

Opposites in the whole self

Opposites in early Nietzsche

Metaphysical, aesthetic and psychological opposites

Nietzsche regarded life and its experiences as a dynamic interplay of opposites in which thesis and antithesis are drawn together in energy-creating conflict. This fundamental condition is a reflection of ‘the primordial contradiction that is concealed in things’ (*BT*, 9). Nietzsche says that all reality – that is ‘our empirical existence, and that of the world in general’ – is a ‘representation of the primary unity’ (*BT*, 4).¹ This primal unity is a dynamic interplay of the separation and reunification of opposites, which reflects the Heraclitean notion of polarity, where ‘polarity [is] the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to reunite’ (*PTAG*, 5). According to Nietzsche, opposites have an equal inherent value, so that one polar element cannot dominate and annihilate its counterpart. Nietzsche does not regard opposites as static values that remain antagonistic and incapable of equilibrium. They are, rather, experienced as relative and complementary to one another:

Everlastingly, a given quality contends against itself and separates into opposites; everlastingly these opposites seek to reunite. Ordinary people fancy they see something rigid, complete and permanent; in truth, however, light and dark, bitter and sweet are attached to each other and interlocked at any given moment like wrestlers of whom sometimes the one, sometimes the other is on top.

(*PTAG*, 5)

The wrestling of opposite forces exhibits the strife that is necessary for all existence: for ‘everything that happens, happens in accordance with this strife’ (*ibid.*). Reality is therefore a flux of contradictions, and the authentic individual, as an inhabitant of this reality, must not only acknowledge its nature but also seek to promote similar opposition within himself. According to Nietzsche, ‘Each one of us . . . must organize the chaos within him’ (*UM*, II, 10); and again, ‘One is *fruitful* only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains *young* only on condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace’ (*TI*, ‘Morality as Anti-Nature’, 3). Individuals who do not seek opposition might be satisfied, but they will ‘become nothing’ (*HAH*, 626); their experience of ‘happiness’ will

merely contribute to Nietzsche's later concept of the 'herd ideal' (*WP*, 696). To overcome the self-satisfaction of the all-too-human masses, individuals must cease to be content with being a mere 'creature' and take on the role of 'creator'. They must seek growth through the energy of conflict, and 'and thus master the tremendous abundance of an apparently chaotic wilderness and . . . bring together in unity that which was formerly thought to be set irreconcilably asunder' (*UM*, IV, 5). According to Nietzsche, growth is enhanced through inner conflict that is engendered by opposition. This is because opposites create in their conflict not merely 'energy', but a 'mutual energy' that does not seek to establish a superior element but maintains the existence of both polar extremes. The value of the individual as creator is determined by the intensity of oppositions contained within him.²

The ideas that strife leads 'to new and more powerful births' (*BT*, 1) and that the greatest human achievements arise from the fullest tension of opposites is the underlying theme of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Here Nietzsche argues that existence is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In the absence of this aesthetic conception of reality, the individual is forced to acknowledge 'the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts and comes-to-be but never is', and this is a 'terrible, paralyzing thought' (*PTAG*, 5). Life appears as if it were an amoral game, ready to deceive (*PTAG*, 6); it forever seeks the destruction of the individual and all that seeks identity, form and shape. Incredibly, Nietzsche says that the individual should not respond to this state of affairs with an attitude that is 'gloomy, melancholy, tearful, sombre, atrabilarious, pessimistic, and altogether hateful' (*ibid.*). Instead he should adopt a response similar to that held by the early Greeks and joyfully affirm the horror of life in its devastation. In Greek tragedy suffering is transcended by an affirmation of the life force behind it; an affirmation that despite every phenomenological change, life is at bottom joyful and powerful, so that in its very expression

nature cries to us with its true, undissembled voice: 'Be as I am! Amid the ceaseless flux of phenomena I am the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally finding satisfaction in this change of phenomena!'

(*BT*, 16)

Nietzsche's analysis of Greek tragedy argues that aesthetic phenomena are central to the meaning of life. Nietzsche views art as the vehicle through which individuals can accept the temporality of their existence; art moves individuals to a psychological attitude that awakens and reinforces the sense that life is intrinsically valuable and meaningful despite the pains involved. Such an aesthetic experience, or 'tragic world view' (*ibid.*),³ is crucial in enabling individuals to regard both their own existence and the existence of the world in general as joyous and wonderful. The Greeks had come face to face with the horrors and absurdities of life; such horror induces inaction because nothing can be done about it; action

therefore requires illusion. The salvation and solace for this state of mind is art, which converts ideas of loathing into ideas that are acceptable. In art horror is tamed and made sublime; what was disgusting is made humorous.

Greek tragedy itself, in its attempt to transform the horror of the meaninglessness of oppositional interplay into joyful experience, generates further experience of opposites. For example, the spectator of tragedy experiences a satisfying sense of illumination, even of ‘omniscience’ (*BT*, 22), and yet has the impulse to find satisfaction with something deeper:

He beholds the transfigured world of the stage and nevertheless denies it. He sees the tragic hero before him, in epic clearness and beauty, and nevertheless rejoices in his annihilation. He comprehends the action deep down, and yet likes to flee into the incomprehensible. He feels the actions of the hero to be justified, and is nevertheless still more elated when these actions annihilate their agent. He shudders at the sufferings which will befall the hero, and yet anticipates in them a higher, much more overpowering joy. He sees more extensively and profoundly than ever, and yet wishes he were blind.

(*BT*, 22)

These opposite feelings are experienced not only by the spectator of tragedy but also by the tragic artist. Artists find pleasure in the appearances they are creating, and yet they negate this pleasure for the higher satisfaction of their destruction. The experience of tragedy therefore generates opposition in the psychological make-up of the individual. The individual experiences a contradictory hybrid of fear and pleasure in the tragic performance, and it is in terms of this opposition that tragedy arises and is able to transfigure what would otherwise be an experience of pure fear at the meaningless flux of life. In other words, the tragic performance neutralizes fear by introducing its binary opposite, pleasure, into the experience, thereby enabling the individual to affirm life as both joyful and powerful.

I contend that, in Nietzsche’s reading, Greek tragedy generates opposition within the individual to enable the individual to affirm the interplay of opposite forces that constitutes the flux of life around him. However, Nietzsche’s view of tragedy does not correlate with the notion of opposites only according to its effects and ultimate aim. Indeed, the very ‘essence’ (*BT*, 12) or internal structure of tragedy is itself composed of two opposing principles – the Apollinian and the Dionysian. And it is because tragedy contains within it the complete integration of these opposing perspectives that Nietzsche considers it to be the highest of art forms.

Apollo and Dionysus as opposites

The Apollinian and the Dionysian are diametrically opposed tendencies or impulses of art, man, and life. The nature of any art varies according to the

level at which the two impulses are functioning: often the two ‘run parallel to each other, for the most part at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism’, and it is in these variable degrees of antagonism that art offers a ‘superficial reconciliation’ (*BT*, 1). When the two impulses are at total variance and are operating singularly they constitute a pure form of art, the classic examples of which, according to Nietzsche, are sculpture and epic poetry (as pure Apollinian art) and fine music (as pure Dionysian art). But when the two opposing impulses unite in equal degree, through a ‘metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic “will”’, art in its *highest* form is created. The union of the Dionysian and Apollinian, as the essence of tragic art, represents the highest meaning for the individual, as it is only through this metaphysical union that mankind is able to affirm its existence.

Nietzsche derives the names of the two impulses from the Greek deities Apollo and Dionysus. In ancient Greek religion each divinity had a set of functions and identifiable characteristics. Apollo is in many instances a god of higher civilization (for example, of medicine, healing and law), while Dionysus is a god of more primitive civilization (of nature and natural fertility, wine, music and orgiastic worship). Nietzsche regarded these two gods as representative of two powerful extremes, the relation of which determines not only forms of art, but also fundamental levels of experience. On an elemental level, Nietzsche considered the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses to be present in dreams and intoxication respectively.

Dreams give an immediate apprehension of form. Nietzsche says that ‘in my experience’ dreams have one kind of reality and at the same time they induce the feeling that there is another deeper reality underlying it.⁴ This is analogous to life itself, for life as we know and experience it can be considered an illusion, a world of appearance that lies between us and the very ground of being, a metaphysical world of primordial unity of all individual things. Apollo is the sun-god, a symbol of brightness and appearance; and the Apollinian is the sphere of *individuation*, restraint, form, beauty and illusion. Nietzsche states that Apollo is ‘the soothsaying god’ (*BT*, 1), the god of the Delphic oracle; but although Apollinian images seem to offer higher truth, they remain at the level of mere appearance.

In contrast to the Apollinian ‘dream-image’, the Dionysian impulse expresses itself in intoxication. In this formless state individuals lose themselves and the structure of individuation collapses in favour of a rediscovered universal harmony that is at one with nature. Nietzsche demands that man becomes reunited with nature – we must begin ‘to “naturalize” humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature’ (*GS*, 109), in such a way that ‘nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man’ (*BT*, 1). In its fullest sense this Dionysian reunion with nature is an ecstatic experience with mystical implications, an experience of supreme intensity and savagery – ‘that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me the real “witches” brew’ (*BT*, 2). Dionysian impulses can be aroused directly by intoxicants and by the approach of spring with

its promise of rebirth, and they find collective expression in orgiastic festivities with their song, dance and sexual licence.

The Dionysian experience is antithetical to that of the Apollinian in that it runs contrary to all distinction and particularity: to limit, form, contrast and convention. The Dionysian impulse is an expression of the 'real' world that admits of no illusion and appearance. It is that sea of contradiction, or 'mixed drink which must be constantly stirred' (*PTAG*, 5). The Dionysian is the meaningless world from which man requires aesthetic salvation; it is therefore intolerable to the individual in its pure form. Apollinian form is required to stabilize the horror of the Dionysian and prevent the dissolution of individuality. The Apollinian, manifest both in its unconscious form in dreams and in its consciously artistic form, serves to conceal the horrific character of life by transforming it into images that are joyful and idealized. Nietzsche praises the Apollinian impulse because it protects the individual from the terrors of nature by using illusion to creatively falsify reality without denying its true nature; it does not try to convince us that life is rational and subject to critical improvements as Socrates had done. The Dionysian impulse similarly does not try to conceal or deny life but expresses its irrational and chaotic energy. The Dionysian impulse helps the individual to confront life, but instead of removing the immediate terror of life, it clothes this terror in a sense of bliss. This is achieved through the Dionysian capacity to reveal a further dimension of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible to us: it is in the realm of *collectivity* (where individuality forms a cosmic unity with nature) that we feel bliss. This realm, or 'primal unity' as Nietzsche calls it, is equivalent to the Schopenhauerian 'Will' or Kantian 'thing-in-itself', in that it constitutes mankind's true and real nature. And it is through the Dionysian impulse that man blends with the authentic nature of reality. This is an experience of transcendence through intoxication, which can be only temporary; a temporary experience of becoming a higher being, one that is able to withstand, and even exalt, the terror of life.⁵

Nietzsche uses Apollo and Dionysus to elaborate his theory of two opposing impulses in art, man, and life, but he does so without any consistent historical justification. These impulses are 'reinterpretations', 'inventions' and 'two new composites which carry the Greek gods' names as symbols' (Silk and Stern, 1981, p. 167). Indeed, Nietzsche adds three new aspects to the function of Apollo. Nietzsche's Apollo is (1) god of dreams, (2) god of appearance and illusion, and (3) god of visual art form; these three combine in what Nietzsche calls the Apollinian 'world of visual imagery'. But these three aspects are not generally acknowledged or supported by historical evidence. Apollo is the god of prophecy but his prophecy is not characteristically mediated through dreams;⁶ Nietzsche's claim for (2) depends solely upon a semantic ambiguity where 'Der Schein' refers to both 'a glimmer of light' and 'illusion' or 'appearance'. In contrast to Nietzsche's claim for (3), there was no ancient Greek god of visual art, and if Apollo were to be associated with art it would be with music.⁷ He also fails to recognize Apollo's well-attested ecstatic character, and instead attributes this

and the title 'god of music' to Dionysus, the deity that Nietzsche believes to be opposite to Apollo. However, 'Dionysus was no more of a god of music than Apollo was god of the visual arts' (Silk and Stern, 1981, p. 175). Nietzsche acknowledges that 'Dionysus possesses the dual nature of a cruel, depraved demon and a mild, gentle ruler', but he does not expand upon this duality; he is too preoccupied with Dionysus' orgiastic aspect to develop his connection with fertility. Overall, Nietzsche is more content to elaborate the paradoxical combination of horror and rapture. It might seem that Nietzsche's lack of fidelity to Greek tradition is irrelevant for our purpose. However, I believe Nietzsche's misrepresentation of the deities is significant. Untouched by Nietzsche's manipulations the deities and their characteristics are distinct from one another; so that, as expounded in Plato's *Laws*, Apollo would be a proponent of the Olympian (or 'Uranian') religion, the religion of heaven, and Dionysus would be a proponent of the chthonic religion, the religion of the earth (828c).⁸ Yet, in Nietzsche's hands, the deities appear in greater contrast: the irrational impulses that were once in Apollo are now extracted and attributed to Dionysus, whose original penchant for irrationality is now magnified to a greater degree. It would seem that Nietzsche wants to channel the symbolism of the two deities towards abstract notions of the rational (the Apollinian impulse) and the irrational or instinctual (the Dionysian impulse).⁹

The nature of the opposites that feature in Nietzsche's early work fall within the categories of metaphysics, psychology and aesthetics. Nietzsche makes a claim in metaphysics when he argues that the fundamental condition of the universe is one of eternal flux and conflict between opposites (*BT*, 9). These metaphysical opposites are later made analogous to opposites of a psychological nature when Nietzsche asks the individual to reflect the condition of the universe and promote opposition within himself (*TI*, 'Morality as Anti-Nature', 3; *WP*, 966). Psychological opposition is again introduced through the effects of the tragic performance upon the spectator and tragic artist alike; it is also linked with metaphysics and aesthetics through the Apollinian and Dionysian, which are at the very core of tragedy.

As we have seen, the Apollinian and Dionysian are diametrically opposed tendencies of art, man, and life in general. There is an overlap between the aesthetic, psychological and metaphysical aspects of these impulses:¹⁰ the Apollinian and Dionysian have a complex significance that simultaneously covers all three fields. On the aesthetic level, the two terms refer to any artistic or cultural tendencies and manifestations that are the outcome of those impulses. On the psychological level they are creative human impulses, which comprise modes of perceiving, experiencing, expressing and responding to reality. As modes of self-consciousness, the Apollinian impulse corresponds to feeling oneself to be distinct from one's environment, while the Dionysian impulse corresponds to the mental state of feeling conjoined to the rest of reality. On the metaphysical level, they denote the conditions of existence apprehended through the operation of the impulses, or the impulses themselves as universal principles of the eternal cosmos.

The Apollinian designates a specific consciousness of the world, an orientation or principle of individuation, that enables the individual to identify and relate to objects by establishing the a priori determinations of space, time and causality that make experience possible. The object that is experienced is an illusion that is created by the subjective perception of the individual; the Apollinian consciousness is therefore subjective. The subject–object relationship is based on subjectivity, so that the perceived object is not the thing-in-itself, but merely the individual's interpretation of it. The thing-in-itself is the 'primary unity' (*BT*, 4), that sea of contradictory impulses with no agency behind it. This metaphysical unity is beyond experience and blindly acts upon the individual in a horrific way. As an aesthetic impulse, the Apollinian consciousness interprets an object as beautiful. Nietzsche's understanding of beauty is taken from Schopenhauer and concerns an appearance of the ideal. Thus, when the Apollinian interprets an object as beautiful, it perceives the object's spirit appearing through matter; the object is beautiful because it expresses its essence. In contrast, the Dionysian is not dependent on such subjective interpretation. According to Nietzsche, its art form is music and, for Schopenhauer, music is the direct copy of the *Will* (*BT*, 16). The Dionysian therefore takes the individual to the very essence of reality, and it metaphysically transmutes him into the collective realm of unity with nature. Art for Nietzsche is religious. Nietzsche says that artists transcend themselves: 'In art, man takes delight in himself as perfection' (*TI*, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', 9); authentic art involves a transcendence that enriches and transforms: 'This *compulsion* to transform into the perfect is – art' (*ibid.*).

The Apollinian and Dionysian are a priori structures that determine reality. However, as objective structures, the Apollinian and Dionysian go against Nietzsche's insistence that opposites are not 'rigid, complete and permanent' but are relative, so that 'light and dark, bitter and sweet are attached to each other and interlocked at any given moment like wrestlers of whom sometimes the one, sometimes the other is on top' (*PTAG*, 5).¹¹ The Apollinian and Dionysian impulses are diametrically opposed, 'rigid and permanent' structures that determine very different realities from one another; but as we have seen with Greek tragedy, they are not so 'detached' from one another that they cannot relate and 'interlock' with each other. Nietzsche writes: 'Polarity [is] the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to reunite' (*PTAG*, 5). The opposites of the Apollinian and Dionysian are therefore dependent upon one another. The Dionysian on its own is dangerous: it is barbaric and shatters subjectivity; it therefore needs the Apollinian.¹² Likewise Nietzsche argues that the Apollinian achievement cannot be appreciated fully until its source of nourishment, the Dionysian, is recognized. Dionysian music activates Apollinian drama to the highest degree – the drama acquires a supreme vividness and an intense metaphysical significance that is unattainable through words and actions alone. Indeed, the Dionysian and Apollinian are dependent upon one another more determinately. Only so much Dionysian experience is available to individual consciousness as can be controlled by the Apollinian: 'Where the Dionysian

powers rise up as impetuously as we experience them now, Apollo, too, must already have descended among us' (*BT*, 25).

As psychological and aesthetic realities the Apollinian and the Dionysian are of equal value (even if the Dionysian is more powerful once its effects are felt): 'The two art drives must unfold their powers in a strict proportion, according to the law of eternal justice' (*ibid.*). Or, in other words, in both creative and intellectual undertakings, reason depends on the instincts for continuous renewal, and the instincts depend on reason as a vehicle for their expression. On a metaphysical level, however, they are not of equal value.¹³ Ontologically the Dionysian is primary: it is the ground of the world and of all existence, and it is the original power that calls into being the entire world of phenomena (*BT*, 25). In this respect the Apollinian is secondary; it is the individuated response of the Dionysian, the source of the illusion through which the Dionysian world must be transformed. It is secondary even if mundane existence almost submerges the Dionysian and allows the everyday experience of particularity and distinctions to proceed unchallenged (*BT*, 1). As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Nietzsche believes that the 'synthesis' of opposites and 'contrary drives' generates the energy necessary for the individual to grow and develop towards his full potential as 'master of the earth' (*WP*, 966). The correct synthesis of the Apollinian and Dionysian is vital to the growth of the individual, and this synthesis is determined by the law of 'eternal justice' (*BT*, 25) which corresponds to the 'mysterious primordial unity' manifested in the world and in the human psyche (*BT*, 1) and also to 'the discipline of self-mastery' (*D*, 109). Both justice and self-mastery are founded upon the principle of equilibrium (*WS*, 22), which, in turn, is maintained by the observance of measure, or the law of 'strict proportion' (*BT*, 25). 'Measure and moderation', Nietzsche says, are 'two very exalted things' (*AOM*, 230), which are critical in maintaining the appropriate interaction of opposites (*HAH*, 276). The failure to adopt them will lead to an exaggeration of one opposite at the expense of the other, which Nietzsche considers to be an unhealthy weakness. In response to the question 'who will prove to be the strongest?' Nietzsche answers: 'The most moderate; those who do not require any extreme articles of faith' (*WP*, 55).¹⁴ The greatest self-mastery would culminate in the maintenance of the Apollinian and Dionysian at their most antagonistic: the most Dionysian energy that the Apollinian can control. Likewise, the weak individual would fail to unite the two impulses and would experience a lack of limit and proportion. Nietzsche regarded Socratism as having created this weakness; with the advent of Socratism came the dissolution of the powerful union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian and the promotion of an Apollinian one-sidedness.

The rationality of Socrates created the downfall of Greek tragedy, for tragedy became diverted from its course by a new insatiable desire for knowledge (*BT*, 11–15). Socrates thought that only the knowledgeable can be virtuous, and this thought was reflected in the tragedies of Euripides, which demanded intelligibility as a prerequisite of beauty.¹⁵ Greek drama had thereby alienated itself from instinctive and unconscious Dionysian wisdom. Socrates had contempt for tragedy

and the instincts (*BT*, 13) as he thought they had no concern for truth; instead Socrates introduced a dialectical tendency (the Platonic dialogue), which was inherently optimistic, for it presupposed that problems of existence could be solved by the active, rational mind. When tragedy came to an end at the end of the fifth century, it was replaced by the 'New Comedy' (*BT*, 11) that introduced a mundane naturalism. Comedy staged the mediocrity of ordinary life, where characters were able to 'speak', to debate and philosophize; the hero, became the cheerful slave with no responsibility or aspiration, an attitude that aspires towards simple satisfaction in the trivialities of the passing moment.

According to Nietzsche, since Socrates Western culture has become increasingly drawn to a one-sided Apollinian tendency. In *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) Nietzsche says that through the 'tyranny of reason' Socrates repressed 'the instincts' and 'the unconscious' and thereby created a division within the psyche (*TI*, 'The Problem of Socrates'). This destruction of psychic integrity is the origin of 'bad conscience' (*GM*, II). The elevation and separation of consciousness ('thinking, inferring, reckoning') from the instincts (the 'regulating, unconscious and infallible drives') induced 'the gravest and uncanniest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered' (*GM*, II, 16). This event is described by Nietzsche as 'an abrupt break' and 'sudden leap and fall' into a new condition of existence (*ibid.*), a condition of 'decadence' and nihilism. The problem of decadence is essentially a problem of fragmentation and one-sidedness. In a letter to Carl Fuchs (winter 1884–1885), Nietzsche defines it as 'a change in perspective: the particular is seen too sharply, the whole is seen too dully' (Middleton, in Nietzsche, 1969, p. 233). Socrates, in seeking to promote the Apollinian above the Dionysian, is therefore described by Nietzsche as 'a typical *décadent*' (*EH*, 'BT', 1). Furthermore, the faith in reason over instinct leads to nihilism (*BGE*, 1; *GM*, III, 24, 25, 27), for the exaggeration of theoretical abstraction and rationality diminishes creative vitality and takes away meaning and value from life:

The fundamental mistake is simply that, instead of understanding consciousness as a tool and particular aspect of the total life, we posit it as the standard and the condition of life that is of supreme value: it is the erroneous perspective of a *parte ad totum* [from a part to the whole].

(*WP*, 707; see also *BGE*, 205; *UM*, IV, 8)

Nietzsche therefore seeks the 'whole' individual, that is, a moderated collaboration of the Apollinian and Dionysian instincts, with as much Dionysian energy as the Apollinian can harness. He therefore does not value the irrational over the rational, but seeks a unification of the two.

Opposites in Nietzsche post-1878

The denial of metaphysical opposites

In Chapter 2 we saw that opposites play a fundamental role in Nietzsche's early philosophy; Nietzsche upholds opposites that are aesthetic, metaphysical and psychological in nature. However, from *Human, All Too Human* (1878) Nietzsche's attitude towards opposites changes dramatically; he no longer insists on their promotion but emphatically denies their value for life. Nietzsche's attitude towards opposites from his 'middle' period onwards is ambiguous for, in direct contrast with his early works, Nietzsche repudiates opposites because they presuppose a metaphysical reality; and yet it is my assertion that he still values psychological opposites. Nietzsche rejects his previously held notion that opposites are an inextricable blend of the aesthetic, metaphysical and psychological, in favour of one that is purely psychological.¹ In this chapter I shall address the apparent contradictions found within Nietzsche's view of opposites. We shall decide whether Nietzsche's argument for psychological opposites is coherent and valid when viewed from the wider context of his dismissal of metaphysics, or if his argument is itself trapped within the very metaphysical confines of which he is critical. We shall also re-examine Nietzsche's earlier conception of opposites in light of this later conception to determine what, if anything, can be recovered from it in the wake of his rejection of metaphysics.

In *Human, All Too Human* (1878) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche equates belief in opposites with metaphysics: 'The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in antithetical values*' (*BGE*, 2). Nietzsche argues that philosophical problems still take the same form as they did two thousand years ago: that is, 'How can something originate from its opposite' (*HAH*, 1). Nietzsche claims that metaphysics answers this question by denying that 'the one originates from the other',² and thereby assumes 'for the more highly valued thing, a miraculous source in the very kernel and essence of the thing-in-itself' (*ibid.*), and for the unconnected lower-valued things, an uninspiring source in 'this' world of mere appearance and illusion. Nietzsche regards this antithesis, which sets up a 'true' ideal world in opposition to 'this' empirically determined world, as the principal example of what goes wrong when opposites are affirmed.³ In other words, Nietzsche thinks the value-judgements held by metaphysicians devalue

life, for the things that they value are denied any connection with life. If their valued things were connected with this world they would consequently lose their value. Metaphysicians' faith in values defined by opposition is a faith in the ascetic ideal, a faith that things of the highest value are negations of things in this world; human existence is deprived of value, for value resides in that which negates this world. Likewise, knowledge for the metaphysicians is a priori, and therefore cannot be determined empirically or be dependent upon human experience, for this would result in a knowledge that is mistaken and illusory. This point is made explicit by the ascetic priest who, when induced to philosophize, will vent his 'innermost contrariness' upon what is felt to be most real, and will therefore 'look for error precisely where the instinct of life most unconditionally posits truth' (*GM*, I, 11). To believe in a metaphysical world, according to Nietzsche, is to believe that our best empirical theory is radically false, and that a priori knowledge is essentially different from that which satisfies our cognitive interests. Knowledge of the metaphysical world would be 'the most useless of all knowledge: more useless even than knowledge of the chemical composition of water must be to the sailor in danger of shipwreck' (*HAH*, 9).

Nietzsche wants to separate himself from the asceticism of opposites and the metaphysical tradition from which they arise. To confirm his intention he names his thought 'historical philosophy' as a foil for 'metaphysical philosophy' (*HAH*, 1). This 'historical philosophy', Nietzsche writes,

which can no longer be separated from natural science, the youngest of all philosophical methods, has discovered . . . that there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular or metaphysical interpretations, and . . . a mistake in reasoning lies at the bottom of this antithesis.

(*HAH*, 1)

Nietzsche claims that opposites, the problem which gives rise to metaphysics, is simply a cognitive error: metaphysical oppositions are posited in order to explain the origin of things that are highly valued. Nietzsche attempts to undermine the metaphysical project by demonstrating it to be cognitively superfluous. He does this by dismissing metaphysics in favour of a more naturalistic interpretation of things of the highest value, an explanation that reunites these things with their apparent opposite, thereby demonstrating what was hitherto considered a highly-valued metaphysical ideal to be 'human, alas all too human' (*EH*, 'HAH', 1). Nietzsche claims that, according to his 'historical philosophy', 'there exists, strictly speaking, neither an unegoistic action nor completely disinterested contemplation; both are only sublimations' (*HAH*, 1). What appear to be opposites are in fact simply different modes of the same thing, thus "'warm and cold" . . . are not opposites, but differences of degree [or] transitions' (*WS*, 67). Nietzsche rejects the inference to a metaphysical world by arguing that there are no opposites, and that things come from their apparent opposite simply through a process of sublimation. He thereby provides an alternative answer to the metaphysician's

original question ('How can something originate in its opposite?') and understands metaphysics to be founded by a 'mistake in reasoning' – the belief that something that is only the sublimation of another thing is really its opposite or negation. *Human, All Too Human* therefore regards metaphysics as based on a simple cognitive error: the metaphysician fails to solve the problem concerning the origin of opposites due to mistaken observations.

Nietzsche's refutation of opposites turns from a declaration in *Human, All Too Human* to critical engagement in *Beyond Good and Evil*.⁴ While in *HAH* Nietzsche is content with exposing the metaphysical world as cognitively superfluous (*HAH* does not discard the metaphysical world completely),⁵ *BGE* sees him attempt to abolish the existence of the metaphysical world altogether. In *BGE*, Nietzsche no longer needs to argue that there are no opposites, or that apparent opposites are interconnected, in order to deny a metaphysical world, for the focus is no longer on the cognitive error of the metaphysician. Indeed, the metaphysician does not seek a 'true' metaphysical world; what he seeks, according to Nietzsche, is to keep the things he most values free from the corruption of being connected to the things he does not value. Nietzsche writes:

It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosopher has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; moreover, that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy have every time constituted the real germ of life out of which the entire plant has grown. To explain how a philosopher's most remote metaphysical assertions have actually been arrived at, it is always well (and wise) to ask oneself first: what morality does this (does *he* –) aim at? I accordingly do not believe a 'drive to knowledge' to be the father of philosophy, but that another drive has, here as elsewhere, only employed knowledge (and false knowledge!) as a tool

(*BGE*, 6)

The basis of a great philosophy for Nietzsche, therefore, can never be an innocent cognitive error. Philosophers seek truth and knowledge not for their intrinsic value but as instruments for what they consider to be a higher purpose. Nietzsche claims that in the case of great philosophy, knowledge, mistakes and cognitive problems are employed in the process of constructing the world so that it reflects the philosopher's values and ideals. Philosophical 'truth' is merely a vehicle through which the philosopher can express his subjective interpretation and perspective on the world; likewise, the reality of opposites,

on which the metaphysicians have set their seal, are . . . merely foreground valuations, merely provisional perspectives, perhaps moreover the perspectives of a hole-and-corner [clandestine and underhand].

(*BGE*, 2)

In *HAH* Nietzsche argues that the metaphysician's fundamental concern is to explain the origin of his highly valued things, and in *BGE* he argues that the metaphysician's fundamental concern is to keep these valued things uncorrupted, and thus unconnected to things of a lower value. The role of opposites changes in these two accounts. In *HAH* the metaphysician's belief in opposites is an innocent, intellectual mistake based on insufficient observation; but in *BGE* it is an attempt to express certain disputable value judgements. Things of the highest value are supposed to be contaminated by things of a lower value; the metaphysical world keeps the higher and lower values apart.

Nietzsche wants to be rid of the notions of the metaphysical world and of objective, rigid opposites, for they promote a conception of the world that is both false and ascetic. These notions, according to Nietzsche, are hostile to his interpretation of life as a painful, fleeting world of becoming, for they overemphasize objectivity and stability and that which has become. While the metaphysician regards temporality as inferior to permanence, Nietzsche holds the inverse view. For Nietzsche, all things are finite; they will be destroyed and replaced by other things again and again; and the metaphysical unchanging world is a mere fiction designed to protect the individual from the suffering that this continual destruction brings. According to Nietzsche, it is individuals' sense-experience that leads them to believe that things in life are regular and stable; their language then goes beyond this experience and strengthens the impression of regularity and stability by abstracting from individual circumstances and describing them in terms of universal qualities and properties. Language therefore falsifies life by simplifying its complexities and distorting its unique character. Language, for Nietzsche, is unable to express the instability of life: 'Linguistic means of expression are useless for expressing "becoming"; it accords with our inevitable need to preserve ourselves to posit a crude world of stability, of "things", etc.' (*WP*, 715). Language creates the illusion that there is a stable distinction between a subject and its properties or activities; but for Nietzsche there exists only the chaotic array of complex and unstable relations and activities, and these cannot be made into a coherent structured whole. Truth therefore becomes a contentious issue for Nietzsche, since life cannot be accurately represented by linguistic consciousness. 'Truth' must be interpreted as a hoard of metaphors, anthropomorphisms and relative perceptions that over time have come to be seen as objective and binding. According to Nietzsche, we must not seek knowledge of life that is a priori and metaphysical; rather, we must seek experience of life and our own interpretation of the world. We arrive at an interpretation through our feelings, sensations and intuitions, and these constitute what is fundamentally 'real'. If we are attentive enough, we can sense these instincts to be more authentic and fundamental to life than structured language.

Nietzsche's ontology is intended to be non-metaphysical. While the metaphysician's language is literal and truth-seeking, Nietzsche's is metaphorical; and while the metaphysician's conception of reality is static, unified and concerned with being, Nietzsche's is dynamic, pluralistic and concerned with becoming.

However, by making a distinction such as that between being and becoming, can we not consider Nietzsche to be a metaphysician himself? Both Adorno and Derrida claim that Nietzsche failed to recognize that, by operating with such oppositional terms, he has retained metaphysical structures of thought. Adorno writes: 'By positing chaos in opposition to stability, Nietzsche's critique fails to reflect upon the metaphysical grounding of such an opposition' (cited in Bauer, 1999, p. 83). Derrida writes:

There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is alien to that history [of metaphysics]; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the forum, the logic, and the implicit postulation of precisely what it seeks to contest.

(Derrida, 1978, p. 280)⁶

Furthermore, the very style of language that Nietzsche employs expresses the opposites that we see it reject. Nietzsche's use of aphorisms present arguments that are contradicted time and time again; it is as if Nietzsche adopts opposition in order to reject the confinement of committing himself to one fixed interpretation of the world. By shifting from one perspective or interpretation to another, and undermining positions he held elsewhere, Nietzsche is preserving the 'fascination of the opposing point of view' (*WP*, 470).⁷ It would seem that Nietzsche cannot reject metaphysical opposites without falling into contradiction and inconsistency.⁸

Nietzsche's thought seems to be incoherent and contradictory, for he promotes opposites at the same time as explicitly rejecting them. For example, he tells us that great men develop through the 'feelings' that the 'presence of opposites' occasion (*WP*, 967); yet to see opposites in nature is 'the imprecise way of observing' nature (*WS*, 67). However, incoherence is avoided when different notions of oppositional thought are identified. I believe that Nietzsche is not attempting in *HAH* and *BGE* to destroy opposites altogether. (If he tried to do so he would be setting up a value or system of thought in opposition to his own.) He is concerned, rather, with the destruction of a *particular* notion of opposites. Nietzsche wants to reject opposites that have an a priori, objective, static structure that exists independently of the human being. These express the ascetic ideal and dictate standards of value to the human being independently of his will; they inform him that a certain thing is good but its opposite is not, and then insist that he choose the former at the expense of the latter. Not all opposites presuppose a metaphysical world that is beyond man, however. Nietzsche does not reject those opposites that are essentially 'anti-ascetic', that value the human being as the source of meaning. Indeed, opposites are promoted by Nietzsche if they represent the human being as intrinsically valuable, and both elements in the opposition can be experienced and actively affirmed: if only one element in the binary pair is experienced and affirmed, then Nietzsche will reject the opposition.

Nietzsche's refutation of metaphysics and its oppositions in favour of experienceable, life-affirming opposition represents his 'revaluation of values'. Meaning is no longer sought as objective a priori truth, but is subjectively determined, derived from a posteriori experience. According to Nietzsche, the only source of authentic meaning is that of the instincts: 'Nothing is "given" as real except our world of desires and passions, that we can rise or sink to no other 'reality' than the reality of our drives' (*BGE*, 36; cf. *WP*, 619). We are nothing more than this natural 'inner occurrence' of primitive and sublimated bodily desires. We can never fully know the content and character of these sensations. When we believe we are following the logic of our interpretations, by the inherent rational connections between ideas, we are merely the victim of our anonymous conflicting instincts, each of which is trying to assert its authority over the other, so that our most valuable convictions are merely the 'judgements of our muscles' (*WP*, 314).

To be an individual is continually to wage the battle for supremacy as Will to Power. Multitudes of opposing instincts in their dynamic conflict generate energy to enforce unstable relationships of domination and subordination. These shifting relations form the tenuous 'hierarchy' (Deleuze, 1983, p. 40) of values that determine the characteristics of our individuality. The individual is essentially taking 'sides against himself' (*AOM*, preface 4) and is 'torn back and forth by conflicting motives' (*HAH*, 107). In the establishment of the most powerful motive, we each have the potential to exhibit an almost infinite number of characteristics, depending on the number of opposing instincts within our psychological make-up and their hierarchical configuration. In contrast to the metaphysician's promotion of unity, Nietzsche prefers the multiple dynamic self. He is 'happy to harbour in himself not an "immortal soul", which is a fixed unity without change and without diversity, but many souls' (*AOM*, 17). Individuals are not determined by a metaphysical identity within or beyond them, but by physical drives; any desire they may entertain for an immortal world of eternal truth is the result of sublimated 'spiritual' drives, which ultimately express an all-too-human phobia of death and destruction. Likewise,

Between good and evil actions there is no difference in kind, but at the most one of degree. Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are coarsened brutalized good ones.

(*HAH*, 107)

In renouncing the concrete antithesis of good and evil Nietzsche embraced the subjectively determined opposition of good and bad, thereby rejecting metaphysical value for the instinctual.

If individuals depend upon fixed values and a single interpretation of the world, believing this to be the only permanent and unequivocal reality, they will relinquish the need to look for new interpretations, and their creative instincts will atrophy. To avoid such deterioration Nietzsche seeks an affirmation of the greatest multiplicity of conflicting views and interpretations, for

the highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant 'man' shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully . . . but are controlled.

(*WP*, 966)

A rich diversity of interpretations will be achieved when individuals promote the Will to Power of conflicting instincts within them, for 'the definite and to us seemingly persistent qualities express only the momentary predominance of the one fighter, but with that the war is not at an end; the wrestling continues to all eternity', continually producing more and more interpretations (*PTAG*, 5).

The change in Nietzsche's thought about opposites is great. Perhaps the most significant change is that the individual replaces the metaphysical world as the standard for all meaning and value. This radical alteration in Nietzsche's thought is reflected in a variety of departures from his early account of opposites. The tragic attitude, for example, is reinterpreted; the individual should no longer seek to flee into a transcendent realm to escape confrontation with terrible reality, but must now learn to find joy in that confrontation itself. The tragic attitude is now equated with the heroism that revels in its own strength, which is powerful enough to endure its confrontation with Dionysus. This attitude is a 'pessimism of strength' that boldly confronts the inevitability of destruction and affirms this destruction as a means to further heroic activity; suffering becomes valuable, for it proves the worth of the tragic individual who endures it. The revised tragic attitude does not make aestheticism necessary for the individual's salvation from terrible reality. According to early Nietzsche, art enables individuals to accept the temporality of their existence by moving them to a psychological attitude that regards life as intrinsically valuable despite the pains involved. According to Nietzsche's revised model, the psyche does not require art – in its capacity to veil the harshness of reality – for its affirmation, as it is reliant only on its own energetic strength.⁹ When they are at their most antagonistic, psychological opposites provide individuals with the strength to relate to the world around them and ultimately to affirm their temporal existence. We could therefore say that psychological opposition replaces aestheticism as mankind's salvation. Psychological opposition unites man with nature, not in terms of a 'metaphysical comfort' (*BT*, 17) that enables him to transcend humanity and become 'primordial being itself', but by their common composition, of contradictory elements that are in continual flux.

In accordance with the revision of the tragic attitude, the 'internal structure' of tragedy – its Apollinian and Dionysian make-up – must also be revised. As psychological impulses, the Apollinian and Dionysian require no further revision: the Apollinian conscious feeling of being distinct from one's environment, and the Dionysian conscious feeling of being conjoined with the rest of reality, can stand. But since psychology is now the only acceptable mode in which the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses can be manifest, as metaphysical conditions of existence

they must be rejected. The Apollinian cannot establish the a priori determinations of space, time and causality that make experience possible; neither can the Dionysian be equivalent to the very essence of reality and the means by which the individual can be conjoined to it. The Apollinian and Dionysian are diametrically opposed psychological impulses: they do not determine different objective realities outside the individual; they determine different subjective 'feelings' within the individual.

Nietzsche is not guilty of contradiction when he simultaneously rejects and endorses opposites because, as we have seen, his rejection applies only to those opposites that are static and ascetic in their presupposition of an objective world above and beyond the individual. Psychological opposites are not in this category: they are relative and in continual flux. Psychological opposites compete for conscious expression; one will dominate, but this is only temporary, for their battle is ongoing; the hierarchy is not static, it will change as the individual's intuitions and feelings change.

In Chapters 2 and 3 we have seen that opposites are significant to Nietzsche's thought. We have seen that Nietzsche values the creative tension that is generated in the competition between opposites. Implicit within our discussion has been the beginnings of a Nietzschean project or vision of human authenticity. For Nietzsche praises powerful individuals who are able to harness the greatest tensions, for they are able not only to endure, but also to rejoice in the suffering and terror of the fleeting temporality of life. In Chapter 4 I shall describe Nietzsche's vision of human greatness. In particular we shall see how greatness is equated with *wholeness*, and how competing opposites are celebrated in Nietzsche's notion of the whole self, the *Übermensch*.

The *Übermensch* as a union of opposites

Nietzsche does not explain in detail what he means by the *Übermensch*. This scarcity of explanation, and wanton vagueness, has led to multiple interpretations of what he might have had in mind, some of which are fanciful and even absurd.¹ It is therefore essential that any attempt at an explanation be kept in check and correspond appropriately to such meagre and piecemeal textual evidence as there is. The fragments that Nietzsche provides imply a submerged richness of thought, but we are denied any further insight into this thought, which is frustrating. Keith May takes the sense of frustration further by maintaining that Nietzsche himself does not know what the *Übermensch* means (May, 1990, pp. 167–168). Kurt Rudolph Fischer, however, claims that this frustration and lack of definition are necessary aspects of the *Übermensch*, for ‘it is part of the determination of the “Übermensch” not to be determined’ (cited in Aschheim, 1992, p. 8).

It is in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) that the fragmentary description of the *Übermensch* appears. After this work, the term *Übermensch* does not appear again in Nietzsche’s works except in *Ecce Homo* (1888), where he writes more about *TSZ* than any of his other books. In his allusion to *TSZ* Nietzsche writes: ‘Here man is overcome at every moment, the concept “superman” here becomes the greatest reality’ (*EH*, ‘*TSZ*’, 6). Nietzsche chooses ‘Zarathustra’ as the prophet of the *Übermensch* because he

was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things . . . Zarathustra created the most portentous error, morality. Consequently he should also be the first to perceive that error.

(*SNZ*, I, p. 5n)

Zarathustra is thus seen by Nietzsche as having invented the opposites of good and evil and then as having come back to try to unite them. Zarathustra returns to improve on his former invention; in particular, to resolve the conflict between good and evil because Christianity cannot do it. In *TSZ*, we see the Christian point of view represented by the old man in the forest, who has no contact with the world and with humanity (*TSZ*, prologue, 2). Because Christianity is no longer in touch with the world, Zarathustra must be reborn; he must come back to show that

God is dead and that there is no difference between good and evil. His aspiration is, therefore, to overcome the opposites of good and evil from a standpoint that is beyond the opposites: he seeks a unification of opposites. Nietzsche saw in Zarathustra the first one to make mankind conscious of itself. For, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, it is Nietzsche's claim that the individual needs to promote conflict and opposition within himself if he is to aspire to greatness and fruition (*TI*, 'Morality as Anti-nature', 3); and now Zarathustra explicitly proclaims that 'one must have chaos in one' (*TSZ*, prologue, 5). Zarathustra is going to teach the opposites; he will teach both wise and poor men 'until the wise among men have again become happy in their folly and the poor happy in their wealth' (*TSZ*, prologue, 1). He is going to redress the balance; he is going to destroy a one-sided outright dominance and replace it with a competitive opposition, a creative tension that seeks strength in growth and productivity over that which seeks strength in sheer magnitude. Zarathustra is going to turn one element into two opposing elements, not in order to separate the two, but in order that they may be complementary to one another and seek unification – a unification that, as we saw in Chapter 2, following Heraclitus' model of polarity, is 'the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to reunite' (*PTAG*, 5). Christianity failed, therefore, because it promoted the metaphysical model of static opposites, so that 'good' and 'evil' never sought unification. The thought of Zarathustra and Christianity are in direct opposition. Zarathustra is the 'dancing star' (*TSZ*, prologue, 5) who is fully conscious of his body and makes good use of the conflict of which it is composed, while the Christian is defined by rigidity and is taught to mortify and repress the flesh, so that he is divided and alienated from his very humanity. The *Übermensch* that Zarathustra proclaims is not like the Christian who promotes opposition and division *against* himself, thereby promoting one side of his humanity and alienating another; rather the *Übermensch* promotes opposition *within* himself (*WP* 966), thereby promoting every conflicting aspect of his humanity.

The *Übermensch* is anticipated in the thought of early Nietzsche, for it is the Dionysian impulse that enables 'nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated' to celebrate 'once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man' (*BT*, 1). In complete contrast to Christianity, with its need to alienate man from nature, the *Übermensch* proclaims: 'Learn to become nature again yourselves and then with and in nature let yourselves be transformed' (*UM*, IV, 6). The *Übermensch* is identified with nature itself, a 'Dionysian' nature. The *Übermensch* is the one who has identified with primary unity, its pain and contradiction and thereby 'suffers in his own person the primordial contradiction that is concealed in things' (*BT*, 9). He is a tragic figure, or a tragic 'artist', who expresses nature's 'exuberant fertility' and 'creative joy' and uses such power to substantiate his own perfection.²

Nietzsche hoped that the future would be characterized by a 'supra-national and nomadic type of man' who would possess 'as its typical distinction a maximum of the art and power of adaptation' (*BGE*, 242). The *Übermensch* will draw upon

his creative capacities in order to unite the opposites within him; he will 'educate himself' and 'draw forth and nourish all the forces which exist . . . and [will] bring them to a harmonious relationship with one another' (*UM*, III, 2). The *Übermensch*, like his prophet Zarathustra, is conscious of his psychological make-up, of how his instincts conflict, and of which ones are currently dominating others. He is therefore in a position to recognize which weaker instincts should be exaggerated in order to promote further conflict and strife, and a stronger capacity for creation. By drawing upon his artistic 'power of adaptation', the *Übermensch* increases opposition within him and thereby increases his capacity for creativity.³ This process never ends; overcoming the instincts is never an end in itself, but is a means toward the higher goal of self-perfecting. Nietzsche writes:

The man who has overcome his passions has entered into possession of the most fertile ground . . . to sow the seeds of good spiritual works in the soil of the subdued passions is then the immediate urgent task. The overcoming itself is only a *means*, not a goal; if it is not so viewed, all kinds of weeds and devilish nonsense will quickly spring up in this rich soil now unoccupied, and soon there will be more rank confusion than there ever was before.

(*WS*, 53)

Nietzsche says: 'I believe that from the presence of opposites and from the feelings they occasion that the great man, *the bow with the greatest tension*, develops' (*WP*, 967). The greatest being is the one who unites the most antagonistic traits (*WP*, 881, 966). Nietzsche observes that commonplace beings 'perish when the multiplicity of elements and the tension of opposites, i.e., the preconditions for greatness in man, increases' (*WP*, 881). The *Übermensch* must therefore be preconditioned to be able to endure such inner tensions. In the commonplace being 'the tension, the range between the extremes . . . [is] less . . . the extremes themselves are . . . obliterated to the point of similarity' (*TI*, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', 37). It is different for the *Übermensch*: 'It is in precisely this compass of space, in this access to opposites that Zarathustra feels himself to be the *highest species of all existing things*' (*EH*, 'TSZ', 6). The *Übermensch*, however, does not merely represent opposites in their multitude; rather, he symbolizes the unification and synthesis of opposites that is appropriate to the further promotion of creativity. In other words, the *Übermensch* does not seek a mere accumulation of antithetical elements, but an 'increased co-ordination, of a harmonizing of all the strong desires' (*WP*, 800). Thus, 'Greatness of character does not consist in not possessing these affects – on the contrary, one possesses them to the highest degree – but in having them under control' (*WP*, 928). As we saw in Chapter 2, Nietzsche's notion of control is expressed in his concept of self-mastery, which is itself explained in terms of equilibrium (*WS*, 22) and moderation (*BT*, 25). He maintains that the most moderate will prove to be the strongest (*WP*, 55). We also saw in that chapter that the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses have to be balanced by one another if either is to be activated to its highest degree.

The notion of complementary opposites is continued throughout Nietzsche's thought, including his idea of the *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* must promote both opposites in the binary pair, unlike the 'typical man', who

does not understand the necessity for the reverse side of things: that he combats evils as if one could dispense with them; that he will not take the one with the other . . . approving only of one part of [a thing's] qualities and wishing to abolish the others . . . the ideal conceived as something in which nothing harmful, evil, dangerous, questionable, destructive would remain.

(*WP*, 881)

The *Übermensch* stands apart from this ideal. In Nietzsche's words:

With every increase of greatness and height in man, there is also an increase in depth and terribleness: one ought not to desire the one without the other – or rather: the more radically one desires the one, the more radically one achieves precisely the other.

(*WP*, 1027)

The tension between opposites must be maintained to generate dynamic creativity; the victory of one element over its opposite, as with the superiority of good over evil in Christianity, will lead to stagnation and decay. The *Übermensch*, accordingly, is beyond good and evil; he will unite good and evil and will embody Zarathustra's teaching that 'the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness' (*TSZ*, II, 'Of Self-Overcoming'). Nietzsche writes:

One cannot be one without being the other . . . with every growth of man, his other side must grow too . . . That man must grow better *and* more evil is my formula for this inevitability.

(*WP*, 881)

If the tension of opposites is the formula of human growth, then the *Übermensch*, the master of humanity, would have the greatest concentration and tension of contrary instincts. Nietzsche writes:

Most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear. Whole ages, whole peoples are in this sense somewhat fragmentary; it is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should evolve piece by piece. But that should not make one forget for a moment that the real issue is the production of the synthetic man.

(*WP*, 881)

The *Übermensch* is not the disorganized totality of unconnected fragments of the mediocre man. He has synthesized every aspect of himself into a productive

whole; he is ‘a full, rich, great, whole human being in relation to countless incomplete fragmentary men’ (*WP*, 997).⁴ The *Übermensch* encompasses the fullest range of human capacities; he is synthetic because he must artificially exaggerate weaker instincts so that a greater conflict of drives can be promoted within him. Unlike the typical man who merely arranges the ‘pieces of mankind’, the *Übermensch* possesses

the mighty capacity to draw together and unite, to reach the remotest threads and to preserve the web from being blown away . . . who unites what he has brought together into a living structure.

(*UM*, IV, 4)

Patricia Dixon (1999), in her discussion of the importance of harmonizing the instincts for Nietzsche, traces the notion of ‘living structure’ to *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), where Nietzsche describes

a ruling structure that *lives*, in which parts and functions are delimited and co-ordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not first been assigned a ‘meaning’ in relation to the whole.

(*GM*, II, 17)

Speaking through Nietzsche, Dixon asks: ‘Where . . . do we discover a harmonious whole at all, a simultaneous sounding of many voices in one nature?’ Nietzsche replies:

[In] men in whom everything, knowledge, desire, love, hate strives towards a central point, a root force, and where a harmonious system is constructed through the compelling domination of this living centre.

(*UM*, III, 2; cited in Dixon, 1999, p. 332)

In *The Gay Science* (1882) Nietzsche further notes that

Many hecatombs of human beings were sacrificed before these impulses learned to comprehend their coexistence and to feel that they were all functions of one organizing force within one human being.

(*GS*, 113)

The ‘living structure’ of the *Übermensch* thus exhibits a unity dictated by a central organizing power that gives the opposite instincts ‘their way and measure’ (*WP*, 84) and ‘precision and clarity of . . . direction’ (*WP*, 64), so that they can develop and work for the whole. In other words, the *Übermensch* possesses ‘all the strong, seemingly contradictory gifts and desires – but in such a way that they go together beneath one yoke’ (*WP*, 848). As a ‘unifying principle’ Nietzsche must promote one instinct above all others, one that can be justified as having static dominance,

one that destroys the ascetic ideal and expresses the individual's life as inherently valuable. In my reading of Nietzsche, this 'central organizing power' is the 'power of adaptation' (*BGE*, 242), or the 'Will to Power' (which is described by Nietzsche as 'the strongest instinct': *TI*, 'What I Owe to the Ancients', 3): that power that increases the capacity for creation through the union of opposites.

Creation is precisely that which is required in Nietzsche's 'revaluation of values'. Creation is the process and principle that enables the individual to travel across the tightrope from the 'mediocre, typical man' to the noble *Übermensch* and safely cross the abyss of nihilism.⁵ The effective expulsion of God from nature has motivated individuals to *recreate* themselves, to get rid of 'the shadow of God' and the idealistic dependency that God decreed, and to return to the earth (*TSZ*, prologue, 3), to become the first 'natural' man, the 'Dionysian' man.

The myth of Dionysus tells how he was born of an incestuous coupling between Zeus and his daughter, Persephone. In her jealousy, Hera (the wife of Zeus) aroused the Titans to attack the infant. These monstrous beings enticed Dionysus with toys and cut him to pieces with knives.⁶ After the murder the Titans devoured the dismembered corpse. But the heart of Dionysus was saved and brought to Zeus by Athena. Dionysus was born again, for Zeus swallowed the heart and gave birth to him with Semele. In his anger at the Titans, Zeus destroyed them with thunder and lightning; but from their ashes humankind was born.⁷ Dionysus is thus a man of 'creation', an embodiment of death and rebirth, and of those conditions necessary for creation – pain and great suffering. Nietzsche continues the depiction of Dionysian man:⁸

The word '*Dionysian*' means: an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.

(*WP*, 1050)

Dionysus calls on mankind to unite with nature and to unite the good with 'the most terrible'. The Dionysian man is reunited with humanity and all that is passionate, chaotic and irrational within him. He must joyfully and tragically restore himself to nature and experience 'an ascent – up into a high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness' (*WP*, 120). This terrible experience must be 'blissfully' endured over and over again, for Dionysus affirms nothing more than the tragedy of the eternal recurrence. There can be no self-overcoming without struggle and suffering; there will always be obstacles within the individual's path, for self-overcoming is a process without end and without reward. The eternal

recurrence is, therefore, ultimately a teaching of strength through despair. The *Übermensch* is thus the

ideal of the most exuberant, most living and most world-affirming man, who has not only learned to get on and treat with all that was and is but who wants to have it again *as it was and is* to all eternity.

(BGE, 56)

The *Übermensch* is the being who promotes the ‘Yes-saying instinct’ as his unifying principle (AC, 57; EH, ‘TSZ’, 6), which gives him the strength for *amor fati*, to endure the unification of good and evil, to live a cursed existence, and to transmute this into the Dionysian intoxication of tragic acceptance.

Nietzsche regarded Goethe as the exemplar of the Dionysian, ‘higher man’ (TI, ‘Expeditions of an Untimely Man’, 49). What Goethe ‘aspired to was *totality*; he strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will . . . he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself’. Nietzsche awards him the highest of all his honours:

A spirit thus *emancipated* stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only what is separate and individual may be rejected, that in the totality everything is redeemed and affirmed – *he no longer denies* . . . But such a faith is the highest of all possible faiths: I have baptized it with the name of *Dionysos*.

(ibid.)

Goethe, according to Nietzsche, achieved humanity in its highest form: he exhibits a unification of the greatest contrary instincts (that is, reason, sensuality, feeling, and will) in the realization of *Übermenschlichkeit*. The *Übermensch* is the symbol of human totality, the unification of opposite instincts in the pursuit of creation. The individual who has realized such totality and unification of his human faculties is no longer all-too-human; he is indeed the *Übermensch*.

Opposites in the Jungian model of the psyche

The interplay of opposites is crucial to Jungian psychology. Jung maintains: 'Life is born only of the spark of opposites' (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 78). In accordance with the notion that 'there can be no reality without polarity' (Jung, 1951, par. 423), the psyche is construed by Jung to be a living system of opposites. Opposition is a necessary condition for the psyche as the very conflict and tension initiated by antithetical forces creates the energy needed by the psyche to generate its momentum and dynamism. Thus, the psyche 'like any other energetic system is dependent on the tension of opposites' (Jung, 1954, par. 483).

According to Jung, personality is a manifestation of 'definiteness, wholeness and ripeness' (Jung, 1934a, par. 288), and fundamental to its constitution are two principal opposites: the conscious and the unconscious, those 'real psychic facts that determine . . . whole being' (Jung, 1927, par. 491). The conscious represents what we can know and experience, and the unconscious refers to all that remains beyond our cognitive reach, that which is unknowable. The unconscious is, by definition, irreducible to conscious terms; if an unconscious element is accessible from a conscious perspective, then it is ultimately reduced to the level of consciousness and is no longer unconscious. Although the unconscious constitutes a vast part of our psyche, we are alienated from it: it is wholly other.¹ Conscious and unconscious are antithetical to one another; the nature of either is defined as opposite to the other. The former is familiar and the latter is unfamiliar. Although consciousness and the unconscious are diametrically opposed, they are, according to Jung, able to complement one another. Because the psyche is a self-regulating system, and, as such, cannot function without opposition (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 92), it follows that the attitudes of consciousness and unconsciousness compensate one another to achieve psychic balance. Since energy is generated only through the tension of opposites, psychological growth necessitates the discovery of the opposite attitude to that of the conscious mind:

The repressed content must be made conscious so as to produce a tension of opposites, without which no forward movement is possible. The conscious mind is on top, the shadow underneath, and just as high always longs for low

and hot for cold, so all consciousness, perhaps without being aware of it, seeks its unconscious opposite, lacking which it is doomed to stagnation, congestion and ossification.

(Jung, 1917/1926/1943, pars. 77–78)

Jung maintains that the attitude of the unconscious, and also its compensatory function, is discovered through the interpretation of the conscious recollection of the dream. The dream provides an active backdrop against which the interplay of opposites can be examined.

Although Jung would be the first to agree with Freud's famous dictum that dream interpretation is the 'royal road to the unconscious' (Freud, 1900/1991, p. 766; cf. Jung, 1916/1957, par. 152), he disagrees with Freud's account of the nature of the dream. While Freud regarded the dream as a repressed wish designed so as to find a way into expression, Jung regarded the dream as a statement of fact, of the way things are in the psyche. For Jung, the dream brings to consciousness an image of the psychological state that has been neglected and made unconscious; it is therefore an invaluable tool for understanding and diagnosing the personality. The dream compensates the conscious attitude as it unites the one-sided conscious orientation with its opposite, the unconscious attitude.² According to Jung, the dream achieves this reconciliation in one of three ways:

If the conscious attitude to the life situation is in large degree one-sided, then the dream takes the opposite side. If the conscious has a position fairly near the 'middle', the dream is satisfied with variations. If the conscious attitude is 'correct' (adequate), then the dream coincides with and emphasizes this tendency, though without forfeiting its peculiar autonomy.

(Jung, 1945/1948, par. 546)

Dreams therefore provide what is missing in the psychic wholeness of the individual, and help to re-establish relations between consciousness and unconsciousness, and secure overall psychic equilibrium.³ The dream is the mediator of opposites; it controls the unconscious element in the binary pair, and through its manipulation, the dream either reinforces the existing bond between the two opposites or seeks its reconfiguration.

The compensatory relation itself – that which makes possible the stability and cooperation of the opposites – depends upon what Jung calls the 'transcendent function' (Jung, 1916/1957, par. 132). This is 'a natural process, a manifestation of the energy that springs from the tension of opposites, and it consists in a series of fantasy-occurrences which appear spontaneously in dreams and visions' (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 121). It forms a basis for

a process not of dissolution but of construction, in which thesis and antithesis both play their part. In this way it becomes a new content that governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of the

opposite into a common channel. The standstill is overcome and life can flow on with renewed power towards new goals.

(Jung, 1921, par. 827)

The transcendent function is a twofold process: the spontaneous emergence of a unifying symbol unites opposing elements; and from this union, it establishes a new conscious attitude, one that is more integrated and enriched with those elements that were hitherto unconscious. Ego-consciousness tends to focus exclusively on adaptation to circumstances in its immediate environment, and fails to integrate the unconscious material that is not relevant to its adaptation. The ego can thus easily develop a one-sidedness that does not correspond to the overall instinctive wholeness of the personality. The transcendent function enables the personality to move from a one-sided attitude to a new, more complete, one (ibid., par. 145). By symbolically sketching new possibilities of life (in 'dreams and visions') it facilitates this transition and opens the way for further development.

The development of the personality is therefore advanced when the opposites of conscious and unconscious complement one another. The conscious attitude requires compensation from the unconscious attitude if it is to flourish, but this does not mean that the unconscious attitude is privileged over consciousness. Jung writes: 'Unconscious compensation is only effective when it co-operates with an integral consciousness; assimilation is never a question of "this *or* that", but always of "this *and* that"' (Jung, 1934b, par. 338). Both opposites must be regarded as having equal importance and must be integrally connected and move on parallel lines if the personality is to remain mentally stable; if they split apart or become dissociated, the personality will suffer from psychological disturbance (cf. *MHS*, p. 52). If either reason or unconscious instinct is exaggerated, this one-sidedness will lead to a pathological state: 'Too much of the animal distorts the civilized man, too much civilization makes sick animals' (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 32).

According to Jung, Western civilization is guilty of exaggerating one opposite over and above its counterpart. Jung sees the civilized individual as a 'sick animal'.⁴ Jung explains:

Serene and tragic at once, it was just this archaic man who, having started to think, invented the dichotomy which Nietzsche laid at the door of Zarathustra: the discovery of the pairs of opposites, the division into odd and even, above and below, good and evil.

(Jung, 1921, par. 963)

Thereafter, 'Western man became someone divided between his conscious and unconscious personality . . . [and as a result] we in the West have come to be highly disciplined, organized and rational' (*JS*, p. 397), so that 'in our time . . . the intellect . . . is making darkness, because we've let it take too big a place' (ibid., p. 420). Modern man has exaggerated and overdeveloped his rational

conscious side at the expense of his unconscious instinctual side and has thereby exposed himself to a dangerous disequilibrium of opposites (Jung, 1957, par. 544). Jung warns:

No matter how beautiful and perfect man may believe his reason to be, he can always be certain that it is only one of the possible mental functions, and covers only that one side of the phenomenal world which corresponds to it. But the irrational, that which is not agreeable to reason, rings it about on all sides. And the irrational is likewise a psychological function.

(Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 110; also see par. 201)

It needs only an almost imperceptible disturbance of equilibrium in a few of our rulers' heads to plunge the world into blood, fire, and radioactivity.

(Jung, 1957, par. 561)

Opposites within consciousness

The favouring of one opposite over its counterpart is not limited to the promotion of reason and consciousness over instinct and the unconscious. It is also experienced on a more fundamental level within the very structure of consciousness itself, thereby making the prospect of the 'sick animal' more probable. The possibility of a discordant relationship between the opposites of conscious and unconscious is greatly increased when we note that consciousness is itself composed of opposites, which can conflict with one another. According to Jung, consciousness is *structured* according to the configuration of opposite forces inherent within it, and this configuration determines the psychological 'type' of the individual's personality, and whether he is healthy with 'definiteness, wholeness and ripeness', or a 'sick animal'.

The configuration of opposites within consciousness is regulated by a basic attitude to external events, and certain properties or 'functions' of consciousness. The 'attitude-types' are 'distinguished by the direction of [the individual's] interest, or of the movement of libido' and the 'function-types' are 'those more special types whose peculiarities are due to the fact that the individual adapts and orientates himself chiefly by means of his most differentiated function' (Jung, 1921, par. 556). Jung identifies two opposite attitude-types – introversion and extraversion. The former refers to an abstracted attitude to the object whereby the individual 'is always intent on withdrawing libido from the object, as though he had to prevent the object from gaining power over him'. The latter, in complete contrast, refers to a positive attitude to the object; the extravert

affirms its importance to such an extent that his subjective attitude is constantly related to and orientated by the object. The object can never have enough value for him, and its importance must always be increased.

(ibid., par. 557)

Although one or the other of these opposite orientations determines individuals' responses to the objects of their conscious experience, it also determines the compensatory action of their unconscious. Where consciousness is extraverted the unconscious is introverted, and conversely: the opposites counterbalance one another. Jung therefore talks of an unconscious attitude as well as a conscious attitude (*ibid.*, pars. 568–576). The unconscious attitude impinges upon the conscious attitude to such an extent that the opposite attitudes often get blurred into one; it is therefore often difficult to decide which character traits belong to the conscious personality and which belong to the unconscious personality (*ibid.*, par. 576).

In addition to the two attitude-types, Jung identified four functions of consciousness: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition. Jung writes:

The essential function of sensation is to establish that something exists, thinking tells us what it means, feeling what its value is, and intuition surmises whence it comes and whither it goes.

(Jung, 1921, par. 983)

These four functions divide into two antithetical pairs. Thinking and feeling are both termed 'rational' because both work with evaluations and judgements; thinking evaluates through cognition with the criteria of 'true' and 'false', feeling evaluates through the emotions with the criteria of 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant'. Sensation and intuition are both termed 'irrational' because they operate according to perception, which is not evaluated or interpreted; sensations perceive things as they are and not otherwise, intuition also 'perceives' through its capacity for an unconscious 'inner perception' of things.

Each one of us has within our ego-consciousness all four functions in antithetical pairs and both opposing attitudes. No one attitude or function occurs in its pure form. This means that the extravert cannot be entirely free from the characteristics of introversion; in this case, the inferior introverted attitude is simply demoted to the unconscious sphere where it can either compensate for the dominant extraverted attitude or remain dormant and incapable of integration within the ego. Similarly, we shall have a dominant mode of functioning from one of the four functions outlined earlier. This dominant function will come from one of the two pairs of rational or irrational functions. We shall also utilize another function as an 'auxiliary' to serve the dominant function, though 'naturally only those functions can appear as auxiliary whose nature is not opposed to the dominant function' (Jung, 1921, par. 667). For example, the two basic functions of thinking and feeling are evaluative and cannot be employed at the same time, and cannot be simultaneously applied to the same object. The relatively unconscious auxiliary function must come from the opposite pair of rational or irrational functions, depending on which pair the superior function came from, so that if I had a superior sensation function (from the irrational pair) my auxiliary function would be from either thinking or feeling (the rational pair).⁵

The unconscious functions group themselves in a similar pattern, in correlation with the conscious orientation, so that the superior function pertains entirely to the conscious realm, while its opposite, the inferior function, is confined to the unconscious realm. The two other functions are partly conscious and partly unconscious: the auxiliary function is relatively directed while its opposite, though seldom available to consciousness, can be raised to consciousness (this is possible because the auxiliary functions are not so opposed to one another as the dominant and inferior functions).

The conscious attitude and function predominate over those of the unconscious. If, however, the conscious attitude becomes overemphasized, so that one conscious function is promoted over its opposite, this opposite function will set up a compensatory drive, and will compel individuals, often by seemingly incomprehensible acts, to take account of the reality which they have neglected. The indirect manifestation of the unconscious takes the form of a disturbance within conscious behaviour. If the functions fail to compensate one another, they will be in a direct conflict with one another, thereby causing the opposites to split apart. This conflict aims at mutual repression of the functions, and if one of the functions becomes repressed, dissociation and splitting of the whole personality ensues, leading to neurosis:

The acts that follow from such a condition are unco-ordinated, sometimes pathological, having the appearance of symptomatic actions. Although in part normal, they are based partly on the repressed opposite, which, instead of working as an equilibrating force, has an obstructive effect, thus hindering the possibility of further progress.

(Jung, 1928, para. 61)⁶

The healthy personality seeks a balance of opposites (comprising the two attitudes and four functions of consciousness). The extreme promotion of only one opposite will result in *enantiodromia*: a complete reversal of the dominant opposite, when the unconscious inferior element overcomes the conscious dominant element to become the dominant element itself. The dominant element, in either case, generates a low level of energy, a state of entropy, which denies the psyche the dynamism necessary for its capacity to create and develop further (Jung, 1930/1950, par. 157). The ideal state of affairs is a *union* of opposites: the promotion of both opposites. This union does not minimize the tension between opposite forces, but increases it so that the production of psychic energy is maximized (Jung, 1942, par. 154). A union of opposites is the envisioned goal of the Jungian psyche. But, this goal is not a universal goal that is to be sought from the very start of life; rather, Jung tells us, it is to be sought in the second half of life (at approximately 35 years: see note 10), with the focus of the first half of life surprisingly being that which defines the ‘sick animal’: namely, promoting only one opposite in the binary pair.

In the first half of life the essential task of the individual is to develop

ego-consciousness and consolidate a one-sided conscious attitude and dominant function. This is a slow process of centring where individuals must differentiate and isolate the function and attitude that will enable them, with most ease, to adapt to the demands of their environment and establish their social position within the world (their *persona*). For a certain one-sidedness and sense of discrimination will be needed to fulfil certain conventional demands that are required in the establishment of the *persona*. Only the dominant function and attitude inherent within the individual's psychic constitution can help him or her in this task.⁷ The other attitude and functions are not yet required, and are thus relegated to the unconscious (Jung, 1928a, par. 64).⁸ The need to confront the unconscious attitude is periodic and arises only when the one-sidedness of the conscious attitude is unable to adapt to the demands of reality, and consequently causes the individual to feel that his life has become stale, unprofitable, and lacking in meaning.⁹ Jung writes:

Thus it may easily happen that an attitude can no longer satisfy the demands of adaptation because changes have occurred in the environmental conditions which require a different attitude . . . the attitude breaks down and the progression of libido also ceases . . . The longer the stoppage lasts, the more the value of the opposed positions increases . . . In proportion to the decrease in value of the conscious opposites there is an increase in the value of all psychic processes which are not concerned with outwards adaptation . . . these psychic factors are for the most part unconscious. As the value of the subliminal elements and of the unconscious increases, it is to be expected that they will gain influence over the conscious mind.

(Jung, 1928a, pars. 61–62)

About a third of my cases are not suffering from any clinically definable neurosis, but from the senselessness and aimlessness of their lives. I should not object if this were called the general neurosis of our age. Fully two thirds of my patients are in the second half of life . . . In the majority of my cases the resources of the conscious mind are exhausted (or, in ordinary English, they are 'stuck') . . . I only know one thing: when my conscious mind no longer sees any possible road ahead and consequently gets stuck, my unconscious psyche will react to the unbearable standstill.

(Jung, 1931b, pars. 83–84; also see Jung, 1928/1931, par. 160)

The unconscious contents that were originally unnecessary in the orientation of the individual's life now become essential if any progression is to be made in the latter half of life. The notion of a human being as a 'sick animal' is therefore a relative concept, for humans have the potential to develop beyond this particular stage of life. If they fail to develop and continue to promote only one opposite at a time when they must identify with both, they will remain steeped in neurosis. This stage of 'sickness' is a necessary developmental stage in the individual's life,

for it provides the incentive and trigger to start the process of psychic unification and the realization of ‘wholeness and ripeness’ (Jung, 1934a, par. 288).¹⁰ The establishment of ego-consciousness (and thus the promotion of a dominant opposite) is a prerequisite in the development of the personality (Jung, 1957, par. 528); individuals who have not established a conscious orientation do not yet have the capacity of regulation and the stability to enable them to seek their potential. Sickness occurs not only when individuals fail to promote both opposites, but also when they fail to identify a dominant element in the early stage of personality development. Thus, we see Jung claim that the individual must seek first to separate the opposites, and to promote one over the other, and then, when such promotion leads to ‘stagnation, congestion and ossification’, to reunite the opposites in order to maintain productivity and dynamism within the psyche.

Individuation: the interplay of opposites

Jung called the process when material of the unconscious compensates, and is incorporated into consciousness, the process of *individuation*. The process of individuation is therefore the dynamic interplay of opposites, in which opposites are actively balanced to form a new unity. This unity is Jung’s conception of the *whole* self, or ‘Self’:

Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as ‘individuality’ embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one’s own self. We could therefore translate individuation as ‘coming to selfhood’ or ‘self-realization’.

(Jung, 1928b, par. 266)

Self-realization implies an understanding of the structures of opposites inherent within the psyche.

We have seen that consciousness is composed of a series of innate functions that are configured as pairs of opposites, and the structure of the unconscious, in its role as counterweight to consciousness, is itself experienced by the individual as a powerful antithetical force. As a force of compensation the unconscious, though itself unknowable, must channel its energy in accordance with those structures of consciousness that it will affect, and it is in this sense that I regard the unconscious as also having ‘structure’ and direction. Indeed, Jung effectively attributes a structure to the unconscious when he divides it into a personal and collective realm:

[T]he personal unconscious . . . includes all those psychic contents which have been forgotten during the course of the individual’s life . . . In addition it contains all subliminal impressions or perceptions which have too little energy to reach consciousness. To these we must add unconscious

combinations of ideas that are feeble and too indistinct to cross over the threshold . . . The other part of the unconscious is what I call the impersonal or collective unconscious. As the name indicates, its contents are not personal but collective; that is, they do not belong to one individual alone but to a whole group of individuals, and generally to a whole nation, or even to the whole of mankind . . . [I]t is the deposit of the psychic functioning of the whole human race.

(Jung, 1920/1948, pars. 588–589; cf. Jung, 1934/1954, par. 42)

The personal unconscious is made up of all the forgotten and repressed material unique to the individual, while the collective unconscious represents a deeper level of unconsciousness – a ‘retreat farther and farther into darkness’ (Jung, 1940, par. 291). This dark level of the psyche lacks individuality and uniqueness; it is irreducible and incomprehensible to consciousness, and thus wholly unassailable by the ego. While the contents of the personal unconscious are subjective, those of the collective unconscious are objective and autonomous. This is because the collective unconscious is related to the phylogenetic instinctual base of the human race. The contents of the collective unconscious are thus common to every individual, and, unlike the personal unconscious that generates compensatory activity according to the individual’s specific needs, the collective unconscious provides undifferentiated compensation to every individual alike (as we shall see later). The contents of the collective unconscious have never been conscious; it operates independently of the ego and of all conscious processes. Its manifestations appear in symbolic form, in fantasies and metaphor that have a universal structure, applicable to every individual in every culture. For the process of individuation to be successful, the individual must confront, and, to some extent, understand, the collective realm together with its primordial images.¹¹ It is important for individuals to assert their individuality against the collective, to differentiate themselves from it, in order to escape the collective ideal of inflation and megalomania with its potential inflictions of grandiose delusions and psychoses. The collective realm is incapable of developing consciousness and individuality; if individuals fail to develop this side of their personality they will be effectively promoting the unconscious over and above consciousness, and will then have to endure an inevitable ‘sickness’ (of an over-inflated ego).¹²

Jung gave the name ‘archetypes’ to the primordial images of the collective unconscious. Archetypes are not inherent ideas as such but are ‘typical forms of behaviour which, once they become conscious, naturally present themselves *as ideas and images*, like everything else that becomes a content of consciousness’ (Jung, 1947/1954, par. 435). They are typical forms of behaviour in that they are ‘deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity’ (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 109). The archetype thus has the capacity and readiness to produce the same mythical ideas and images over and over again. Archetypes have an organizing influence on images and ideas; they are recurrent subjective fantasy-ideas that are aroused by physical processes and entities found in the external

world. Though they themselves are not conscious, conscious images and ideas are variations on them.

The process of individuation usually involves encountering a series of archetypal visual 'personifications', which compensate consciousness and indicate to the individual how the opposites are relating within him and how much progress has been made toward their unification. Archetypes are symbolically translated from their unconscious roots to consciousness, so that archetypes appear within dreams and in other manifestations of the unconscious – in 'visions, fantasies, emotions, grotesque ideas, and so forth' (Jung, 1932, par. 509). The individuation process is a long and arduous process in which the opposites of consciousness and the unconscious merge into a unity. A series of archetypal figures and situations are encountered along the way, and are – if the conditions are appropriate – accepted and assimilated into consciousness. According to Jung, the individual's 'acceptance' of one archetype leads him to encounter others; this process culminates in the 'acceptance' of 'the archetype of archetypes', 'the archetype par excellence' (Samuels, 1994, p. 87), the 'Self'. The Self is the totality of the personality, where all opposites are united, and consciousness is enriched in its coordination with the personal and collective unconscious.

Jung does not explicitly define the *process* of individuation, so that we cannot be certain of the specific stages involved in the gradual unification of opposites. Jung makes it clear that he does not want to define each stage in terms of an objective teleological formulation that applies to every individual: 'How the harmonizing of conscious and unconscious data is to be undertaken cannot be indicated in the form of a recipe' (Jung, 1939b, par. 524). It is also apparent that the archetypal encounters do not necessarily form a linear sequence or process, but can also be thought of as circular. According to this circular scheme, it would seem that an encounter with a particular archetype could happen at any time. It is not localized or allotted a specific place in the psychic order of things; rather it spontaneously materializes at a time appropriate to the individual concerned. However, more often than not we see in Jung's writings allusion to a linear sequence of archetypal encounters. The individuation process often begins with the confrontation of the personal unconscious, where individuals assimilate their neglected tendencies personified by the 'shadow' archetype (cf. Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 103). After this, the collective unconscious must be confronted, where the contra-sexual side of the individual is encountered, personified by the anima/animus (thereby providing the undifferentiated compensation to every individual alike). Finally, the archetype of the 'Self' is encountered. When this is accepted, the individual accepts the totality of his being.¹³ Furthermore, Jung's discussion of the individuation process in *Aion* (CW 9ii, 1951) examines the archetypal figures in this sequence, supporting the notion of a linear framework of experience. According to this scheme, it is conceivable for individuals to estimate how far they have progressed towards the Self, for it provides a teleological map to chart the progressive stages of the merger between consciousness and the unconscious. That is, by paying careful attention to the motifs of archetypal appearances within their

dreams, individuals should be able to estimate which stage in the process of individuation they have reached.¹⁴ Such clarity and accuracy would be unachievable with a circular process.

The shadow is the first archetypal figure to be encountered in the individuation process because it is the most accessible: 'Its nature can in large measure be inferred from the contents of the personal unconscious' (Jung, 1951, par. 13). The shadow is the most apparent archetype to the individual as it embodies the very opposite of his conscious one-sided attitude; it is the inferior function and attitude type within consciousness. To incorporate the shadow into consciousness is to reject the 'sick animal' with his propensity to promote one opposite in the binary pair, for its incorporation entails the acceptance of the neglected opposite, and thus a unification of opposites. 'With insight and good will', Jung writes, 'The shadow can to some extent be assimilated into the conscious personality' (ibid., par. 16). However, Jung also notes that there can be resistance to this assimilation – notably 'projection', where some traits peculiar to the individual's shadow are projected outside of that individual and appear as traits within another person. The shadow is often rejected because it is of a contrary nature and often appears alien or even morally reprehensible. Projection works as a defence mechanism to remove the shadow-elements out of consciousness and into the external world. Jung writes: 'He must be convinced that he throws a very long shadow before he is willing to withdraw his emotionally-toned projections from their object' (ibid.). Jung continues to say that these projections are

assumed to belong to the realm of the shadow, that is, to the negative side of the personality. This assumption becomes untenable after a certain point, because the symbols that then appear no longer refer to the same but to the opposite sex, in a man's case to a woman and vice versa. The source of the projections is no longer the shadow – which is always the same sex as the subject – but a contra-sexual figure.

(Jung, 1951, par. 19; cf. par. 422)

In the linear process of individuation, it is, therefore, through experiencing a *resistance* in the shadow's assimilation into consciousness that the archetype of the anima (of a man) and the animus (of a woman) is encountered.

If the shadow is experienced first – as the antithesis of the conscious orientation – the archetype of anima/animus is the second set of opposites to be experienced. The incorporation of this archetype into consciousness signifies the union of genders: the anima is the feminine component of the unconscious male psyche, while the animus is the male component of the unconscious female psyche. The former personifies 'eros' or love, while the latter is a personification of 'spirit' and 'intellect' (Jung, 1951, par. 29). The archetypal image of the anima is usually singular to compensate the fundamental masculine tendency to discriminate, while the image of the animus is usually plural to compensate the fundamental female tendency to unify and synthesize (*SNZ*, II, pp. 1152–1153). The anima/animus

therefore, like the shadow, compensates the *persona* of the individual – his (one-sided) conscious orientation. Jung writes:

The persona, the ideal picture of a man as he should be, is inwardly compensated by feminine weakness and as the individual outwardly plays the strong man, so he becomes inwardly a woman, i.e., the anima, for it is the anima that reacts to the persona.

(Jung, 1928b, par. 309)

The persona and anima/animus are opposites; while the persona represents the outer conscious attitude, the anima/animus represents the inner unconscious attitude. The anima/animus contains within it all those human qualities that the persona lacks. Thus, ‘If the persona is intellectual, the anima will quite certainly be sentimental’; therefore

the character of the anima can be deduced from that of the persona. Everything that should normally be in the outer attitude, but is conspicuously absent, will invariably be found in the inner attitude.

(Jung, 1921, par. 806)

The anima/animus does not contain only negative attributes, as the shadow usually does; it can have characteristics of a positive or negative nature depending on those of the persona. The realization of the anima/animus together with the shadow is essential to the dissolution of the one-sided persona and to the process of the unification of opposites.

In this scheme it would seem that the process of uniting opposites begins with a discovery of the personal unconscious, of which the shadow is part. This is discovered by a matter of will: the individual must determine its content by recognizing all aspects (attitudes and functions) of his or her *whole* personality, and then by noting which are absent from the conscious orientation – something that is indicated by those unfavourable feelings that the individual might unconsciously project on to others. The process continues with the discovery of the collective unconscious, of which the anima/animus is part. This second stage is triggered by the first. This happens, according to Jung, when the first stage ‘becomes untenable after a certain point’ (Jung, 1951, par. 19). The details of how the transformation is made from the first stage to the second (from incorporating the personal unconscious into consciousness to the incorporation of the collective unconscious into consciousness) is not made clear by Jung. The implication is that the resistance experienced in the first stage, caused by trying to incorporate the shadow, somehow initiates archetypal activity from the anima/animus. However, this implies that the shadow has not yet been successfully accepted into consciousness, thereby making further progress in individuation unlikely.¹⁵ Likewise, Jung tells us that once the anima/animus has been successfully incorporated into

consciousness ‘the unconscious again changes its dominant character and appears again in a new symbolic form, representing the Self, the innermost nucleus of the psyche’ (*MHS*, p. 196). It would therefore seem that the progressive stages in the process of uniting opposites are not a matter for intellectual examination; rather, the process is an unconscious one that is marked only by spontaneous symbolic images that are linked by no definable causal relationship. The three stages in the individuation process can thus be discussed as one. Once the inferior unconscious traits (symbolized by *both* stages one and two: the archetypes of the shadow and anima/animus) are made conscious, the psyche is no longer expressed in one-sided terms as promoting one opposite, but is expressed as promoting an equal balance between the opposites. The psyche’s oppositions are no longer related by conflict but by compensation and unification, and this psychic state of equilibrium is itself symbolized by stage three, the Self – the very centre of totality, which embraces both consciousness and unconsciousness just as the ego is the centre of the conscious mind (Jung, 1936a, par. 44).

It is not easy to decipher the movement between the stages (or even the stages themselves) of the individuation process. I understand this movement as the gradual unification of opposites, and I believe that a more thorough understanding of this process can be found in Jung’s alchemical texts. Jung draws a parallel between his individuation process and the alchemical process; although Jung’s interpretation of the latter is riddled with obscure and often incomprehensible symbols, I believe an overall scheme and structured stages, in which opposites are progressively united, can be identified. Once we have established this, we should be in a better position to understand the movement between the stages of the individuation process.

The unification of opposites in alchemy

In alchemy Jung found a wealth of symbolism that he recognized to be parallel to the process of individuation. As we saw earlier, the unconscious communicates its material to consciousness via the transcendent function, which spontaneously produces symbols in dreams, fantasies and visions. We cannot rely solely upon Jung’s ‘systematic’ discourse to understand the process of uniting opposites. Indeed Jung points out many times that the psyche cannot be adequately described in ‘scientific’ and ‘rational’ terms. An attempt at examining Jung’s difficult texts on alchemy and its symbols may compensate for the structured exposition of his thought.

The ancient art of alchemy was concerned with the complexities of change, of the transformation from one state to another. Alchemists worked with metals, and within their laboratories they tried to transform an ore of little value into silver or gold (or the ‘Philosopher’s Stone’). But this ‘external work’ with matter was, in many cases, intimately linked to an ‘inner work’ on the human personality. For example, we often read of the ‘alchemical fire’ that is the ‘secret of the *opus*’. This is clearly a physical fire that was controlled within a vessel as part of the ‘outer’

process; but it is also the heat-producing quality of meditation and imagination that is linked with the 'inner' individuation process. Thus,

alchemy had a double face: on the one hand the practical chemical work in the laboratory, on the other a psychological process, in part consciously psychic, in part unconsciously projected and seen in the various transformations of matter.

(Jung, 1937a, par. 380)

As a method of understanding physical process, it is fair to say that alchemy is now redundant: it inevitably gave way to modern chemistry due to its inferior methodology (which lacked quantitative measurements), understanding and lack of success in the transformation of matter. However, alchemy is still relevant in its use as a tool for reflecting upon psychological change. Indeed, in *Psychology and Alchemy* (CW 12, 1944a) Jung discusses how certain archetypal images that are common in alchemy appear in the dreams of modern individuals who have no knowledge of alchemical literature:

The world of alchemical symbols definitely does not belong to the rubbish heap of the past, but stands in a very real and living relationship to our most recent discoveries concerning the psychology of the unconscious.

(Jung, 1955–1956, p. xiii)

The 'most recent discovery', according to Jung, is of course his individuation process.

The often cited saying 'solve et coagula' in alchemical texts describes the process of uniting opposites that is common to alchemy and the individuation process. Both the alchemist and the Jungian analyst see the essence of his art in terms of separation, on the one hand, and synthesis and consolidation on the other:

There was first of all an initial state in which opposite tendencies or forces were in conflict . . . [and then] the great question of a procedure which would be capable of bringing the hostile elements and qualities, once they were separated, back to a unity again.

(ibid., p. xiv)

This procedure in alchemy is, unfortunately, highly confused and complex, so that 'hardly two authors are of the same opinion regarding the exact course of the process and the sequence of its stages' (Jung, 1937a, par. 333) and 'It is quite hopeless to try to establish any kind of order' (Jung, 1937a, par. 401). It thus seems that our quest for arriving at a definite structure to the process of uniting the opposites by referring to the alchemical literature will fail. However, Jung maintains that 'the majority [of authors] are agreed on the principal points at

issue' (ibid.). Thus, alchemists in general distinguish four stages to their work, which correspond, Jung notes, to

the original colours mentioned in Heraclitus: *melanosis* (blackening), *leukosis* (whitening), *xanthosis* (yellowing) and *iosis* (reddening) . . . [But] later, about the fifteenth or sixteenth century, the colours were reduced to three, and the *xanthosis* . . . gradually fell into disuse or was seldom mentioned.

(ibid.)

'Colours', Jung informs us, 'are feeling-values' (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 333). For evidence he cites the fact that when patients sketch their dream images they use colour at 'the moment when merely intellectual interest gives way to emotional participation' (ibid.). Likewise, it is often the case that significant emotional moments in the dream itself insist upon a specific colour for their expression. We could thus say that the use of colour to denote stages in the alchemical process indicates the transformation of the conscious mood or attitude in the individuation process, with its gradual incorporation of unconscious material. Jung seems to agree with this view:

Psychologically it means that during the assimilation of the unconscious the personality passes through many transformations, which show it in different lights and are followed by ever-changing moods.

(Jung, 1955–1956, par. 430)

The unconscious is gradually 'illuminated' in the developing personality, which is characterized by a change in mood from black to white (or yellow) to red:

This dawning light corresponds to the *albedo*, the moonlight which in the opinion of some alchemists heralds the rising sun, the growing redness (*rubedo*) which now denotes an increase of warmth and light.

(ibid., par. 307)

The first 'mood' or stage of the alchemical process is black, which corresponds to the lack of unconscious incorporation (the shadow of the individuation process or the alchemical *nigredo*). The final stage is red, which corresponds to the fullest expression or illumination. We can think of the red stage of enlightenment as the Nietzschean 'Daybreak', when authentic values, which were once hidden, are at last expressed, or in terms of the 'blood' that gives life to the *whole* individual, the Self (cf. Jung, 1947/1954, par. 384).

In order to ascertain a more detailed explanation of the stages in the alchemical process and their associated colours, we shall examine the external, chemical method of transforming a base metal into a nobler metal. This is clearly described by the historian Jack Lindsay, who is worth quoting at length.

Lead, a primary common metal, had to be broken up, changed, driven up the scale, towards silver or gold; it had to change its colour. So fire was invoked; and under its action the lead was reduced to a fluid state. The fluidity thus brought about was what constituted the primary level, in which new potentialities were actively present . . . Also the liquefaction of lead involved its blackening. So the blackness of the liquid condition above all expressed the attainment of a primary level, a state of chaos . . . Somehow the Primary Black had to be transformed into White or Yellow, which expressed the nobler metals. This could be done, it was believed, if one could find a metal which had certain affinities with both the lower and higher substances, which sympathized with both of them and which exerted its attractive power in both directions (downwards and upwards).

By using the right kind of metal, in the right kind of proportions, one could swing the balance towards the upper levels and thus transform the material into the higher . . . The two materials, that of primary matter or liquid blackness and that of the alloying and transforming addition, must have something in common, some element of harmony . . . But if that were all, a state of equilibrium was created and nothing happened; the first level was not transcended. So one nature must conquer the other. The conquering act was the moment of transformation, when the equilibrium was broken and a new relationship established.

The new fused substance existed at a higher level and involved the creation of a new quality, which revealed itself in the colour-change. But that was not enough. The new state must be stabilized, so that it might provide the basis for yet another upward movement.

(Lindsay, 1970, pp. 116–117; cited in Schwartz-Salant, 1995, pp. 8–9)

In Lindsay's description of the alchemical process we can identify three prominent stages of transformation. This triadic formula is implicit within alchemical texts and, according to Lindsay, has been communicated within alchemical thinking from its earliest forms in Bolos-Demokrites (200 BC), who is regarded as the founder of alchemy (Lindsay, 1970, p. 103). This triadic principle is the *Axiom of Ostanos*, which is stated thus: *A nature is delighted by another nature, a nature conquers another nature, a nature dominates another nature*. If we transpose this formula into the process of uniting opposites, we see that the first stage entails the promotion of opposites. This is the 'primary chaos', which is a 'mixture' (ibid., p. 117) of the base black metal and its *potential* to be other (i.e. the nobler white or yellow metal). It is interesting to note that the opposites must be created; they exist from the beginning only *in potentia*. Jung supports this premise thus:

The division into two was necessary in order to bring the 'one' world out of the state of potential into reality. Reality consists of a multiplicity of things. But one is not a number, the first number is two, and with it multiplicity and reality begin.

(Jung, 1955–1956, par. 659)

Lindsay tells us that the second stage of the process is defined by the 'introduction of a dynamic factor which changes the original relations' (Lindsay, 1970, p. 117). A third element is thus introduced to unite the opposites. This third element corresponds to Jung's *transcendent function* (Jung, 1921, par. 184), as it has affinities with both opposites, and thus enables the original element to unite with its potential. At this stage of the process we are told that the unification of opposites might result in a static condition where no energy is created. Earlier we saw that Jung regarded this condition as tantamount to the death of the psyche, for 'Like any other energetic system [the psyche] is dependent on the *tension* of opposites' (Jung, 1954, par. 483, *italics mine*). The unification of opposites in this case would entail their merger without maintaining their essential difference; the two opposites would merely blend into one. To counteract this, the notion of 'conquering' is introduced within this stage of the alchemical process. Here we see that the opposites are not equivalent, they share a common value with the 'third thing' that acts as a mediator between the two, but they themselves remain incommensurable. Thus, in this stage one opposite will conquer or overcome the other while maintaining their synthesis. The notion of domination of one opposite over the other in this union is not, however, equivalent to Jung's 'sick animal', for the latter entails complete domination to the extent that the inferior opposite is relegated to the unconscious when it should be consciously active. In the alchemical model the inferior opposite is acknowledged and plays a significant role; it is active in that it forges a tension with its superior counterpart, thereby allowing the process to continue. Indeed, Lindsay implies that the process continues so that the union of the opposites (the union of the base metal and its potential to be nobler) 'might provide the basis for yet another upward movement'. There is thus a more valued stage beyond the union of opposites. I believe this is yet another unification of opposites, triggered off by the previous one.¹⁶ We saw a similar pattern of progression earlier when the union of consciousness and the personal unconscious (personified by the shadow) brought about the further union of consciousness and the collective unconscious (personified by the anima/animus). In this earlier case we were uncertain about how the second union of opposites might be initiated by the first; but now we can turn to the *Axiom of Ostones* for a possible answer. Thus, the stabilization of the union of opposites (expressed by the colour white or yellow, and the chemical composition of silver or gold) provides the basis from which a further transformation can be made to a more valued stage (expressed by the colour red, and the 'Philosopher's Stone'). This process of transformation occurs as it did previously – the unvalued white/yellow element, now regarded as the synthesis of opposites, contains within it the potential to be other, the highly valued red stone, which is its opposite. And the 'third element' is again introduced to transform the 'mixture' by uniting its opposites.

The triadic formula of *Ostones*, with its three-stage process of uniting opposites, can be traced in the alchemical symbolism that Jung interprets as paralleling his individuation process. Perhaps the simplest method to use to unravel the complex symbolism is the colour key. We have already recognized that the original black

(lead) stage of the alchemical process corresponds to the shadow of the individuation process, the white or yellow (silver or gold) stage to the anima/animus, and the final red (philosopher's stone) stage to the Self. The symbols of alchemy, however, provide a more enriched explanation of this, which is summarized by Jung as follows:

The *nigredo* or blackness is the initial state, either present from the beginning as a quality of the *prima materia*, the chaos or *massa confusa*, or else produced by the separation (*olutio, separatio, divisio, putrefactio*) of the elements. If the separated condition is assumed at the start, as sometimes happens, then a union of opposites is performed under the likeness of a union of male and female (called the *coniugium, matrimonium, coniunctio, coitus*), followed by the death of the product of the union (*mortificatio, calcinatio, putrefactio*) and a corresponding *nigredo*. From this the washing (*ablutio, baptisma*) either leads direct to the whitening (*albedo*), or else the soul (*anima*) released at the 'death' is reunited with the dead body and brings about its resurrection, or again the 'many colours' (*omnes colores*), or 'peacock's tail' (*cauda pavonis*), lead to the one white colour that contains all colours. At this point the first main goal of the process is reached, namely the *albedo, tinctura, alba, lapis albus* etc., highly prized by many alchemists as if it were the ultimate goal. It is the silver or moon condition. The *albedo* is, so to speak, the daybreak, but not until the *rubedo* is it sunrise . . . the *rubedo* then follows direct from the *albedo* as the result of raising the heat of the fire to its highest intensity. The red and the white are King and Queen, who may celebrate their 'chymical wedding' at this stage.

(Jung, 1937a, par. 334)

The first stage of the process is evident in the black *prima materia* or *chaos*, where all elements are in total conflict so that the opposites repel one another and no connection or relation between them is possible (*ibid.*, par. 381). This original state is symbolized in alchemy by many images. Perhaps the most common is that of water: it is 'a whirlpool in chaos', the 'material principle of all bodies' is 'eternal water', the 'water of life' (Jung, 1937a, pars. 433, 425). Water is construed by Jung to be 'an excellent symbol for the living power of the psyche', particularly its unconscious aspect (*ibid.*, par. 94).

It is the role of the alchemical process to unite the opposites of the *prima material*, and this is embodied in the union of opposite genders – in the 'chymical wedding'. In alchemy the union of man and woman represents the highest union of opposites in which all other opposites become subsumed: 'The brother–sister pair stands allegorically for the whole conception of opposites' (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 436; Jung, 1944a, par. 43). Their 'wedding' is crucial to the process. It must be noted that in the above passage Jung speaks of this union immediately after the initial stage of *chaos* and again between the stages of *albedo* and *rubedo*. It would seem that either the initial union between the sexes is merely transitory and does

not enjoy complete satisfaction or ‘stability’ until the end of the process, or that their ‘wedding’ occurs at each transformation. In support of the latter explanation, the wedding is often referred to as the *coniunctio*, which, Jung says, is equivalent to the transcendent function – that which enables the cooperation of opposites at *any* and *every* stage (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 261). However, the wedding of king and queen (Sol and Luna) is usually realized at the end of the process, culminating in the birth of their child, which represents the ultimate alchemical goal. If this is indeed the case, then the appearance of their wedding at the start (as the above passage indicates) is confusing. This confusion adds to our earlier uncertainty as to whether the individuation process is either a linear or circular process. Jung himself confirms the confusion:

The displacement and overlapping of images are as great in alchemy as they are in mythology and folklore. As these archetypal images are produced directly by the unconscious, it is not surprising that they exhibit its contamination of content to a very high degree.

(Jung, 1955–1956, par. 401)

We see that the chaotic, separated opposites find regulation and unity in the wedding of male and female. In terms of the *Axiom of Ostanés*, the first stage is in play, where *a nature is delighted by another nature*. In the wedding of male and female, the third element that is common to both opposites and implements their union, is the symbol of incest; we are thus informed that the king will marry his mother (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 410), that there will be a ‘union of close blood-relatives’ (Jung, 1946, par. 419), and a ‘union with one’s own being’ (ibid.). After the wedding the union experiences ‘death’ and ‘a corresponding *nigredo*’. This is because the king must die leaving the widowed queen in a transformed state of pregnancy. These events culminate in the second phase of the process, the white *albedo* stage, where *a nature conquers another nature*. Thus, in the union of male and female, the female is stronger than the male; she conquers him to avoid their complete merger into a static condition. The king is inferior, we are told, because he is intrinsically weak: ‘The original imperfection of the king . . . becomes a problem’ (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 368); ‘The old king lacked something, on which account he grew senile’ (Jung, 1945/1954, par. 427). Indeed, the king is suffering from the sickness of a one-sided conscious attitude:

With increasing one-sidedness the power of the king decays . . . the more distinctly an idea emerges and the more consciousness gains in clarity, the more monarchic becomes its content, to which everything contradictory must submit . . . The king constantly needs the renewal that begins with a descent into his own darkness, an immersion in his own depths, and with a reminder that he is related by blood to his adversary.

(Jung, 1955–1956, par. 471)

The king must die so that he can be reborn in a nobler form, as a *whole* being. He must suffer various fatalities at the hands of the queen, including ‘immersion in the bath or sea’ (of ‘Luna unconsciousness’), ‘dissolution and decomposition’, ‘extinction of his light (Sol) in the darkness (Luna)’, and ‘incineration in the fire’.¹⁷ The death of the king ‘signifies the overcoming of the old and obsolete as well as the dangerous preliminary stages [of the process of uniting opposites] which are characterized by animal symbols’ (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 169). The king is represented by a dragon, which

from inner necessity . . . destroyed itself and changed into the lion, and the adept, drawn involuntarily into the drama, then felt the need to cut off his paws . . . The dragon ate its own wings as the eagle did its feathers. These grotesque images reflect the conflict of opposites into which the researcher’s curiosity had led him.

(Jung, 1945/1954, par. 493; also see Jung, 1955–1956, par. 169)

The king’s murder by the queen is principally described as a drowning in a bath, which is the return to the unconscious. The symbolic meaning of water is clearly conveyed here – for the king represents the conscious extreme, and the water is the (female) unconscious chaos that threatens to overcompensate. The king is destroyed, but all is not lost, because the waters are baptismal and enable the king to be reborn. The king is reborn as the child of the incestuous marriage between himself (in his original inferior form) and the queen. As the unborn child of the queen, the king experiences a ‘return to the dark initial state’, as he is again immersed in her waters and the ‘amniotic fluid of the grave uterus’ (Jung, 1946, par. 454).

The murder of the king by the superior queen describes the white *albedo* stage of the alchemical process. Returning to the above passage (Jung, 1937a, par. 334), we see that ‘the washing . . . leads direct to the whitening . . . the one white colour that contains all colours’; and these ‘many colours’ are equivalent to the ‘peacock’s tail’. In order to encourage the transformation to the final stage of the alchemical process, in which the child is born, the queen consumes a special ‘pregnancy diet’ (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 388). This diet represents the third stage in the triadic formula of *Ostanes*, where *a nature dominates another nature*. The queen, by nourishing the unborn king inside her, expresses her dominance over him. This nourishment takes the form of ‘peacock flesh’ and the ‘blood of the green lion’ (ibid., par. 401).¹⁸ Thus, the queen expresses her domination over the king by devouring that which represents all colours; that is, all the coloured stages in the alchemical process. The queen contains everything within her; she is what Jung refers to as the ‘one white colour that contains all colours’. The final stage in the alchemical process occurs after the queen consumes the lion’s blood and peacock’s flesh,¹⁹ when she gives birth to her son: the reborn king.

The king in his second birth is the *hermaphrodite*; he is both king and queen. In this state, the king is no longer inferior to the queen, so she cannot dominate

him. This means the process of splitting and uniting opposites cannot continue: 'Because the lapis [the child of Sol and Luna] is both male and female there is no need for another coniunctio' (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 524). In the alchemical process the king passes through various stages of transformation characterized by the dragon, lion, eagle and hermaphrodite. Each stage represents a greater degree of insight as more of the unconscious is incorporated; the hermaphrodite king, as the final stage, represents complete unconscious integration.

The complexities of alchemical symbolism are evident in the exposition I have given. However, the triadic formula of *Ostanes* can be discerned within it, and this alchemical method gives us insight into how the opposites are united. The parallels between alchemical symbolism and the process of individuation are palpable, so that, an examination of the former can elucidate the latter. Thus, although the process of uniting opposites that underlies the progress of individuation is obscured, Jung's work on alchemy illuminates what he regarded as its essential aspects.

In this chapter we have seen that opposites are significant to Jung's thought. We have seen that Jung values the creativity that is generated when opposites balance and compensate one another. The development of the personality – the *individuation process* – depends on a complementary relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, where both opposites are given equal expression; a disequilibrium or one-sidedness will result in an unhealthy psychological disturbance.

We have seen that Jung does not explicitly define the stages of the individuation process. I presented it as a linear process that proceeds through stages that progressively reconcile opposites, culminating in the complete unification of opposites where both opposites are fully expressed. We saw that these stages are personified by particular archetypes in the individuation process and find their parallel in particular colours and symbols in the alchemical process. The process of individuation leads to the *whole* personality where consciousness is enriched in its coordination with the personal and collective unconscious. Jung calls the whole personality the Self, and in Chapter 6 we shall try to describe what Jung meant by this. Certain similarities between the Self and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* will emerge.

The Self as a union of opposites

The achievement of the Self marks the telos of the psyche, where the opposites within the psyche are no longer related by conflict but by compensation. The Self is thus ‘the container and the organizer of all opposites’ (Jung, 1946, par. 536). It signifies the unification of opposites within the psyche, wherein the four functions, two attitude-types, shadow, anima/animus and persona are integrated within the wider unification of consciousness and the unconscious, thereby creating a new and richer focus within the personality to balance the ego with its tendency to prejudice.

It is generally thought that Jung primarily developed his concept of the Self primarily from his own concept of the ‘transcendent function’, and from Eastern Mysticism, which frequently refers to notions of totality (Jung, 1951, par. 350). As we saw in Chapter 5, the transcendent function is part of the symbol-forming aspect of the unconscious that possesses a purposive tendency to hold both conscious and unconscious together. Its purpose is to enable the psyche to realize the Self – the ultimate psychic balance where all oppositions are resolved. In 1916 Jung wrote:

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living third thing . . . a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation.

(Jung, 1916/1957, par. 189)

This ‘third thing’ and ‘new level of being’, which culminates in the unification of opposites, is virtually identical with the Self. In this sense the Self (as with the transcendent function) can be regarded as the mediator of opposites. It is equivalent to the ‘third’ element that is introduced in the second stage of the alchemical process of *Ostanes*, which, through its affinities with both opposites, enables their unification (cf. Jung, 1946, par. 474). The Self is both a crucial ingredient within the process of uniting opposites and the very end-product of this process, the union of opposites itself.

Jung did not develop a substantial theory of the Self; and thus the notion of the individuated personality, which has attained 'Selfhood', remains equally elusive. In 'The Undiscovered Self' (1957) he bluntly states: 'Since self-knowledge is a matter of getting to know the individual facts, theories are of very little help' (Jung, 1957, par. 493). We know that the Self is the ordering and unifying centre of the total psyche, and that while the ego is the centre of the conscious personality, the Self is the centre of both the conscious and unconscious personalities (Jung, 1936a, par. 44); but this description leads only to an inadequate and limited analysis of Selfhood. This is because the Self is only partly capable of being consciously perceived, as its totality encompasses every psychic manifestation – including those unconscious processes that remain ineffable and forever out of reach to ego comprehension and understanding:

The self is a union of opposites *par excellence* . . . the self, however, is *absolutely paradoxical* in that it presents in every respect thesis and antithesis, and at the same time synthesis . . . it is itself both conflict and unity.

(Jung, 1944a, par. 22, italics mine)

Thus, the Self as a paradoxical entity evades logical explanation.¹

A rational theory based on empirical data is useless for the depiction of the Self, as it cannot be reduced to intellectual knowledge. Scientific discourse relies heavily on abstract theorizing about well-defined data and seeks to exclude the symbolic metaphors through which the unconscious finds expression. Indeed, Jung writes that the Self is experienced as having

a value quality attached to it, namely its feeling-tone. This indicates the degree to which the subject is *affected* by the process or how much it means to him . . . In psychology one possesses nothing unless one has experienced it in reality. Hence a purely intellectual insight is not enough.

(Jung, 1951, par. 61)

Trying to explain the Self is akin to explaining God. God, or the abstract idea of God, is not contained in rational thought or empirical sense-data. He is found through metaphors and symbols, as a force primarily *experienced* rather than *understood* on a reductive level of intellect.

The experience of the Self, as with all numinous experiences of Otherness, is an affective experience of immense proportion (Jung, 1951, par. 53). The Self is other to the ego; it is an experience of the 'not-me' in the 'me', a religious experience. Emmanuel Levinas takes up a similar idea in *Totality and Infinity* (1969) where the contradictory elements of 'Same' (ego) and 'Other' (Self) can never exist as a totality in union. The Same exists because the Other is irreconcilable with it, otherwise both Same and Other would be part of a greater totality or whole that would invade and invalidate their separateness. Levinas paradoxically says they are related as a 'relation without relation' (ibid., pp. 79–80). It is a relation

because an encounter does take place, and it is 'without relation' because that encounter does not establish understanding: the Other remains resolutely Other. This does not invalidate the Jungian interpretation where the Self encompasses the ego in a totality, for the ego remains at all times an element separate to it. (If the ego were identified with the Self, ego-inflation would result: Jung, 1951, par. 44). The Levinasian discourse continues to parallel Jung's and offers insight into the nature of the Self. In his text Levinas proceeds by stating that the encounter between the Same and Other is essentially of a violent nature.² He writes: 'Violence consists in welcoming a being to which [the mind] is inadequate' (Levinas, 1969, p. 25). The encounter with the Other causes the Same to realize its impotence; it creates a surplus value of infinity within the Same, which disrupts the totality and self-containment of the Same.³ The Same cannot integrate the Other and is reconditioned by it: 'The I loses its hold before the absolutely Other . . . [it] can no longer be powerful' (ibid., p. 17). Thus, the Other overturns the very egoism of the personality and puts consciousness into question; consciousness must answer to the Other and realize that it is not in total possession of the world (ibid., p. 173). Jung describes this encounter with the unconscious Other as a wounding:

Whoever has suffered once from an intrusion of the unconscious has at least a scar if not an open wound. His wholeness, as he understood it, the wholeness of his ego personality, has been badly damaged, for it became obvious he was not alone; something which he did not control was in the same house with him, and that is of course wounding to the pride of the ego personality, a fatal blow to his own monarchy.

(SNZ, II, p. 1233; also see SNZ, I, p. 449)

The individual must, therefore, acknowledge that he is a being of both consciousness and unconsciousness, of Same and Other. Experience of the unconscious directly affects the conscious ego; the ego is reformulated or damaged by the ethical demand placed on it in the presence of the Other. Jung warns of this potential danger many times. According to Jung, the individuation process is often experienced as dangerous and violent. Jung writes:

The rediscovered unconscious often has a really dangerous effect on the ego . . . In the same way that the ego suppressed the unconscious before, a liberated unconscious can thrust the ego aside and overwhelm it. There is a danger of the ego losing its head, so to speak, that it will not be able to defend itself against the pressure of affective factors.

(Jung, 1916/1957, par. 183; also see Jung, 1951, par. 33)

The danger and pressure arise when the conscious attitude is confronted by its shadow – those characteristics of a contrary nature that can appear alien and morally reprehensible. The realization of the whole personality is a powerful

numinous experience that is dangerous and violent. As we saw in Chapter 5, the alchemical process describes the rebirth of the ego 'into' the Self as a painful experience, for the king (who represents ego-consciousness) must suffer an awful death if he is to be reborn into a complete form. The death of the ego, as with the death of the king, 'signifies the overcoming of the old and the obsolete' (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 169), and this entails a wounding from the might of the Self. The ego experiences the king's sufferings: of dissolution and decomposition, the extinction of its light (its power and domination over all), and incineration in the fire (in the greater power) (Jung, 1945/1954, par. 468). Within the individuation process the Self forces the ego to acknowledge its impotence, and through its affects it inflicts a radical change in the attitude of the ego. The ego is no longer in its petty personal world – believing itself to be in total possession of the world – as it was prior to individuation, but now participates freely in the wider world of objective interests (Jung, 1929, par. 68). It sheds its limited subjectivity for 'an attitude that is beyond the reach of emotional entanglements and violent shocks' (Jung, 1929, pars. 67–68). The king is thus reborn; his monarchy is revitalized so that his power can no longer be questioned, for he has attained the ultimate power: Selfhood.

The ego must try to accept its rebirth (Jung, 1951, par. 51) and try to ground its experience of the Other in a framework to which it can relate. The two opposing rational functions of thinking and feeling are required to secure this kind of understanding (*ibid.*, par. 52); but this is difficult to achieve (*ibid.*, par. 58) as it requires a personality that has already achieved a sufficient degree of individuation, where both functions have developed. If the ego does not try to accept its rebirth and tries instead to ignore the experience of the Other, or tries to explain it away as illusion, or reduce it to the level of the intellect, it will have to deal with the consequential onslaught of 'insanity' and 'destructive mass psychoses' (Jung, 1929, pars. 52, 53). Here the Other and the ego can be regarded as opposites; when the ego ignores the Other or reduces it to ego-consciousness it is equivalent to the domination of one opposite over its counterpart, and neurosis will inevitably follow. Likewise, the promotion of the Other over the ego will have similar results. Thus, although the Self, as the unknowable Other, appears as a violent entity to ego-consciousness, it cannot be wholly destructive. The Self does not seek to eradicate all ego-consciousness, for the opposites of ego and Self are of equal importance. As we saw in Chapter 5, 'Unconscious compensation is only effective when it co-operates with an integral consciousness. Assimilation is never a question of "this or that", but always of "this and that"' (Jung, 1934, par. 338). Therefore, the Self cannot kill the ego, for the ego is the Self's feet (*SNZ*, II, p. 978).

When the ego fails to accept its rebirth and is at a loss of understanding, the psyche spontaneously produces a compensatory symbol, a symbol that expresses totality (and thus the union of opposites). This symbolic framework enables the ego to relate to the unconscious experience and protects it from the onslaught of insanity that would otherwise overcome it.⁴ When this symbol of unification is

manifest, the balance between the ego and the unconscious is restored. The presence of these symbols provides an empirical grounding for Jung's 'theory' of the Self, for

although 'wholeness' seems at first sight to be nothing but an abstract idea, it is nevertheless empirical in so far as it is anticipated by the psyche in the form of spontaneous or autonomous symbols.

(*ibid.*, par. 59)

An empirical grounding, however, does not mean that Jung is on his way to establishing an objective theory of the Self that can be tested and qualified, because these Self-symbols (or transcendent functions) remain numinous – they are conscious interpretations of unconscious communications, the archetypal images of the archetypal Self. These symbols are clothed with finite images that are accessible to the ego, images that are subjectively defined by the ego according to its response to the *a priori* archetype and its conscious attitude (Jung, 1951, par. 355);⁵ but the archetype in itself, behind this subjective clothing, can never be attained. The Self remains elusive, concerned with individual facts that escape testable theory (Jung, 1957, par. 493). It is experienced by the individual and symbolically expressed in individual terms.

Symbols have a subjective power, and may thus be effective for one individual and appear as a mere sign for another. Likewise, from an objective standpoint, one symbol is only as appropriate as the next.⁶ An intellectual classification of symbols will achieve little. Jung, however, is intent on making more of his 'empirical theory' (Jung, 1951, par. 59), to the extent that he is guilty of objectifying the subjective, by predetermining what is personal, in giving specific examples and an overall schematization of Self-imagery. Jung attempts the very thing he maintains should not be done: to establish a concrete theory of the Self, a theory of its objective symbolic form. He states that the Self will appear in dreams as an

elephant, horse, bull, bear, white and black birds, fishes, and snakes . . . tortoises, snails, spiders, and beetles. The principal plant symbols are the flower and the tree. Of the inorganic products, the commonest are the mountain and the lake.

(Jung, 1951, par. 356)

Here Jung is limiting Self-symbols to rigid, personal examples, and consequently fails to acknowledge the subjective rule of symbolism, where a specific image may not express the Self and the unification of opposites to every individual. It would be more appropriate for Jung to express his 'theory' only with such abstract statements as: 'Anything that a man postulates as being a greater totality than himself can become a symbol of the self' (Jung, 1942/1948, par. 232). Or again: 'the self can appear in all shapes from the highest to the lowest, inasmuch as they transcend the scope of the ego personality in the manner of a daimonion' (Jung,

1951, par. 356). These statements are detailed and yet flexible enough to be applicable to every subjective symbolic formulation of the Self.

Jung is quite willing to give many examples of Self-symbols (most of which are found in *Aion*, *CW* 9ii, 1951). Edward Edinger dramatically summarizes these interchangeable images and themes of the Self as follows:

Such themes as wholeness, totality, the union of opposites, the central generative point, the world navel, the axis of the universe, the creative point where God and man meet, the point where transpersonal energies flow into personal life, eternity as opposed to the temporal flux, incorruptibility, the inorganic united paradoxically with the organic, protective structures capable of bringing order out of chaos, the transformation of energy, the elixir of life – all refer to the Self, the central source of life energy, the fountain of our being which is most simply described as God.

(Edinger, 1972, p. 4)

The God-image and the mandala sacred circle are the two Self-images that fascinate Jung the most. The former led Jung to his somewhat controversial response to the idea of theodicy by explaining God in terms of completion rather than perfection, and of therefore harbouring an evil shadow side (Jung, 1951, par. 123). Christ, as a Self-symbol, represents a personality greater than the average individual (Jung, 1942/1954, par. 414; Jung, 1951, par. 42); but to be a symbol of integration and unity Christ must be linked with His opposite – the Antichrist – to convey good and evil. And the latter led Jung to his experience and discovery of the Self, for in drawing mandalas every morning (in 1918–1919) he came to realize that they are ‘cryptograms concerning the state of the Self’ (*MDR*, p. 221), an illustration of his psychological disposition at that time. In these mandalas he saw his whole being actively at work, and through them he acquired a living conception of the Self. The mandala symbolizes a protective circle,⁷ which would lessen the intensity of the violent experience of Otherness, and thus ‘protect the unity of consciousness from being burst asunder by the unconscious’ (Jung, 1929, par. 47).

Symbols are psychic images that, through the purposive tendency of the transcendent function, link opposites together: what is known to the unknown, the rational to the irrational, and consciousness to unconsciousness. These Self-images provide the ego with a subjective framework through which it can relate to the Self, and come to terms with its impinging unconscious forces. The images are not the actual Self; they are merely approximations representing states of relative wholeness or ‘Self-ness’. It is impossible to arrive at the archetype-in-itself, we can experience its effects only in its corresponding symbol, and there are an infinite number of symbols that may apply. Such limitless conveyance of the Self suggests to me that the Self is not such an unbroken and coherent entity as is often thought. The images of the Self are not described theoretically, but metaphorically, as a finite expression of something infinite. The union of opposites, as a symbolic

representative of the Self, is thus only one subjective interpretation from an infinite variety. In this sense it seems to have little prominence. However, if we regard the union of opposites as the process through which the Self is realized, then it assumes great significance. But this incurs a conceptual problem. For, if we attribute value to the union of opposites because it *produces* the Self as its 'end-product', then we imply that it is not equivalent to the Self; we presuppose that the process through which the 'product' is realized has an identity separate from it.⁸ This problem can be avoided if we interpret the process as circular and not linear. In this case the Self is identified with the process and yet also beyond it; it is a synergy of the three elements of the process (the two opposites and the 'third' alchemical mediator). This means the Self is not identified with any of the three elements in isolation, neither is it identified with the sum of its parts; rather the Self surpasses its parts, thereby making its constitution beyond examination. Warren Colman adopts a similar approach to this in his analysis of the Self. Colman explicitly defines the Self as both the product realized by the process and the process of realization itself, as an organizing principle and that which is organized. Colman maintains that there is no principle or archetypal structure that is separate from that which it is organizing; the structure is inherent in itself. He regards the Self as both 'a tendency towards organization' (the process of uniting opposites) and 'the structure of that organization' (the Self). 'In other words, the psyche is self-structuring and the name for that process is the self' (Colman, 2000, p. 14). Colman does not regard the end-product of the process as separate from the process, but as the point at which the process ceases to continue. The process of uniting opposites is therefore inextricably linked with the Self; it is an expression of the Self's activity, its 'tendency towards organization'.⁹

The Self is Other and no complete explanation of it can be determined; only its partial representative elements can be examined, and if the Self is a 'synergy', the examination of its parts will not give an accurate representation of the Self. However, this has not deterred other commentators on Jung from attempting to do so; they offer definitions of the Self by regarding one of its different aspects as the principal aspect of the archetype. For example, Elie Humbert regards the Self primarily as an ethical postulate. He writes: 'If you were to ask what the other self signifies for me, I should reply that it is, above all, the inner voice which tells me frequently and precisely how I am to live' (Humbert, 1980, p. 240). Indeed, Jung himself describes the Self as 'the will of God' and an inner 'absolute which one must learn how to handle correctly' (Jung, 1951, par. 51). As a God-image, the Self provides an ethical challenge to confront one's projections and resolve the confrontational issues from within. Andrew Samuels also refers to the Self as a religious challenge:

The self involves the potential to become whole or, experientially, to 'feel' whole – a part of feeling whole is feeling a sense of purpose, of sensing a goal. Part of wholeness is to feel that life makes sense and of having an

inclination to do something about it when it does not, thus, to have a religious capacity.

(Samuels, 1994, p. 91)

In support of his claim to a religious capacity he cites Jung as saying: 'The self, though on the one hand simple, is on the other hand an extremely composite thing, a "conglomerate soul"' (Jung, 1950, par. 634). Judith Hubback in 'The Dynamic Self' (1998) takes a different stance and suggests that the Self is principally associated not with its capacity to motivate, but with the movement it inspires. Hubback thus focuses on the Self's propensity to action and dynamism, an interpretation that takes us away from the structural interpretation of the Self as symbolic imagery. She notes that Jung's descriptions of the Self in *Aion* culminate in 'numerous nouns and verbs (powerful ones), containing the elements of energy and psychological action'. She proceeds to list these in their chronological order as follows:

'Integration' and 'assimilation' (par. 43), 'discrimination' (par. 44), 'energetic tension' (par. 53), 'confronts' (par. 59), 'affected' (par. 61), 'relate' (par. 65). In the later chapter 'The Structure and Dynamics of the Self' there are: the self 'a dynamic process' (par. 411), 'move' (par. 413) and 'Sooner or later nuclear physics and the psychology of the unconscious will *draw* closer together as both of them . . . *push forward* into transcendental territory' (par. 412).

(Hubback, 1998, p. 279)

The definitions of the Self, cited above as its principal (but incomplete) aspects, refer either directly to the process of uniting opposites or to its experienced effects. Thus, Humbert and Samuels refer to the sensing of a teleological purpose and movement towards a personal whole with ethical connotations, and Hubback refers to the process impersonally, in terms of its energetic movement and activity. Each of these commentators equates the Self with its process of realization; they do not attempt to define the Self as distinct from the process of uniting opposites. Although we noted that the process of uniting opposites, as a symbolic representative of the Self, is only one subjective interpretation from an infinite variety, it is significant that these commentators and I support Jung in raising it to a prominent position. Indeed, although there are an infinite number of symbols, the effectiveness of which are subjectively determined, some have greater significance than others. For example, the symbol of the cross does not endure solely because of one individual and his subjective determinations, but according to millions of people who all share in its symbolism as a power of collective validity. Similarly, the union of opposites is not 'just another symbol'; it has enormous influence; its connotations, unlike the particularity of the cross, range from the general to the specific as its potency incorporates such notions as difference, relationships, totality, unity, separateness, paradox, death, regeneration, dynamism and so on.

The symbol of the union of opposites, as Jung himself maintains, conveys the very meaning of life (cf. Jung, 1917/1926/1943, par. 78). I believe it is more applicable than other Self-symbols that Jung describes. It is certainly more pertinent than the ‘elephant, horse, bull, bear, white and black birds, fishes, and snakes . . . tortoises, snails, spiders, and beetles . . . the flower and the tree . . . the mountain and the lake’ (Jung, 1951, par. 356). It is perhaps also more powerful than that of the mandala and God Himself, which, although equally effective in the transformation of psychic energy, remain abstract images that are not immediately entertained in the individual’s life. Thus, while the notion of opposition is empirically evident in life (‘the sad truth is that man’s real life consists of a complex of inexorable opposites – day and night, birth and death, happiness and misery, good and evil . . . life is a battle ground. It has always been, and always will be’: *MHS*, p. 75), the notions of the ‘sacred circle’ and God remain obscure and perhaps less likely to be identified by ego-consciousness. Just as Nietzsche promoted the Will to Power over and above the other instincts as the ‘unifying concept’ that organizes the instincts into a ‘hierarchy’, the symbol of the union of opposites can be regarded as a more significant and powerful Self-symbol over and above other Self-symbols. However, we must remember that this attempt, as with any other attempt to rank symbols by value, can be justified only at a subjective level.

The Self is susceptible to potential inconsistency because it is not grounded within concrete theory, but within subjective interpretation. The Self is an elusive entity, one that is defined by infinity and irreducible to intellectual terms. It is effectively a transcendental postulate ‘which, although justifiable psychologically, does not allow of scientific proof’ (Jung, 1928b, par. 405). This postulate serves only to formulate and link together the psychic processes that have already been theoretically established.

If the Self were available for an intellectual encounter it could be understood without much difficulty, for its symbols are ‘formulations that can easily be mastered by the philosophic intellect’ (Jung, 1951, par. 60) – though, as we have seen, some can be mastered more easily than others. The intellect promotes the illusion that one can be in possession of the Self and can master and manipulate it accordingly,

But actually one has acquired nothing more than its name, despite the age-old prejudice that the name magically represents the thing, and that it is sufficient to pronounce the name in order to posit the thing’s existence . . . the intellectual ‘grasp’ of a psychological fact produces no more than a concept of it, and that concept is no more than a name, a *flatus vocis*.

(Jung, 1951, par. 60)

In terms of an intellectual theory, the Self is simply the ‘name’ given to that which is unfathomable in the psyche, a metaphysical concept. But this is inappropriate for Jung. For, even though the Self cannot be known, the Self is a concept or

postulate that is grounded neither in metaphysical speculation nor faith; rather, according to Jung, an adequate picture of the Self is formed on the basis of a thorough 'experience' of it: 'Just as the concept arose out of an experience of reality, so it can be elucidated only by further experience' (ibid., par. 63; cf. Jung, 1931c, par. 1292; Jung, 1932, par. 501).¹⁰

alchemy we often come across the image of a pair linked together by a third' (Von Franz, 2000, p. 396; see also: 'Three and one, moreover, are well-known alchemical formulae for the wholeness of the central symbol', *ibid.*, p. 275).

- 17 Thus, the methods of Jungian psychology can be useful when applied to philosophical theory, as it is able to expose that which theoretical reflection is unable to access. For example, it is able to get behind the motivations of the author. Indeed, by analysing the role of opposites in Nietzsche's model of the self, in comparison with that of Jung, we shall be given new interpretation and resolution to particular problems of inconsistency and obscurity in Nietzschean philosophy through understanding them in psychological terms. Most notably, the meaning and constitution of the *Übermensch*.
- 18 While philosophical criticism can *distort* Jungian thought, elsewhere I have argued that the Self is principally a numinous experience that evades and *violates* ego-comprehension. The Self cannot be defined or reduced to an intellectual analysis. Furthermore, it should not be reduced to limited definitions, where it is no more than a transcendental postulate, passive function or derivative from the internal structure of Jungian argument. See Huskinson (2002).

2 Opposites in early Nietzsche: metaphysical, aesthetic and psychological opposites

- 1 Nietzsche later calls this metaphysical notion of 'primal unity' the 'Will to Power'. However, I believe that the Will to Power is not a metaphysical doctrine. For commentators on Nietzsche that interpret the Will to Power as a non-metaphysical doctrine see Maudmarie Clark (1990), who argues that the Will to Power is a hypothetical argument that, ironically, encourages his reader not to look for metaphysical meaning in life. Sarah Kofman (1972) argues that the Will to Power is a 'superior hypothesis' about interpretation because it promotes the greatest 'enrichment and embellishment of life' (p. 202): it is 'not a revelation but a justification of Being' (p. 201); it affirms the fullness of life by promoting the multiplicity of its possible interpretations (cited in Clark, 1990, p. 15). Walter Kaufmann (1968) argues that the Will to Power is a psychological doctrine: it is 'the one and only interpretation of human behaviour [and reality in general] of which we are capable when we consider the evidence and think about it as clearly as we can' (*ibid.*, p. 206). In other words, the Will to Power is true only because it is the theory that best accounts for our experience. (Nietzsche certainly regarded the Will to Power as the basis of psychology; thus: psychology is the 'morphology and the *development-theory of the will to power*': *BGE*, 23).
- 2 Nietzsche later remarks that 'in contrast to the animals, man has cultivated an abundance of *contrary* drives and impulses within himself: thanks to this synthesis he is master of the earth' (*WP*, 966).
- 3 This tragic world view is evident in the philosophy of Heraclitus, who transformed the thought of the world as eternal flux from one of terror 'into its opposite, into sublimity and the feeling of blessed astonishment' (*PTAG*, 5). This transformation occurs with the discovery of a cosmos-creating force, 'Logos', through which 'wonderful order, regularity and certainty manifested themselves in all coming-to-be' (*PTAG*, 9).
- 4 Nietzsche here anticipates Freud's notion of the manifest and latent content of dreams (see Freud, 1900/1991, vi).
- 5 Nietzsche later changes his attitude towards tragedy: humans should no longer seek this transcendent realm in order to escape the confrontation with terrible reality, but must learn to find joy in that confrontation. This tragic attitude – a 'pessimism of strength' – will be discussed in Chapter 3.
- 6 However, in *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), Eric Dodds notes: 'Tradition said,

- probably with truth, that the original Earth oracle at Delphi had been a dream-oracle' (p. 110).
- 7 Nietzsche does allude to 'Apollinian music' (*BT*, 2) of a strongly rhythmic character that is associated with the lyre, but he does not expand upon the traditional association of Apollo with music.
 - 8 See William Guthrie (1950, pp. 205–253) for further discussion of this distinction.
 - 9 The association of Apollo with consciousness and of Dionysus with the unconscious will be examined in Chapter 9.
 - 10 The connection between Nietzsche's aesthetics and metaphysics is apparent. It is not simply the case that art is privileged within his metaphysical theory (as it is with Schopenhauer), for his aesthetics is metaphysical. In *Preface to Wagner* (1888d/1967) Nietzsche writes: 'art represents the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life'; that is, art, by serving to protect the individual through its illusions, has a high metaphysical purpose attached to it.
 - 11 This contradiction will be examined in Chapter 3.
 - 12 In Greek tragedy the Dionysian is associated with the chorus, which was composed of satyrs who, through their dance, induced a sense of ecstasy in the spectator, thereby achieving a breakdown of the barrier between spectator and stage, and creating an atmosphere similar to a cultish ceremony. The function of the Apollinian is to shield the spectator against the full impact of the music, at the same time as accentuating it. By itself Dionysian music would be a devastating experience, with its evocation of primordial universality. The Apollinian drama of the tragic myth makes the evocation bearable in its portrayal of the sublime hero, with whom the spectator can empathize and find pleasure. Contrary to the negation of individuality, the spectator is relieved of the burden of the Dionysian by the hero of the play, who struggles to take on the Dionysian world himself.
 - 13 In Chapter 3 we shall see that this consideration is irrelevant, for Nietzsche's dismissal of metaphysics brings with it the need to reinterpret the Dionysian and Apollinian as psychological impulses only.
 - 14 It must be noted that moderation for Nietzsche does not mean the avoidance of strong opposition; it does not find a parallel in the Aristotelian mean (which Nietzsche rejects as 'mediocre': *TSZ*, III, 'Of the Virtue that Makes Small', 2). Rather, it refers to the promotion of the most antagonistic traits in equal measure. Thus, the maintenance of the most intense conflict between elements in a strong binary opposition characterizes the most spiritual of men (*TI*, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', 17).
 - 15 Kaufmann in his essay 'Nietzsche and the Death of Tragedy: A Critique' (1976) argues that Nietzsche was wrong to consider Euripides the rationalist among the Greek tragedians, and considers instead Aeschylus (Nietzsche's candidate for the most irrational) as the most rational and closest to Plato. Dodds accepts Kaufmann's reversal of Nietzsche's schema, and argues in 'Euripides the Irrationalist' (Dodds, 1929, pp. 78–92), that the decline of Greek tragedy was caused by irrationalism, and that Socrates and Plato, contrary to Nietzsche's thought, embody true Greek genius.

3 Opposites in Nietzsche post-1878: the denial of metaphysical opposites

- 1 As we shall see in the course of our inquiry, Nietzsche does not reject aestheticism completely in his model of opposites. See note 9.
- 2 The metaphysician therefore denies the Heraclitean notion of polarity that Nietzsche himself endorses: 'The diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to reunite' (*PTAG*, 5).
- 3 The distinction between 'true' and 'apparent' worlds is his most frequent target for the

refutation of opposites. See the end of 'History of an Error', 'How the World at Last Became a Myth' (*TI*), where Nietzsche identifies the abolition of this dualism as his personal mission. This is because Nietzsche believes the idea of a true world beyond time to have lost its purpose and to be wholly irrelevant to our 'earthly' concerns. With the abolition of the true world also comes the abolition of the apparent world; the whole metaphysical dichotomy is thus dissolved.

- 4 In *HAH* a difficulty arises for Nietzsche. Nietzsche draws a distinction, an *opposition*, between his 'historical philosophy' and metaphysical philosophy. Perhaps due to the recognition of this danger and failure Nietzsche changes his approach in *BGE* from a direct comparison between his own interpretation and that of the metaphysicians to focusing on the future and the anticipation of 'the arrival of the new species of philosopher' (*BGE*, 2). This change demonstrates a potential awareness on Nietzsche's part of falling into oppositional thinking himself. However, this view is negated in Nietzsche's insistence that we 'have to await the arrival of a new species of philosopher, one which possesses tastes and inclinations *opposite to* and different from those of its predecessors' (*ibid.*, italics mine).
- 5 Maudemarie Clark argues that the reason for this is that Nietzsche had not yet found a way to deny the conceivability of the thing-in-itself (Clark, 1990, pp. 98–99). Thus in *HAH* Nietzsche refuses to rule out the possibility of a metaphysical world; he insists only that truth or essence might differ radically from its possible appearance to human beings. But by the time Nietzsche writes *BGE* he thinks he has found a way to discard the metaphysical world completely by arguing that the thing-in-itself is an impossible notion that involves a contradiction in terms: 'But I shall reiterate a hundred times that "immediate certainty", like "absolute knowledge" and "thing in itself" contains a *contradictio in adjecto*: we really ought to get free from the seduction of words!' (*BGE*, 16). The rest of this passage, however, does not explicitly argue why the very idea of the thing-in-itself involves a contradiction in terms; this must be sought elsewhere. Thus, in *GS* Nietzsche writes:

What is 'appearance' for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown x or remove from it!

(*GS*, 54)

In *TL* Nietzsche writes of this 'mysterious X of the thing-in-itself' and equates it with 'the essence of all things' (*TL*, 83; *WP*, 880). The argument in *GS*, 54 therefore supports the argument of *BGE*, 16: Nietzsche rejects the existence of a metaphysical world for its manifestation must be within a world of appearance, the world that it necessarily negates.

- 6 The question of Nietzsche and metaphysics is derived from Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche. See 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"' (Heidegger, 1977).
- 7 However, the inherent movement itself that is found within Nietzsche's writing can be seen as a denial of the rigid structure of these opposites. Nietzsche insists upon fluidity and playfulness within written texts:

What a torment books written in German are for him who has a *third* ear! How disgustedly he stands beside the slowly turning swamp of sounds without resonance, of rhythms that do not dance, which the Germans call a book! . . . How many Germans know . . . that there is *art* in every good sentence – art that must be grasped if the sentence is to be understood!

(*BGE*, 246)

Nietzsche is aiming for a Derridian style of writing where 'philosophical criticism' is replaced by something closer to an 'art criticism' that leads the reader to a greater enlightenment and personal depth of feeling through the sheer provocation of its style; the reader is not given 'answers' but is asked actively to seek the themes presented within the text.

- 8 However, Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading* (1979) shows that Nietzsche consistently rejects metaphysics by deconstructing it and destabilizing it from within. He maintains that there is a distinction in between what a statement literally asserts and what it does or shows. In Nietzsche there are statements with an obvious metaphysical content, and if we are concerned only with what these statements literally assert then we must conclude that Nietzsche is indeed a metaphysician who contradicts his own criticism of metaphysics. But, if we are concerned instead with what these statements actually do, we see that they undermine their own authority and reveal their own inadequacy. De Man therefore asserts that statements can show what they cannot literally assert without falling into contradiction. He therefore considers language to be metaphorical, that is, grounded in rhetoric rather than logic, and incapable of corresponding to anything non-linguistic, which is contrary to the metaphysical demand. De Man therefore believes that the limitations of rational-discursive thought can be shown when its origin in rhetoric or metaphor is revealed, but that this origin cannot simply be asserted because this assertion would itself presuppose the validity of rational-discursive thought. The apparent contradiction between Nietzsche's theory and practice of metaphysics does not, therefore, reveal any inadequacy and inconsistency in his thought, since it is only by means of such contradictions that the illusions of metaphysics can be exhibited. Nietzsche's thought is therefore not a claim to truth, for if it were, Nietzsche would be wrong when he claims that all truth is illusion, and his thought would remain inconsistent. (When Nietzsche says life is chaotic and stable he does not assert the truth, for this would contradict with his assertion that life cannot be articulated adequately in language.) Therefore, to avoid rendering Nietzsche's thought inconsistent, De Man insists that Nietzsche remains immersed within the errors he sought to expose. According to De Man, the allegory of errors found in Nietzsche's thought is 'the very model of philosophical rigor' (*ibid.*, p. 118).
- 9 Although art is no longer required in its illusory capacity (that is, to mask the terrors of life in a veil of comfort), it is still endorsed by the later Nietzsche in its *creative* capacity. In Chapter 4 we shall see that Nietzsche's notion of the Will to Power is the 'artistic' power of adaptation that increases one's capacity for creativity through the union of opposites. Later we shall see that the unification of opposites does not lend itself easily to intellectual, scientific examination; it's meaning is better conveyed through symbols. Also, we shall see that Nietzsche's notion of art has religious connotations. In this sense we could say that the psyche still requires 'art' for its expression.

4 The *Übermensch* as a union of opposites

- 1 Perhaps the most notorious misinterpretation of the *Übermensch*, as a doctrine of the 'Master Race', is made explicit in Nazi distortions (see Heller, 1988; Aschheim, 1992, pp. 232–272, 315–331).
- 2 Nietzsche writes: 'In art, man takes delight in himself as perfection' (*TI*, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', 9; *WP*, 852). 'Art' here does not refer to art in its illusory capacity, but in its creative capacity. For clarification of my interpretation see Chapter 3, note 9.
- 3 Other commentators on Nietzsche have defined the *Übermensch* in similar terms as

‘uniting the instincts’, in the pursuit of increased creation, by the ‘power of adaptation’. Arthur Danto writes:

The *Übermensch* is not the blond giant dominating his lesser fellows. He is merely a joyous, guiltless, free human being, *in possession of instinctual drives, and so is in a position to make something of himself rather than being the product of instinctual discharge* and external obstacle.

(Danto, 1965, p. 200, italics mine)

Kaufmann writes: ‘[The *Übermensch*] has overcome his animal nature, organized the chaos of his passions, sublimated his impulses, and given style to his character’ (Kaufmann, 1968, p. 316). Richard Schacht writes: ‘The *Übermensch* is the essence of the “higher man”; he is vital, healthy, self-controlled . . . and he is creative’ (Schacht, 1983, p. 340).

4 Zarathustra also takes up this theme:

Truly, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men! The terrible thing to my eyes is to find men shattered in pieces and scattered as if over a battle-field of slaughter. And when my eye flees from the present to the past, it always discovers the same thing: fragments and limbs and dreadful chances – but no men!

(*TSZ*, II, ‘Of Redemption’)

5 Karl Jaspers also maintains that creation is integral to Nietzsche’s philosophy and necessary to the ‘the highest type’ (Jaspers, 1966, p. 152). For

Creation is *evaluation* . . . Creation is *faith* . . . Creation is *love* . . . In creation is *annihilation*. All creation is *communication* . . . Still, all of creation is great pain and lack of knowledge . . . In creation *authentic being is attained*.

(Jaspers, 1966, pp. 151–152)

The greatest capacity for creation is attained when all instincts are subordinate to the unifying principle: the Will to Power. The Will to Power is the dominating instinct. Nietzsche refers to it as:

The dominating passion, which even brings with it the supremest form of health; here the co-ordination of the inner systems and their operation in the service of one end is best achieved – but this is almost the definition of health!

(*WP*, 778)

Sickness and weakness are defined by entropy, an absence of creativity; sickness occurs when there is a ‘multitude and disgregation [sic] of impulses and the lack of any systematic order among them’ (*WP*, 46). Strength and health, on the other hand, are defined by ‘their co-ordination under a single predominant impulse’ (ibid); that is, when the impulses are coordinated by the Will to Power.

6 This version of the myth is found in Hornblower and Spawford (1999, pp. 479–482). There are variations of the story; for example, in another version the Titans whiten their faces with chalk and attack the infant Dionysus as he looks into a mirror. It is interesting to note the corresponding section at the beginning of *TSZ*, II, entitled ‘The Child with the Mirror’, in which Zarathustra looks into the child’s mirror and sees himself as a Titan-like devil. Zarathustra understood this as a warning that his ‘Dionysian’ doctrine was in danger (see Chapter 11 for discussion of this).

- 7 This myth supports the notion that mankind is composed of opposites: the human body is vulgar and evil (since man sprang from the Titans) and the human soul is pure and divine (for the Titans have devoured the god). Thus, in its current state mankind is mediocre, but has within it the potential to be *Übermenschlichkeit*.
- 8 Nietzsche here is discussing his later notion of the Dionysian, which can be construed as a union of Dionysian and Apollinian elements.

5 Opposites in the Jungian model of the psyche

- 1 Here I am referring to the realm of the unconscious itself. I am not referring to the contents of the unconscious, which can, according to the intensity of its energetic charge, become conscious and therefore accessible to, and no longer alienated from, the individual.
- 2 However, according to Hillman (1979), a major proponent of the Archetypal School of Jungian thought, the dream is complete in itself. It must be taken literally and there is no need to talk about the dream compensating consciousness. Hillman writes: 'Theory of compensation appeals to the dayworld perspective of ego and results from its philosophy, not from the dream' (Hillman, 1979, p. 79).
- 3 According to Jung, this explains

why people who have unrealistic ideas or too high an opinion of themselves, or who make grandiose plans out of proportion to their real capacities, have dreams of falling. The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities, and at the same time it warns them of the dangers in their present course.

(MHS, p. 40)

- 4 This corresponds to the 'inverse cripples' of Nietzsche, who 'lack everything except one thing, of which they have too much' (TSZ, II, 'Of Redemption').
- 5 From out of this scheme, of implementing the two attitudes and the four functions, it is possible to produce a total of sixteen different personality types. Jung says that there is no a priori basis for these different types. He distinguishes the four functions as the criteria for these types 'because they cannot be related or reduced to one another' (Jung, 1921, par. 731).
- 6 It is clear that Jung is implementing his theory of opposites in the construction of his system of typology. Jung divides the four functions into opposing categories of rational and irrational, and separates a superior and dominant function from its opposing inferior function, attributing the former to consciousness and the latter to the unconscious. It must be noted that the superior and inferior functions do not each represent one of the opposing categories of rationality and irrationality; rather Jung conceived the superior and inferior functions to come from the same category, that is, to be both rational or irrational. Thus, intuition and sensation are opposites because they both share in irrationality. I think it is more fitting to have intuition and thinking as true opposites, as representing rational and irrational tendencies. However, as we have noted, the rational functions are evaluative and the irrational are perceptive, and two corresponding functions of similar disposition cannot operate at the same time; that is, two evaluative functions or two perceptive functions cannot be simultaneously applied to measure the same thing. In accordance with this, Samuels writes: 'Jung felt that, as a person is more likely to be rational or irrational, the important question typologically would have to be answered from within either the rational or the irrational category' (Samuels, 1985, p. 63).
- 7 It is inherent because it is part of the individual's natural disposition. Jung writes: 'The type antithesis must have some kind of biological foundation' (Jung, 1921, par. 559).

- 8 It therefore follows that an individual with a natural disposition towards extraversion should have an easier time than the individual with an introverted disposition in making such adjustment to the environment. This is because the interest of the former lies within the external environment while the latter is more concerned with his inner subjectivity. However, in the second half of life the introvert will probably have an easier time than the extravert, because this phase of life is concerned primarily with the confrontation of the unconscious attitude: that is, with the neglected attitude that remains in opposition to ego-consciousness.
- 9 According to Jung, the need to confront the unconscious attitude is also a result of the individual's vocation. The individual must change his attitude 'as if it were a daemon whispering to him of new and wonderful things . . . Only the man who can consciously assent to the power of the inner voice becomes a personality' (Jung, 1934a, pars. 300, 308).
- 10 Although knowledge of the whole personality is contained within the psyche, its realization or discovery occurs over a course of time. Specifically, Jung tells us it is an achievement of the second half of life, an achievement that sees the psyche naturally accept the neglected attitude and functions into consciousness. The 'second half of life' is vague. Jung equates the transition from the first half of life to the second with the 'mid-life crisis', which, in psychoanalytic terms, is considered to be at an approximate age of 35 years for a man (Jaques, 1965, p. 502; Jung, 1929, par. 16). Jaques notes that the mid-life crisis is more difficult to identify in women as it is often obscured by the proximity of the onset of changes connected with the menopause. However, such mid-life crises are not universal. This means that the idea that there are two halves of life with their corresponding characteristics of 'sickness' and 'healthy balance' are not applicable to *all* individuals. Indeed, it is argued by the Developmental School (notably by Fordham) that the activities of the 'second half' of life (that is, of balancing and uniting opposites) is a process that spans the whole of the individual's life and its essential characteristics can be seen within children. The Developmental School therefore dissolves the periodic boundaries in which the individual can be identified either as healthy and wholesome or a 'sick animal'. In other words, the individual may never regard one opposite in the binary pair as primary and may thus always maintain a balance of opposites. But this is not something one should imitate, for a balance of opposites in this case is not necessarily healthy. The individual will have failed to develop a strong conscious attitude and will have difficulties adapting to the social environment; such individuals will be easily disposed to neuroses and the 'sick animal'.
- 11 Of course, individuals are also required to confront their personal unconscious; the contents of the collective unconscious require the involvement of elements of the personal unconscious in their manifestation. According to M. Williams (1973), the two kinds of unconscious are indivisible. The distinction between personal and collective categories of unconscious is irrelevant because primordial images or archetypal structures remain skeletal without personal experience to give them substance.
- 12 In Chapter 9 we shall see that Jung's definitive example of an over-inflated personality is that of Nietzsche.
- 13 It must be noted that there are many more archetypes to be encountered in the individuation process than I have mentioned here. Jung writes:

Besides these figures there are still a few others, less frequent and less striking, which have likewise undergone poetic as well as mythological formulation. I would mention, for instance, the figure of the hero and of the wise man, to name only two of the best known.

(Jung, 1939b, par. 515)

Jung also talks about encountering figures that represent superior wisdom and personifications of intelligence and knowledge (*MDR*, pp. 174–178). There are also archetypal situations such as death, birth and initiation.

- 14 According to Jung, the shadow is represented in dreams as a figure of the same sex. 'In the dreams of Europeans [it often appears] as dark-skinned, alien or primitive' (Storr, 1988, p. 87). Jung tells us about a 'small, brown-skinned savage' in a dream he had about Siegfried (*MDR*, par. 174) and he affirms that this figure 'was an embodiment of the primitive shadow' (par. 181). The anima is often represented as a witch or a priestess, 'with women who have links with the "spirit world", i.e. the unconscious' (*MHS*, p. 177), while the animus is often represented as a group of men (for women often focus on one man in their conscious relationships). The Self is often personified in dreams as a superior human figure, as a goddess to women, and a wise old man to men (*ibid.*, p. 197). The manifestation of one of these personifications in a dream indicates that part of the unconscious attitude (i.e. the shadow or anima/animus) is in some way actively compensating the conscious attitude, which further indicates that a particular 'stage' in the individuation process requires further development.
- 15 However, Jung also notes that the shadow is never fully integrated into consciousness: 'There are certain features [of the shadow] which offer the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence' (Jung, 1951, par. 16). Attention to one's shadow is necessary *throughout* the individuation process.
- 16 Hupert Hermans describes this phenomenon as 'moving opposites', so that 'when a person attempts to come to a unification of opposites within a certain polarity, there may be a spontaneous movement towards yet another polarity' (Hermans, 1993, p. 438). Edinger distinguishes between a 'lesser *coniunctio*' and a 'greater *coniunctio*' (Edinger, 1994a, pp. 211–231). The lesser union 'must be subjected to further procedures' (p. 212) while the greater union is 'the goal of the *opus*, the supreme accomplishment' (p. 211). Similarly, Von Franz, in her commentary on Aquinas' *Aurora Consurgens*, refers to 'the starting point' of the individuation process as 'the preconscious totality', and 'the end-product' of the process as 'the actualized totality' (Von Franz, 2000, p. 347).
- 17 These notions are 'derived by the alchemists from the dissolution of the "matter" in acids, from the roasting of ores, the expulsion of sulphur or mercury, the reduction of metallic oxides, and so forth' (Jung, 1945/1954, par. 468).
- 18 Jung argues that the symbol of the queen drinking blood is further indication of the displacement and overlapping of imagery often found within alchemical texts. When 'we are told that the queen drank blood, this image corresponds in every aspect to the king drinking water . . . to the king drowning in the sea' (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 403).
- 19 It is interesting to note that the peacock is an early Christian symbol for resurrection (Jung, 1955–1956, par. 395). We could say that the peacock's flesh in the alchemical model initiates the resurrection of the king.

6 The Self as a union of opposites

- 1 Indeed, *Aion*, the title of Jung's *Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (1951), refers to the transcendent aspect of the Self, for it is taken from the ancient religion of Mythraism where 'Aion' is the name of the god that rules over the astrological calendar and over time itself.
- 2 Levinas' idea that the experience of the Other is violent is similar to that of Otto who, in *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), defines the experience of the numinous as immediate experiences of 'awefulness' (Otto, 1917/1936, IV: 1), 'overpoweringness' (IV: 2) and 'urgency' (IV: 3).

- 3 The parallel between Jungian 'Self-experience' and the Levinasian experience of the Other is further paralleled in the Kantian notion of the sublime (see Chapter 8, note 16).
- 4 Jung writes: 'You see, by means of a symbol, such dangers can be accepted: one can submit to them, digest them. Otherwise . . . it is a very dangerous situation: one is exposed without protection to the onslaught of the unconscious' (*SNZ*, II, p. 1249).
- 5 The features of the Self-symbol will change as the conscious attitude changes.
- 6 The subjective power of analogies of the Self is aptly demonstrated in the discourse between Redfearn (1990) and Booth (1990a, 1990b) in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 35. The disagreement between the two scholars revolves around the analogy Redfearn uses to describe the notions of the many 'selves' and the many feelings of 'I', implemented across the psychoanalytic traditions, including the Jungian 'Self'. Booth first tries to enlarge Redfearn's analogy to include further connotations of the Self that he thinks have been ignored. Then he offers a different analogy, which he personally feels more appropriately encapsulates the notion of the Self. In *My Self, My Many Selves* (1985) Redfearn uses an analogy of the theatre to provide a general model of the self/Self. He writes:

This 'I' migrates hither and thither to various locations in the total personality, like the spotlight at a theatre picking out first one actor then another, or, even more pertinently, like a pilgrim on his journey of life visiting one place, then another, in his universe . . . I call these various actors in ourselves 'sub-personalities'.

(Redfearn, 1985, p. xii)

Booth in 'A Suggested Analogy for the Elusive Self' (1990a) argues against this analogy. He states that words such as 'theatre' and 'pilgrim' are 'loaded words' and as such have connotations that 'point our understanding in certain directions' (p. 335). Booth says that it specifically

leaves open the question of governance: who is providing the integration – is there a 'personality' co-ordinating the activities of the sub-personalities? Or, if the 'feeling of I' as 'pilgrim' merely visits 'places' in the self, what authority does it carry as a visitor, or find there as it 'arrives'?

(Booth, 1990a, p. 336)

Booth proceeds to offer his own analogy of the self/Self, that of a 'committee of the whole', which, like Booth's criticism of Redfearn's analogy, is guilty of using loaded words. Booth's 'committee' has innumerable members who each have equal authority and can 'seize the floor at any time', thereby taking the position of the 'I' with the other parts of the self acting as 'aides or advisers'. Booth regards his own subjective analogy to be more appropriate for expressing the objective self/Self than that of Redfearn. However, Redfearn quickly responds to Booth, maintaining that the analogy of the committee is no better than that of the theatre. He writes:

His picture . . . strikes me as one way in which the self and the sub-personalities of the self interact. But of course it is only *one* way . . . If we remember that the 'sub-personalities' are meant to denote the archetypal as well as the complex figures, then the notion of a committee seems hardly more adequate than the picture of a company of actors.

(Redfearn, 1990, p. 339, italics mine)

Booth later responds: 'Dr. Redfearn's generous acknowledgement that the committee analogy might show *one* way in which parts of the self interact, gives about as much

recognition as one analogist can hope for from another' (Booth, 1990b, p. 341, italics mine). The subjective power of symbolic imagery is at play here. Both scholars are more content to uphold their own analogy, and any attempt to persuade and communicate its authority requires justification; no one symbol can be universally accepted because symbols are subjectively determined.

- 7 The Ouroboros (the alchemical symbol of the snake/dragon swallowing its tail) is similar to the mandala and would also work as a protective circle. See Goethe's *The Parable* where the serpent wound herself around the Prince's dead body and took her tail in her mouth in order to become 'a protective maternal power, for she preserves the body of the Prince from corruption' (Raphael, 1965, p. 98).
- 8 This process would be a form of Aristotelian *kinesis*. But the union of opposites does not correspond to Aristotle's notion of *energia* either, where there is no *process* at all, but every 'stage' is complete in itself. For Jung, on the contrary, the Self is the very purpose of the process, as a lifetime project that never terminates.
- 9 Fordham's analysis of the Self maintains the distinction between the process and the end-product of the process. However, this does not rescue the notion of a union of opposites from its demotion to a subjective symbol, for although he distinguishes between the two, he still maintains that they are both identified with the Self, albeit as different aspects of it. Fordham's discussions on the Self bring to light an apparent contradiction between two definitions of the Self that Jung developed – the Self as totality and the Self as archetype (Fordham, 1985, pp. 20–24). To see how Fordham's discussion contributes to our analysis, we can equate the 'Self as totality' with the notion of the 'Self as process', and the 'Self as archetype' with the notion of the 'Self as final product of the process'. The process in each case refers to the process of the unification of opposites, so that in the former definition the process is directly identified with the Self but in the latter it is not (the Self is merely its end result, not the means by which this result is achieved). The 'Self as totality' is equivalent with the 'Self as process' because both define the Self as the sum of that which determines its manifestation – that is, everything that has gone in to its establishment. The Self is identified with that which leads to its manifestation; it has connotations of movement and transition. Likewise, the 'Self as archetype' is equivalent to the final product in itself: it is complete, the end result.

Fordham begins by examining the concept of Self as a totality, which he maintains first makes an appearance in *Psychological Types* (1921), where Jung discriminates between the ego and the Self and states that the Self is 'the subject of my total psyche which also includes the unconscious. In this sense the self would be an ideal entity which embraces the ego' (Fordham, 1985, p. 20). Fordham notes significant implications of this, for

if the self is the whole psyche, then it cannot be observed intrapsychically since the ego is contained in it as a part and cannot function as an observer. It is only when some part of the ego stands separate from or only participates up to a point in the rest of the whole that data about the self can be collected.

(Fordham, 1985, p. 21)

Next Fordham examines the concept of the Self as an archetype, which contradicts the totality thesis. Here he quotes Jung as stating that the Self is 'the real organizing principle of the unconscious, the quaternity, or squared circle of the self' (Jung, 1951, par. 318), and again refers to places where Jung defines or implies that the Self is the archetype of order, whose special function is to balance and pattern the other archetypes (*CW* 12; Jung, 1942/1954, par. 433; Jung, 1958, pars. 624, 805). Fordham makes clear that the archetype thesis does not contradict the fundamental notion from the totality

thesis – that the Self is unknowable to consciousness – for the archetype itself is purely unconscious. What he does find problematic in the totality thesis is how the Self can be both the totality of the psyche including all the archetypes, and also one of these archetypes. Therefore, in terms of our own use, the question will read: ‘If the Self is equivalent to the process of uniting opposites, how can it also be the product of this process?’ Fordham notes that, as an archetype, the Self cannot be a totality (for the ego and archetypes must be distinguished to avoid inflation) and neither can it ever be experienced (since it stands outside ego-comprehension). Nevertheless, the symbolic images that represent the Self in consciousness are clearly archetypal and are presumably structured by the archetype that they represent: the Self. By way of conclusion to this paradox, Fordham conceives the Self not as an archetype (and thus, not as the ‘product’ of the process) but as ‘beyond’ archetypes and ego (which corresponds to our notion of the Self as a synergy – ‘beyond’ the sum of its parts and process), which are then seen as arising out of or ‘deintegrating’ from the Self. Furthermore, he suggests that a distinction in terminology be made so that the term ‘Self’ would be used only to refer to a psychic totality; otherwise the term ‘central archetype of order’ would be preferred (Fordham, 1973). For the purpose of our analysis, we see that Fordham upholds the definition of the ‘Self as totality’ only: a totality that is not directly identifiable with the sum of its parts, and therefore with the process itself, but is ‘beyond’ them, as a synergy. The process of the Self’s realization (the unification of opposites) is defined by Fordham not explicitly as the Self, but as the ‘central archetype of order’. In accordance with this view, Jung himself rewrote his definition of the Self (Jung, 1921, pars. 789–791), taking into account this apparent contradiction, and emphasizing the Self as a special transcendental concept. This new definition strengthens the notion of the Self as a totality, but its transcendental element also enables the Self to function as the archetype of unity.

- 10 But is Jung correct to say that the concept of the Self is turned into *fact* simply because it arises out of experience and is elucidated by further experience? Plaut remains uncertain, for ‘such understanding drives one to the very edge of sanity. If Jung’s vision arose from that very place in his mind (as we have reason to believe), small wonder that it makes us anxious too’ (Plaut, 1985, p. 248). However, Plaut is resigned to acknowledge other scientifically ‘approved’ theories that make use of such ‘mad-driving’ paradoxes, such as quantum physics where the facts depend ultimately upon the act of observation. Nevertheless, Colman saves Jung from potential flaw and takes the argument of experience a step further by concluding that

the self is not an experience and it certainly is not a content of experience, but rather it is the taste of experience, its quality. The self is not subjectivity but the condition by which subjectivity is possible. It is not myself, nor the experience of myself but the very possibility of my having self-experience.

(Colman, 2000, p. 15)

The Self provides the grounding upon which the individual can have experiences; it is not merely, in Levinasian terms, the Other that questions the authority of the Same (the ego), but the fundamental grounding which enables the Other to question the Same: it is the very ‘encounter’ itself between the two elements of Other and Same. Or, in Jungian terms, it is the ‘third thing’ (Jung, 1916/1957, par. 189) that unites the two elements. The Self is the dangerous ‘relation of non-relation’ that forces individuals into a more complete understanding of themselves.

Nietzsche and Jung

The Whole Self in the Union of Opposites

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First published 2004 by Brunner-Routledge
27 Church Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 2FA

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Brunner-Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

Brunner-Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

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Typeset in Times by Keystroke, Jacaranda Lodge, Wolverhampton
Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall
Cover design by Hybert Design

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This publication has been produced with paper manufactured to strict environmental standards and with pulp derived from sustainable forests.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Huskinson, Lucy, 1976–

Nietzsche and Jung : the whole self in the union of opposites / Lucy Huskinson.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58391-832-9 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 1-58391-833-7

(pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, 1844–1900. 2. Jung, C. G. (Carl Gustav), 1875–1961. I. Title.

B3317.H87 2004

193—dc22

2004003889

ISBN 0-203-50829-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-59356-1 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 1-58391-832-9 (Hbk)

ISBN 1-58391-833-7 (Pbk)