this aspect of psychological maturation that figures of superior insight such as Philemon and Aiwass are valuable.

Philemon was “other” to Jung in that he was separate from his ego consciousness. Within that realm of neither/nor logic, Philemon’s superior insight helped to heal Jung’s mental wounds, contribute to the foundation of Jung’s later theories and revealed to Jung the autonomy of the other within. Jung also developed complementary concepts such as projection and the nature of the shadow, for example, that contributed to the necessity of dealing with the “other” without.

Aiwass revealed to Crowley the sanctity of individual freedom and the desire for social reform that encouraged and facilitated the growth of the individual. However, unlike some schools of thought within the Western Esoteric Tradition, Crowley’s vision of psycho-spiritual maturation does not shy from the dark and hidden portions of the human condition and whereas the Western Esoteric Tradition tends to focus on the development of the elite, for the good of the many, Crowley’s law of Thelema, as he so often repeated, is for all. (Crowley 2004: 30)

Obviously Jung and Crowley are exceptional individuals. How many of us will develop a “school” of depth psychology or found an esoteric spiritual tradition? How many of us would actually want to? Philemon and Aiwass were equally exceptional examples of figures of superior insight. Our own encounters with such neither/nor figures of metaphor, should they occur, may not be as

exceptional as those experienced by Jung and Crowley but we can be reasonably sure that they would be a source of inspiration and insight. Perhaps though the way to approach these figures of superior insight is with the Esoteric notion of the four powers of the sphinx in mind: to know, to dare, to will, to be silent. I think each of these powers is advantageous when dealing with figures of superior insight but perhaps the last one might be the most constructive and with that said I shall end as I began—in silence.

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