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X

THE FISH IN ALCHEMY

1. *The Medusa*

- ¹⁹³ Michel Nostradamus, physician and astrologer, must surely have been acquainted with alchemy, since this art was practised mainly by physicians. Whether he knew that the fish was a symbol for the arcane substance and the *lapis* is perhaps questionable, but it is more than likely that he had read the classics of alchemy. Of these one of the greatest authorities is the *Turba philosophorum*, which had been translated very early (11th–12th cent.) from the Arabic into Latin. At about the same time, or a little later, its appendices were also translated, namely the “*Allegoriae super librum Turbae*,” the “*Allegoriae sapientum supra librum Turbae XXIX distinctiones*,”¹ together with the “*Aenigmata ex Visione Arislei*” and “*In Turbam philosophorum exercitationes*.” The *Turba* belongs to the same sphere of thought as the *Tabula smaragdina*, and hence is one of those late Hellenistic products that were transmitted to us by the Arabs, mainly, perhaps, through the Neoplatonic school of Harran (Thabit ibn Qurrah and others), which flourished at the beginning of the eleventh century.² The ideas preserved in these treatises are “Alexandrian,” and the recipes, particularly those set forth in the “*Allegoriae super librum Turbae*,” adhere closely to the spirit and letter of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*.³
- ¹⁹⁴ Now these “*Allegoriae*”⁴ are our earliest source for the alchemical fish symbolism. For this reason we may assign a

¹ This treatise was not printed together with the *Turba*, like the others, but it appears to belong to the same category. The 28th *Distinctio* contains the “*Dicta Belini*” (Belinus = Apollonius of Tyana).

² Cf. Ruska, *Turba Philosophorum*.

³ Cf. the edn. of Preisendanz.

⁴ Printed in *Artis auriferae* (1593), I, pp. 139ff.; *Theatrum chemicum*, V, pp. 64ff.; and Manget, *Bibliotheca chemica curiosa* (1702), I, pp. 467ff., 494ff.

fairly early date to the alchemical fish—before the eleventh century, in any case.⁵ There is nothing to suggest that it is of Christian origin. That, however, did not prevent it from becoming—through the transformation of the arcane substance which it had at first represented—a symbol of the *lapis*, the latter term denoting the *prima materia* as well as the end product of the process, variously called *lapis philosophorum*, *elixir vitae*, *aurum nostrum*, *infans*, *puer*, *filius philosophorum*, *Hermaphroditus*, and so on. This *filius*, as I have shown elsewhere, was regarded as a parallel of Christ. Thus, by an indirect route, the alchemical fish attains the dignity of a symbol for the *Salvator mundi*. Its father is God, but its mother is the *Sapientia Dei*, or Mercurius as Virgo. The *filius philosophorum* (or *macrocosmi*), otherwise the *lapis*, means nothing other than the self, as I have explained in a detailed examination of its various attributes and peculiarities.

195 The text containing the earliest reference to the fish runs: "There is in the sea a round fish, lacking bones and cortex, and having in itself a fatness, a wondrous virtue, which, if it is cooked on a slow fire until its fatness and moisture entirely disappear . . . is saturated with sea-water until it begins to shine."⁶ This recipe is repeated in another, possibly later, treatise of the same kind, the "Aenigmata philosophorum."⁷ Here the "piscis" has become a "pisciculus," and "lucescat" has become "candescat." Common to both treatises is the ironic conclusion of the recipe: When the *citrinitas* (*xanthosis*, 'yellowing') appears, "there is formed the *collyrium* [eyewash] of the philosophers." If they wash their eyes with it, they will easily understand the secrets of the philosophy.

196 This round fish is certainly not a fish in the modern sense, but an invertebrate. This is borne out by the absence of bones and "cortex," which in medieval Latin simply means a mussel-

⁵ I am not counting the fish as technical alchemical material, in which capacity it was of course known even to the Greek alchemists. I would mention, for instance, the "procedure of Salmanas" (Berthelot, *Alch. grecs*, V, viii, 5) for producing the "round pearl." Fish-glue was often used as an agglutinant.

⁶ "Allegoriae," in *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 141: "Est in mari piscis rotundus, ossibus et corticibus carens, et habet in se pinguedinem, mirificam virtutem, quae si lento igne coquatur, donec eius pinguedo et humor prorsus recedit . . . et quousque lucescat, aqua maris imbuatur."

⁷ "Aenigmata," in *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 149.

shell or mollusc.⁸ At all events, it is some kind of round organism that lives in the sea, presumably a scyphomedusa or jellyfish, which abounded in the seas of the ancient world. Its free-swimming form, the acrospedote medusa, has a round, bell- or disc-shaped body of radial construction, which as a rule is divided into eight sections by means of four perradials and four interradians (whose angles may again be halved by adradials). Like all Cnidaria⁹ or Nematophora¹⁰ (to which class the Scyphomedusae belong), they are equipped with tentacles; these contain the thread-cells or nematocysts with which they poison their prey.

- 197 Our text remarks that when the "round fish" is warmed or cooked on a slow fire it "begins to shine." In other words, the heat already present in it becomes visible as light. This suggests that the author of the recipe was influenced either by Pliny himself or by some one in the same tradition. Pliny describes a fish—the *stella marina*, 'star of the sea'—which, he says, has puzzled several great philosophers.¹¹ This fish was said to be hot and burning, and to consume as with fire everything it touched in the sea.¹² Pliny mentions the *stella marina*¹³ in the same breath¹⁴ as the *pulmo marinus*, which swims freely on the surface,¹⁵ and attributes to the latter so fiery a nature that when you rub it with a stick, you can straightway use the stick as a torch.¹⁶ From this we might conclude that our author did not take zoological distinctions too seriously, and may have confused the *stella marina* with the *pulmones*. However that may be, the Middle Ages with its passion for symbols eagerly seized on the legend of the "starfish." Nicholas Caussin regarded the "fish" as a starfish and describes it as such. This animal, he says, generates so much heat that it not only sets fire to everything it touches but also cooks its own food. Hence it signifies the "veri

⁸ See du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, s.v. "cortex."

⁹ From *κνίδη*, *urtica*, 'nettle.' Hence Pliny's "sea-nettle" (*Hist. nat.*, XXXII, xi, 53).

¹⁰ From *νήμα*, 'thread, tentacle.'

¹¹ Caussin (*Polyhistor symbolicus*, 1618, s.v. "stella") cites Aristotle as a source.

¹² *Hist. nat.*, IX, 60. Cf. trans. by Rackham and Jones, III, pp. 346-48.

¹³ This could be conceived as a starfish, since, as Pliny says, it has a hard exterior.

¹⁴ *Hist. nat.*, XVIII, 35.

¹⁵ IX, 47 (Rackham/Jones trans., III, p. 220).

¹⁶ XXXII, 10.

amoris vis inextinguibilis" (the inextinguishable power of true love).¹⁷

¹⁹⁸ Such an interpretation sounds very strange to modern ears. But for the Middle Ages "alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis" was literally true: all ephemeral things were but a symbol of the divine drama, which to modern man has become almost meaningless. Picinellus interprets the fish in the same way, the only difference being that his amplification is much more elaborate. "This fish," he says, "glows forever in the midst of the waters, and whatsoever it touches grows hot and bursts into flames." This glow is a fire—the fire of the Holy Ghost. He cites as his authority Ecclesiasticus 48 : 1,¹⁸ and refers also to the fiery tongues of the Pentecostal miracle. The miraculous fact that the fire of the *stella marina* does not go out in the water reminds him of the "divinae gratiae efficacia" (action of divine grace), which sets on fire the hearts that are drowned in a "sea of sins." For the same reason the fish means charity and divine love, as the Song of Solomon 8 : 7 testifies: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." The fish, so our author supposes, spreads a radiance about itself from the first moment of its life and thus is an emblem of religion, by whose light the faithful live.

¹⁹⁹ As the quotation from the Song of Solomon shows, the interpretation of the burning starfish brings out its connection with profane love. Picinellus even says that the starfish is the "hieroglyph of a lover's heart," whose passion not even the entire sea can extinguish, no matter whether his love be divine or profane. This fish, says our author inconsequently, burns but gives no light. He quotes St. Basil: "Then conceive in your mind a deep pit, impenetrable darkness, fire that has no brightness, having all fire's power of burning, but without any light. . . . Such a conception describes the fire of hell."¹⁹ This fire is "concupiscentia," the "scintilla voluptatis" (spark of lechery).

²⁰⁰ It is curious how often the medieval symbolists give diametrically opposed interpretations of the same symbol, apparently without becoming aware of the far-reaching and

¹⁷ *Polyhistor symbolicus*, p. 414.

¹⁸ "And Elias the prophet stood up, as a fire; and his word burnt like a torch" (DV).

¹⁹ *Homilia in Ps.* 33, in Migne, *P.G.*, vol. 29, col. 371.

dangerous possibility that the polarity of the symbol implies the identity of the opposites. Thus we can find certain views in alchemy which maintain that God himself "glows" in this subterranean or submarine²⁰ fire. The "Gloria mundi," for instance, says:²¹

Take fire or unslaked lime, which the Philosophers say grows on trees. In this fire God himself glows in divine love. . . . Likewise the Natural Master says regarding the art of fire, that Mercurius is to be decomposed . . . and fixed in the unquenchable or living fire, wherein God himself glows, together with the sun, in divine love, for the solace of all men; and without this fire can the art never be brought to perfection. It is also the fire of the Philosophers, which they keep hidden away and concealed. . . . It is also the noblest fire which God created upon earth, for it has a thousand virtues. To these things the teacher replies that God has bestowed upon it such virtue and efficacy . . . that with this fire is mingled the Godhead itself. And this fire purifies, as purgatory does in the lower regions.²²

²⁰ This recalls the Vision of Arisleus, where the philosophers in the glass-house at the bottom of the sea suffer great torment on account of the extraordinary heat. (*Art. aurif.*, I, pp. 146ff., and Ruska, "Die Vision des Arisleus," pp. 22ff.)

²¹ *Mus. herm.* (1678), pp. 246f. The "Gloria mundi" is an anonymous treatise, and it remains uncertain whether it was originally written in Latin or not. So far as is known, it was printed for the first time in 1620, in German. To the best of my knowledge it was first mentioned in the treatises of the 17th cent. It was highly esteemed and was considered especially dangerous. In the *Theatr. chem.* (1661), VI, pp. 513ff., there is a long extract from it, conjuring the reader to be discreet: "I will that all those who possess this book be admonished and besought for the love of Jesus Christ, that they conceal this art from all such as are puffed up, vainglorious, unjust oppressors of the poor, proud, worldly, scoffers, contemners, false accusers, and such unworthy folk, nor permit this writing to come into the hands of such, if they would escape the wrath of God and the punishments which he is wont to bring down upon those that are presumptuous and profane."

²² "Recipito ignem, vel calcem vivam, de qua Philosophi loquuntur, quod in arboribus crescat, in quo (igne) Deus ipse ardet amore divino. . . . Item, Naturalis Magister ait ad artem hanc de igne, Mercurium putrefaciendum . . . et fixandum in igne indelebili, vel vivo, quo in Deus ipse ardeat, sed cum sole in amore divino, ad solatium omnium hominum; et absque isto igne ars numquam perfici poterit. Item, ignis Philosophorum quem occultatum occlusumque illi habent. . . . Item, ignis nobilissimus ignis est, quem Deus in terra creavit, millenas enim virtutes habet. Ad haec respondet didascalus quod Deus tantam virtutem efficaciamque tribuerit . . . ut divinitas ipsa cum hoc igne commixta siet. Et iste ignis purificat, tamquam purgatorium in inferno . . ."

The fire is "inextinguishable." "The Philosophers call this fire the fire of the Holy Ghost."²³ It unites Mercurius with the sun "so that all three make but one thing, which no man shall part asunder."²⁴ "Just as in these three God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost unite themselves, the Holy Trinity in three Persons, and there yet remains the one single true God, so also the fire unites these three things: body, spirit, and soul, that is, Sun, Mercurius, and Soul."²⁵ "In this invisible fire the mystery of the Art is enclosed, as God the Father, Son, and Spirit in three Persons is verily included in one essence."²⁶ This fire is "fire and water at once." The Philosophers name it the "living fire" in honour of God, "who mingles himself with himself in the living water."²⁷

²⁰¹ Another treatise says of the water that it is the "hiding-place and dwelling-place of the whole treasure."²⁸ For in its midst is the "fire of Gehenna" which "contains this engine of the world in its own being."²⁹ The fire is caused by the "primum mobile" and is kindled by the influence of the stars. It never ceases its universal motion and is continually lit through the "influence of celestial forces."³⁰

²⁰² It is an "unnatural" fire, "contrary to nature." It puts bodies to the torture, it is itself the dragon that "burns furiously like hell-fire."³¹ The life-spirit dwelling in nature, Phyton, has a double aspect: there is an infernal form of it, namely hell-fire, from which a hellish bath can be prepared. The treatise of Abraham Eleazar speaks of Phyton as a "god."³²

²³ "Philosophi hunc ignem Spiritus Sancti ignem appellant."

²⁴ ". . . adeo ut omnes tres, una res fiant, quas nemo separaturus siet."

²⁵ "Pari modo quo in hisce tribus sese uniunt, Deus pater, Deus filius et Deus spiritus sanctus, S. S. Trinitas in tres personas et tamen unicus verus Deus remanet; ita quoque ignis unit hasce tres res: utpote corpus, spiritum et animam, hoc est, Solem, Mercurium et Animam" (p. 247).

²⁶ "In igni hoc invisibili artis mysterium inclusum est, quemadmodum tribus in personis Deus Pater, Filius et Spiritus S. in una essentia vere conclusus est" (p. 248).

²⁷ ". . . qui seipsum sese in vivam aquam miscet" (p. 247). Presumably taken over from the "troubled" water of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2).

²⁸ "Occultatio et domicilium omnis thesauri."

²⁹ "Continens hanc machinam mundi in suo esse."

³⁰ Sendivogius, "Novi luminis chemici," *Mus. herm.*, p. 607.

³¹ Ripley, "Duodecim portarum," *Theatr. chem.*, II, p. 128.

³² *Uraltes Chymisches Werk* (1760), pp. 79 and 81.

²⁰³ According to Blaise de Vigenère, the fire has not two but four aspects: the intelligible, which is all light; the heavenly, partaking of heat and light; the elemental, pertaining to the lower world and compounded of light, heat, and glow (*ardor*); and finally the infernal, opposed to the intelligible, glowing and burning without any light.³³ Here again we encounter the quaternity which the ancients associated with fire, as we saw from the Egyptian conception of Set and the four sons of Horus,³⁴ and from Ezekiel's vision of the fiery region to the north. It is not at all likely that Vigenère was thinking of Ezekiel in this connection.³⁵

²⁰⁴ In the "Introitus apertus" of Philalethes the arcane substance is named "chalybs" (steel). This, he says, is the "auri minera" (the *prima materia* of the gold), "the true key of our Work, without which no skill can kindle the fire of the lamp." Chalybs is a "spirit pre-eminently pure," a "secret, infernal, and yet most volatile fire,"³⁶ the "wonder of the world, the system of the higher powers in the lower. For this reason the Almighty has assigned to it a most glorious and rare heavenly conjunction, even that notable sign whose nativity is declared throughout the Philosophical East to the furthest horizon of its hemisphere. The wise Magi saw it at the [beginning of the] era, and were astonished, and straightway they knew that the most serene King was born in the world. Do you, when you see his star, follow it to the cradle, and there you shall behold the fair infant. Cast aside your defilements, honour the royal child, open your treasure, offer a gift of gold; and after death he will give you

³³ "De igne et sale," *Theatr. chem.*, VI, p. 39.

³⁴ They are also the sons of Set, in so far as Heru-ur and Set have one body with two heads.

³⁵ The quaternary symbols that appear spontaneously in dreams always point, so far as I can see, to totality or the self. Fire means passion, affects, desires, and the emotional driving-forces of human nature in general, that is, everything which is understood by the term "libido." (Cf. *Symbols of Transformation*, Part II, chs. 2 and 3.) When the alchemists attribute a quaternary nature to the fire, this amounts to saying that the self is the source of energy.

³⁶ Hell-fire is identical with the devil, who, on the authority of Artefius ("Clavis maioris sapientiae," *Theatr. chem.*, IV, p. 237), has an outer body made of air and an inner one of fire.

flesh and blood, the supreme Medicine in the three monarchies of the earth." ³⁷

²⁰⁵ This passage is particularly interesting because it allows us to look deep into the world of obscure archetypal ideas that fill the mind of the alchemist. The author goes on to say that the steel, which is at the same time the "infernal fire," the "key of our Work," is attracted by the magnet, for which reason "our magnet" is the true "minera" (raw material) of the steel. The magnet has a hidden centre which "with an archetic appetite" ³⁸ turns towards the Pole, where the virtue of the steel is exalted." The centre "abounds in salt"—evidently the *sal sapientiae*, for immediately afterwards the text says: "The wise man will rejoice, but the fool will pay small heed to these things, and will not learn wisdom, even though he see the outward-turned central Pole marked with the notable sign" ³⁹ of the Almighty."

²⁰⁶ In the Pole is found the heart of Mercurius, "which is the true fire wherein its Lord has his rest. He who journeys through this great and wide sea may touch at both Indies, may guide his course by the sight of the North Star, which our Magnet will cause to appear unto you." This is an allusion to the mystic journey, the "peregrinatio." As I have explained elsewhere, it leads to the four quarters, here indicated by the two Indies—

³⁷ Philalethes, "Introitus apertus," *Mus. herm.*, pp. 654f.: ". . . ignis infernalis, secretus . . . mundi miraculum, virtutum superiorum in inferioribus systema, quare signo illum notabili notavit Omnipotens cuius nativitas per Orientem in Horizonte Hemisphaerii sui philosophicum annunciat. Viderunt Sapientes in Evo Magi, et obstupuerunt statimque agnoverunt Regem serenissimum in mundo natum. Tu cum ejus Astra conspexeris, sequere ad usque cunabula, ibi videbis infantem pulcrum, sordes semovendo, regium puellum honora, gazam aperi, auri donum offeras, sic tandem post mortem tibi carnem sanguinemque dabit, summam in tribus Terrae Monarchiis medicinam."

(Cf. Waite, trans., *The Hermetic Museum Restored and Enlarged*, II, pp. 166f.) Philalethes ("lover of truth") is a pseudonym. Waite (*The Works of Thomas Vaughan: Eugenius Philaletha*) conjectures the Hermetic philosopher Vaughan (1621-65), an hypothesis that is doubtful for several reasons. See also Waite, *Lives of Alchemistical Philosophers*, p. 187, and Ferguson, *Bibliotheca Chemica*, II, pp. 194 and 197.

³⁸ From the Paracelsan concept of the "Archeus." See my "Paracelsus the Physician" (Swiss edn., p. 36). Ruland (*Lexicon of Alchemy*, p. 36) defines: "Archeus is a most high, exalted, and invisible spirit, which is separated from bodies, is exalted, and ascends; it is the occult virtue of Nature, universal in all things, the artificer, the healer . . . the dispenser and composer of all things."

³⁹ Probably magnetism.

East, West—and by the turning of the compass to the north.⁴⁰ Together they form a cross, i.e., a quaternity, which pertains to the nature of the Pole. For from the Pole the four directions radiate out, and also the division of the hemispheres (east and west of the Greenwich meridian). Thus the northern hemisphere resembles the round body of the hydromedusa, whose spherical surface is divided by four (or multiples of four) radials, and therefore looks like a globe seen from the Pole.

207 In this connection I would like to mention the dream of a twenty-year-old student, who got into a state of confusion when he found that the philosophical faculty for which he had opted did not suit him. He could discover no reason for this. His disorientation reached the point where he simply did not know what profession he wanted to take up. Then a dream came to his help and showed him his goal in the fullest sense:

208 *He dreamt that he was walking in a wood. Gradually this grew more and more lonely and wild, and finally he realized that he was in a primeval forest. The trees were so high and the foliage so thick that it was almost dark on the ground. All trace of a path had long since disappeared, but, driven on by a vague sense of expectation and curiosity, he pressed forward and soon came to a circular pool, measuring ten to twelve feet across. It was a spring, and the crystal-clear water looked almost black in the dark shadows of the trees. In the middle of the pool there floated a pearly organism, about eighteen inches in diameter, that emitted a faint light. It was a jelly-fish. Here the dreamer awoke with a violent emotion: he decided there and then to study science, and he kept to this decision. I must emphasize that the dreamer was not under any psychological influence that might have suggested such an interpretation. The conclusion he drew from the dream was undoubtedly the right one, but it does not by any means exhaust the meaning of the symbol. The dream is archetypal—a "big" dream. The wood that grows dusky and turns into a primeval forest means entry into the unconscious. The round pool with the jelly-fish in it represents a three-dimensional mandala, the self: wholeness as the goal to which the "archetypal appetite" points, the magnetic north which gives the traveller his bearings on the "sea of the world."*

⁴⁰ Cf. *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 457.

209 Turning back to our text, I would emphasize, by way of recapitulation, that the infernal fire is nothing other than the *Deus absconditus* (hidden God) who dwells at the North Pole and reveals himself through magnetism. His other synonym is Mercurius, whose heart is to be found at the Pole, and who guides men on their perilous voyage over the sea of the world. The idea that the whole machinery of the world is driven by the infernal fire at the North Pole, that this is hell, and that hell is a system of upper powers reflected in the lower—this is a shattering thought. But the same note is struck by Meister Eckhart when he says that, on returning to his true self, he enters an abyss “deeper than hell itself.” Scurrilous as it is, the alchemical idea cannot be denied a certain grandeur. What is particularly interesting, psychologically, is the nature of the image: it is the projection of an archetypal pattern of order,⁴¹ the mandala, which represents the idea of totality. The centering of the image on hell, which at the same time is God, is grounded on the experience that highest and lowest both come from the depths of the soul, and either bring the frail vessel of consciousness to shipwreck or carry it safely to port, with little or no assistance from us. The experience of this “centre” is therefore a numinous one in its own right.

210 Picinellus feels that his *stella maris*, “this fish which burns in the midst of the water but gives no light,” besides meaning the Holy Ghost, love, grace, and religion, also symbolizes something in man, namely his *tongue*, speech, and powers of expression, for it is in these faculties that all psychic life is manifest. He is evidently thinking of an instinctive, unreflecting psychic activity, because at this point he cites James 3 : 6: “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity among our members, defiling the whole body, setting on fire the wheel of birth, and set on fire by hell.”⁴²

211 Hence the evil “fish” coincides with our untamed and apparently untameable propensities, which, like a “small fire that sets a great forest ablaze,”⁴³ defiles the whole body and

⁴¹ Cf. my “Concerning Mandala Symbolism.”

⁴² Ecclesiasticus 9 : 18 (Vulg. 25): “A man full of tongue is terrible in his city” (DV). Conversely, the fiery tongue is an allegory (or symbol?) of the Holy Ghost: “cloven tongues, as of fire” (Acts 2 : 3).

⁴³ James 3 : 5 (RSV).

even sets on fire the "wheel of birth." The τροχός τῆς γενέσεως (*rota nativitatis*) is a distinctly curious expression to use in this connection. The wheel, it is explained, symbolizes the circle or course or cycle of life. This interpretation presupposes ideas akin to Buddhism, if we are not to conceive the wheel merely as the banal statistical cycle of births and deaths. How the wheel could ever be set on fire is a difficult question that cannot be answered without further reflection. We must consider, rather, that it is meant as a parallel to the defilement of the whole body—in other words, a destruction of the *soul*.

²¹² Ever since the *Timaeus* it has been repeatedly stated that the soul is a sphere.⁴⁴ As the *anima mundi*, the soul revolves with the world wheel, whose hub is the Pole. That is why the "heart of Mercurius" is found there, for Mercurius is the *anima mundi*.⁴⁵ The *anima mundi* is really the motor of the heavens. The wheel of the starry universe is reflected in the horoscope, called the "thema" of birth. This is a division of the heavens into twelve houses, calculated at the moment of birth, the first house coinciding with the ascendent. Divided up in this way the firmament looks like a wheel turning, and the astronomer Nigidius⁴⁶ is said to have received the name Figulus ("potter") because the wheel of heaven turns like a potter's wheel.⁴⁷ The "thema" (that which is "set" or "ordained") is indeed a τροχός, 'wheel'. The basic meaning of the horoscope is that, by mapping out the positions of the planets and their relations to one another (aspects), together with the distribution of the signs of the zodiac at the cardinal points, it gives a picture first of the psychic and then of the physical constitution of the individual. It represents, in essence, a system of original and fundamental qualities in a person's character, and can therefore be regarded as an equivalent of the individual psyche. Priscillian (d. 385) evidently took the wheel in this sense. He says of Christ: "He alone has the power to join together the Pleiades and to loose the bands of Orion. Knowing the changes of the firmament and destroying the wheel of generation, he has overcome the day of

⁴⁴ *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 109.

⁴⁵ "The Spirit Mercurius" (Swiss edn., pp. 78 and 99).

⁴⁶ P. Nigidius Figulus lived in the 1st cent. B.C.

⁴⁷ Hertz, *De P. Nigidii Figuli Studiis atque operibus*, p. 5.

our birth by the renewal of baptism."⁴⁸ From this it is plain that in the fourth century the wheel of birth was in fact regarded as the horoscope. "Setting fire to the wheel" is therefore a figurative expression for a catastrophic revolt of all the original components of the psyche, a conflagration resembling panic or some other uncontrollable, and hence fatal outburst of emotion.⁴⁹ The total nature of the catastrophe is explained by the central position of the so-called "tongue," the diabolical element whose destructiveness is an essential part of every psyche. Seen in this light, the *stella maris* stands for the fiery centre in us from which creative or destructive influences come.

2. The Fish

²¹³ In our discussion of medieval fish symbolism we have so far been concerned only with a fish in name, the jelly-fish, without taking due account of the fact that this is not a fish at all in the zoological sense, and—more important still—is not shaped like one. It was simply the description of the "round fish" that brought it to our attention. That, however, was not the case in the Middle Ages, for we have the testimony of a sixteenth-century adept, Theobald de Hoghelande, which shows that he at least understood the fish to be a real fish. Listing the numerous synonyms for the tincture, he remarks: "Likewise they compared it to fishes. Hence Mundus says in the *Turba*: Take one part fish-gall and one part calf's urine, etc. And in the 'Aenigmata sapientum' it says: There is in our sea a small round fish, without bones or legs [*cruribus*]." ⁵⁰ Since the gall mentioned in the quotation can only come from a real fish, Hoghelande obviously took the "small round fish" to be a real one, and since one can imagine a fish without bones, but hardly without skin or some kind of integument, the incomprehensible "*corticibus*" of

⁴⁸ Tract. I, 31, in *Opera*. For Christ as destroyer of Heimarmene see *Pistis Sophia*, Mead trans., p. 17.

⁴⁹ Fire in this sense often appears in dreams.

⁵⁰ Hoghelande, "Liber de alchemiae difficultatibus," *Theatr. chem.*, I, p. 163. The quotation from Mundus in the *Turba* (Ruska, p. 128) runs: "Take therefore one part white gum at an intense heat, and one part calf's urine, and one part fish-gall, and one part substance of the gum, without which it cannot be made free from error." "Mundus" is a corruption of "Parmenides," due to Arabic transcription: (Bar)Mnds. See Ruska, p. 25.

the original version⁵¹ had to be changed into "cruribus" (legs). Of course, fishes don't have legs either. But this passage from a sixteenth-century text proves that the "small round fish" of the "Aenigmata" was understood, in alchemical tradition, as a real fish and not as a jelly-fish. A round and transparent fish of a peculiar sort, without "cortices," is described in the *Cyranides*: the "cinedian fish" lives in the sea on the shores of Syria, Palestine, and Libya, is six fingers long, and is a "pisciculus rotundus." It has two stones in its head and another one in the third vertebra of the tail (*spondilo*), or notochord. This stone is especially potent and is used as a love-potion.⁵² The cinedian stone is practically unknown, because it is very rare. It is also called "opsianus,"⁵³ which is interpreted as "serotinus" (of late growth or origin) and "tardus" (slow, hesitant). It pertains to Saturn. "This stone is twin or twofold: the one is opaque and black, but the other though black is brilliant and shining like a mirror."⁵⁴ This is the stone which many seek, without knowing it: for it is the dragon's stone (*dracontius lapis*).⁵⁵

²¹⁴ The only thing that can be elicited with certainty from this involved description is that the animal in question must be a vertebrate, and is therefore presumably a genuine fish. What exactly is the justification for calling it "round" is far from clear. It is obvious that the fish is mainly a mythologem, since it is said to contain the dragon's stone. This stone was known to Pliny⁵⁶ and also to the medieval alchemists, who named it *draconites*, *dracontias*, or *drachates*.⁵⁷ It was reputed to be a precious stone, which could be obtained by cutting off the head of a sleeping dragon. For it becomes a gem only when a bit of the dragon's soul remains inside,⁵⁸ and this is the "hate of the monster as it feels itself dying." The gem is of a *white* colour,

⁵¹ "Ossibus et corticibus carens."

⁵² Du Cange, *Glossarium*, s.v. "ligaturae": "Corrigia or *ligatura* of Aphrodite. *Ligaturae*, *alligaturae* and *alligamenta* are amulets for dispelling diseases. *Subal-ligaturae* are magic draughts [poisons], precautionary measures [spells]," etc.

⁵³ *Opsianos lithos* = 'black stone,' obsidian.

⁵⁴ "Iste lapis est geminus vel duplex: unus quidem est obscurus et niger, alter autem niger quidem, lucidus et splendidus est sicut speculum."

⁵⁵ Delatte, *Textes latins et vieux français relatifs aux Cyranides*, Fasc. XCIII, p. 56. ⁵⁶ *Hist. nat.*, XXXVII, 10. ⁵⁷ Ruland, *Lexicon*, pp. 128-29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128: "But unless it is removed while they [the serpents] are alive, it will never become a precious stone."

and a powerful alexipharmic. Even though there are no dragons nowadays, the text says, these draconites are occasionally found in the heads of water-snakes. Ruland asserts that he has seen such stones, blue or black in colour.

²¹⁵ The cinedian stone has a double nature, though, as the text shows, it is not at all clear.⁵⁹ One might almost conjecture that its double nature consisted originally in a white and a black variety, and that a copyist, puzzled by the contradiction, inserted "niger quidem" ('though black'). But Ruland distinctly emphasizes that "the colour of the Draconite is white."⁶⁰ Its affinity with Saturn may shed light on this dilemma. Saturn, in astrology the "star of the sun," is alchemically interpreted as black; it is even called "sol niger" and has a double nature as the arcane substance,⁶¹ being black outside like lead, but white inside. Johannes Grasseus cites the opinion of the Augustinian monk Degenhardus concerning the lead: the lead of the Philosophers, named lead of the air (*Pb aeris*), contains the "shining white dove" which is called the "salt of the metals."⁶² Vigenère assures us that lead, "than which nothing is more opaque," can be turned into "hyacinth" and back again to lead.⁶³ Quicksilver, says Mylius,⁶⁴ comes from the "heart of Saturn," in fact is Saturn, the bright silveriness of mercury contrasting with the "blackness" of lead. The "bright" water⁶⁵ that flows from the plant Saturnia is, according to Sir George Ripley, "the most perfect water and the bloom of the world."⁶⁶ How old this idea is can be seen from the remark of Hippolytus,⁶⁷ that Chronos (Saturn) is a "power of the colour of water, and all-destructive."

²¹⁶ In view of all this, the double nature of the cinedian stone might signify the polarity and union of opposites, which is just what gives the *lapis philosophorum* its peculiar significance as

⁵⁹ *Lucidus* (see above, n. 54), 'brilliant, shining,' can also mean 'white,' thus contrasting with black. But the description would also fit the obsidian.

⁶⁰ *Lexicon*, p. 203.

⁶¹ "The sacred lead of the wise," from which are extracted mercury, sulphur, and salt. Cf. Chartier, "Scientia plumbi sacri sapientum," *Theatr. chem.*, VI, p. 571.

⁶² "Arca arcani," *ibid.*, p. 314.

⁶³ "De igne et sale," *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁶⁴ *Philosophia reformata*, p. 305.

⁶⁵ Pantheus, *Ars transmutationis metallica* (1519), fol. 9r.

⁶⁶ *Opera omnia chemica* (1649), p. 317.

⁶⁷ *Elenchos*, V, 16, 2 (Legge trans., I, p. 154).

a uniting symbol,⁶⁸ and hence its magical and divine properties. Our draconite, too, is endowed with extraordinary powers ("potentissimus valde"), which make it eminently suitable as the "ligature of Aphrodite," i.e., love-magic. Magic exercises a *compulsion* that asserts itself against the conscious mind and will of the victim; that is to say, a strange will arises in him and proves stronger than his ego. The only comparable effect capable of psychological verification is that exerted by unconscious contents, which by their compelling power demonstrate their affinity with or dependence on man's totality, that is, the self and its "karmic" functions.⁶⁹ We have already seen that the alchemical fish symbol points ultimately to an archetype of the order of magnitude of the self. So it should not surprise us to see that the principle of "outward uncomeliness," which applies to the lead and the *lapis*, is also applied to Christ. The same that is said of the *lapis* is said of Christ by Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373): "He is clothed in figures, he is the bearer of types. . . . His treasure is hidden and of small account, but when it is laid open, it is wonderful to look upon."⁷⁰

²¹⁷ In a treatise of the seventeenth century, by an anonymous French author,⁷¹ our strange hybrid, the "round fish," finally becomes a verifiable vertebrate known to zoology: *Echeneis remora*, the common remora or sucking-fish. It belongs to the mackerel family, and is distinguished by a large, flat, oval-shaped sucker on the top of the head in place of the dorsal fin. By means of this it attaches itself either to a larger fish or to a ship's bottom and in this wise is transported about the world.

²¹⁸ The text says of this fish:

For that which we take, in order to prepare from it the Philosophical Work, is naught else but that little fish the *Echeneis*, which has no blood or spiny bones, and is shut up in that deep mid region

⁶⁸ *Psychology and Alchemy*, "The Christ-Lapis Parallel."

⁶⁹ We could conceive these as hereditary influences, vestiges of ancestral life, although this idea does not suggest as much as *karma* does to the Indian.

⁷⁰ *Hymni et sermones*, ed. Lamy, II, col. 770.

⁷¹ "Fidelissima et Jucunda Instructio ex manuscripto Gallico Philosophi Anonymi desumpta, per quam Pater filio suo omnia declarat, quae ad compositionem et praeparationem Lapidis Sapientum sunt necessaria, decem capitibus comprehensa." The abbreviated title of this treatise as printed in Vol. VI of *Theatr. chem.* is "Instructio de arbore solari."

of the great universal sea. This little fish is extremely small, alone, and unique in its shape, but the sea is great and vast, and hence it is impossible for those to catch it who do not know in what part of the world it dwells. Believe me verily, that he who, as Theophrastus says, does not well understand the art by which he can draw down the moon from the sky and bring it from heaven to earth, and change it into water and then into earth, will never find the material of the stone of the wise, for it is not more difficult to perform the one than to find the other. Yet none the less, when we speak somewhat in confidence in the ear of a trusted friend, we teach him that hidden secret of the wise, how he can naturally, speedily, and easily catch the little fish called Remora, which is able to hold back the proud vessels of the great Ocean sea (that is the spirit of the world). Those who are not sons of the art are altogether ignorant and know not those precious treasures which are concealed by nature in the precious and heavenly Aqua Vitae of our sea. But, that I may declare to you the clear light of our unique material, or our virgin soil, and teach you in what wise you may acquire the supreme art of the sons of wisdom, it is needful that I instruct you concerning the magnet of the wise, which has the power of attracting the little fish called Echeneis or Remora from out the centre and depth of the sea. If it is caught in accordance with nature, it changes in a natural way first into water and then into earth. And this, when properly prepared by the cunning secret of the wise, has the power of dissolving all solid bodies and making them volatile, and of purifying all bodies that are poisoned.⁷²

⁷² "Quia illud quod accipimus ut opus Philosophicum ex eo praeparemus, nihil aliud est quam pisciculus Echen[e]is sanguine et ossibus spinosis carens, et in profunda parte centri magni maris mundi est inclusus. Hic pisc[ic]ulus valde est exiguus, solus et in sua forma unicus, mare autem magnum et vastum, unde illum capere impossibile est illis, qui qua in parte mundi moretur ignorant. Certam mihi fidem habe, illum qui ut Theophrastus loquitur, artem illam non callet, qua Lunam de firmamento trahat, et de coelo super terram adducat, et in aquam convertat, et postea in terram mutet, nunquam materiam lapidis sapientum inventurum, unum tamen non est difficilior facere, quam alterum invenire. Nihilominus tamen, cum fido amico aliquid in au[re]m fideliter dicimus, tunc ipsum occultum secretum sapientum docemus, quomodo pisc[ic]ulum Remora dictum naturaliter cito et facile capere possit, qui navigia magni maris Oceani (hoc est spiritus mundi), superba retinere potest, qui cum filii artis non sint, prorsus ignari sunt et preciosos thesauros, per naturam in preciosa et coelesti aqua vitae nostri maris delitescentes, non noverunt. Sed ut clarum lumen unice nostrae materiae, seu terrae virgineae nostrae tibi tradam summam artem filiorum sapientiae, quomodo videlicet illam acquirere possis, te doceam, necesse est ut prius de magnete sapientum te instruum, qui potestatem habet, pisc[ic]ulum

²¹⁹ We learn from this text that the fish is found, if it can be found at all, in the centre of the ocean. But the ocean is the "spirit of the world." Our text, as the above sample shows, derives from a time when alchemy had almost given up its laboratory work and was becoming more and more of a philosophy. For an alchemist living in the early part of the seventeenth century, the "spirit of the world" is a somewhat unusual term, because the expression more commonly used was the "anima mundi." The world-soul or, in this case, the world-spirit is a projection of the unconscious, there being no method or apparatus which could provide an objective experience of this kind and thus furnish objective proof of the world's animation. This idea is nothing more than an analogy of the animating principle in man which inspires his thoughts and acts of cognition. "Soul" and "spirit," or psyche as such, is in itself totally unconscious. If it is assumed to be somewhere "outside," it cannot be anything except a projection of the unconscious. This may mean a lot or a little, according to the way you look at it. At any rate, we know that in alchemy "our sea" is a symbol for the unconscious in general, just as it is in dreams. The extremely small fish that dwells in the centre of the universal sea nevertheless has the power to stop the largest ships. From the description of the Echeneis it is evident that the author was acquainted with the "pisciculus rotundus ossibus et corticibus carens" of the "Aenigmata." Our interpretation of the round fish as the self can, accordingly, be extended to the Echeneis. The symbol of the self appears here as an "extremely small" fish in the vast ocean of the unconscious, like a man alone on the sea of the world. Its symbolization as a fish characterizes the self, in this state, as an unconscious content. There would be no hope whatever of catching this insignificant creature if a "magnet of the wise" did not exist in the conscious subject. This "magnet" is obviously something a master can teach to his pupil; it is the "theoria," the one solid possession from which the adept can proceed. For the *prima materia* always remains to be found, and the only

Echen[e]is vel Remora dictum ex centro et profunditate nostri maris attrahendi. Qui si secundum naturam capitur, naturaliter primo in aquam deinde in terram convertitur: Quae per artificiosum secretum sapientum debito modo praeparata potestatem habet, omnia fixa corpora dissolvendi, et volatilia faciendi et omnia corpora venenata purgandi etc."

thing that helps him is the "cunning secret of the wise," a theory that can be communicated.

220 This is affirmed by Bernardus Trevisanus (1406-1490) in his treatise "De secretissimo philosophorum opere chemico": it was the sermons of Parmenides in the *Turba* that first freed him from error and guided him into the right way.⁷³ But Parmenides says the same thing as Arisleus⁷⁴ in the *Turba*: "Nature is not improved save through its own nature,"⁷⁵ and Bernardus adds by way of confirmation: "Thus our material cannot be improved save through itself." It was the *theory* of Parmenides that helped Bernardus on to the right track after much fruitless laboratory work, and there is a legend that he even succeeded in making the philosophers' stone. As to the theory, he is obviously of the opinion that its basic thought is expressed in the saying quoted above, that "nature"⁷⁶ can improve or free itself from error only in and through itself. The same idea is expressed in the repeated warning of other treatises not to mix anything from outside with the content of the Hermetic vessel, because the *lapis* "has everything it needs."⁷⁷

221 It is not exactly probable that the alchemists always knew what they were writing, otherwise they would have dropped dead at their own enormities, and of this there is no sign in the literature. *Who* has everything he needs? Even the loneliest meteor circles round some distant sun, or hesitantly draws near to a cluster of brother meteors. Everything hangs together with everything else. By definition, only absolute totality contains everything in itself, and neither need nor compulsion attaches it to anything outside. This is undoubtedly the same as the idea of an absolute God who encompasses everything that exists. But which of us can pull himself out of the bog by his own pigtail? Which of us can improve himself in total isolation? Even the holy anchorite who lives three days' journey off in the desert not only needs to eat and drink but finds himself utterly and

⁷³ "Liber de alchemia," *Theatr. chem.*, I, p. 795.

⁷⁴ Arisleus is legendary. He was regarded as the author of the *Turba*.

⁷⁵ "Natura non emendatur nisi in sua natura."

⁷⁶ "Natura" and "naturae," in the language of the *Turba*, correspond to the *φύσεις* of the alchemist Democritus (1st cent.). See Berthelot, *Alch. grecs*. They are substances or states of substances.

⁷⁷ "Omne quo indiget."

terribly dependent on the ceaseless presence of God.⁷⁸ Only absolute totality can renew itself out of itself and generate itself anew.

²²² What is it, then, that one adept whispers into the ear of another, fearfully looking round lest any betray them, or even guess their secret? Nothing less than this: that through this teaching the One and All, the Greatest in the guise of the Smallest, God himself in his everlasting fires, may be caught like a fish in the deep sea. Further, that he may be "drawn from the deep" by a eucharistic act of integration (called *teoqualo*, 'God-eating,' by the Aztecs⁷⁹), and incorporated in the human body.

²²³ This teaching is the secret and "cunning" magnet by virtue of which the remora ("little in length / mighty in strength") stops the proud frigates in the sea, an adventure which befell the quinquereme of the emperor Caligula "in our own day," as Pliny says in his interesting and edifying tale. The little fish, that was only half a foot long, had sucked fast to the rudder on the return journey from Stura to Entium, and had brought the ship to a standstill. On returning to Rome after this journey, Caligula was murdered by his soldiers. So the Echineis turned out to be an omen, as Pliny points out. The fish played another such trick on Mark Antony before the naval engagement with Augustus, during which Antony was killed. Pliny cannot marvel enough at the mysterious powers of the Echineis. His amazement obviously impressed the alchemists so much that they identified the "round fish in our sea" with the remora, and in this way the remora came to symbolize that extremely small thing in the vastness of the unconscious which is charged with such fateful significance: it is the self, the *atman*, "smaller than small, greater than great."

²²⁴ The alchemical fish symbol, the Echineis, clearly derives from Pliny. But fishes also crop up in the writings of Sir George Ripley.⁸⁰ What is more, they appear in their "messianic" role: together with the birds, they bring the stone, just as in the Oxyrhynchus sayings of Jesus⁸¹ it is the "fowls of the air and the fishes of the sea and whatsoever is upon or beneath the earth"

⁷⁸ "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33: 14.

⁷⁹ [Cf. "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," pp. 222ff.—EDITORS.]

⁸⁰ *Opera*, p. 10.

⁸¹ Grenfell and Hunt, *New Sayings of Jesus*, p. 16.

that point the way to the kingdom of heaven (motif of the "helpful animals"). In Lamspringk's symbols⁸² the zodiacal fishes that move in opposite directions symbolize the arcane substance. All this theriomorphism is simply a visualization of the unconscious self manifesting itself through "animal" impulses. Some of these can be attributed to known instincts, but for the most part they consist of feelings of certainty, beliefs, compulsions, idiosyncrasies, and phobias that may run directly counter to the so-called biological instincts without necessarily being pathological on that account. Wholeness is perforce paradoxical in its manifestations, and the two fishes going in opposite directions, or the co-operation of birds and fishes, are an instructive illustration of this.⁸³ The arcane substance, as its attributes show, refers to the self, and so, in the Oxyrhynchus sayings, does the "kingdom of heaven" or the conjectural "city."

3. *The Fish Symbol of the Catharists*

- ²²⁵ The use of fishes as symbols for the psychopompos and for the antithetical nature of the self points to another tradition that seems to run parallel with the Echeneis. And there is, in fact, a very remarkable clue to be found, not in the literature of alchemy, but in heresiology. The document in question comes from the archives of the Inquisition at Carcassonne, published by Benoist in his *Histoire des Albigeois et des Vaudois*, in 1691.⁸⁴ It concerns an alleged revelation which Christ's favourite disciple John was vouchsafed as he "rested in the Lord's bosom." John wished to know what Satan's state was before his fall, and the Lord answered: "He was in such splendour that he ruled the powers of heaven." He wanted to be like God, and to this end he descended through the elements of air and water, and found that the earth was covered with water. Penetrating beneath the surface of the earth, "he found two fishes lying upon the waters, and they were like oxen yoked for ploughing, holding the whole earth by command of the invisible Father from sunset to sunrise [or, from West to East].

⁸² *Mus. herm.*, p. 343.

⁸³ Regarding the combination of fish and bird in ancient mythology, cf. Goodenough, V, pp. 58ff. and figs. 63, 66, 69.

⁸⁴ Cited by Hahn, *Geschichte der Ketzer im Mittelalter*, II, pp. 815ff.

And when he went down, he found hanging clouds which covered the broad sea. . . . And when he went down, he found set apart therefrom his 'Osob,' which is a kind of fire." On account of the flames he could not descend any further, so he went back to heaven and announced to the angels that he was going to set up his throne on the clouds and be like the All-highest. He then treated the angels as the unjust steward treated his master's debtors, whereupon he and the angels were cast out of heaven by God.⁸⁵ But God took pity on him and allowed him and his angels to do what they liked for a week. During this time Satan, using Genesis 1 as a model, created the world and mankind.

226 A prominent Catharist, John de Lugio, confesses to a similar belief.⁸⁶ This belief seems to have been known in Catharist circles during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for the conviction that the world was created by the devil is found in many of the sects. The alchemist Johannes de Rupescissa was in all probability a member of the Poor Men of Lyons,⁸⁷ who were influenced by the Catharists. In any case, he could be considered as a connecting link with this tradition.

227 What strikes us most of all in this text is the fact that it contains the Old Bulgarian word *Osob*. Karl Meyer, in his Old Church Slavonic dictionary,⁸⁸ gives *особъ* as *κατ' ἰδίαν*: *особа* (*osoba*) means in Russian, Polish, and Czech 'individual, personality.' "His *osob*" could therefore be translated as "that

⁸⁵ In contradiction to Luke 16:8, where "the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely."

⁸⁶ Despite the fact that the sect of this John condemned the Concorricci, with whom our Johannine revelation originated. In the *Summa Fratris Reneri* ("De propriis opinionibus Joh. de Lugio") we read: "He says this world is of the devil." Hahn, I, p. 580.

⁸⁷ Rupescissa, *La Vertu et la propriété de la quinte essence* (1581), p. 31: "Since it is our intention to comfort and strengthen the poor preachers of the gospel [*hommes evangelisants*] by means of our book, to the end that their prayers and supplications be not in vain and lost in this work, and that they be not greatly hindered in this pursuit, I will declare and give to them a secret drawn from the bosom of the secrets of the treasures of Nature, which is a thing truly worthy of wonderment, and is to be honoured."

In Rupescissa's treatise "De confectione veri lapidis" (in Gratarolus, *Verae alchemiae artisque metallica*, 1561, II, p. 299) there is the following exhortation, very unusual in alchemical literature: "Credas, vir Evangelice." Presumably, this was originally an "homme evangelisant."

⁸⁸ *Altkirchenslavisch-griechisches Wörterbuch des Codex Supraślensis*.

which is peculiar to him." ⁸⁹ This, in the case of the devil, would naturally be fire. ⁹⁰

²²⁸ The idea of the two fishes lying on the waters, yoked like oxen for ploughing, is very strange and needs some elucidation. To this end I must recall to the reader St. Augustine's interpretation of the two fishes in the miraculous feeding of the five thousand: for him they represent the *kingly* and the *priestly* person or power, ⁹¹ because, like fishes surviving the tempests of the sea, they outlast the turbulence of the multitude. These two powers are united in Christ: he is the king and priest. ⁹²

²²⁹ Although the two fishes mentioned in the text certainly do not refer to the miraculous fishes, Augustine's interpretation tells us something of importance about the way people thought in those days: the fishes were regarded as *ruling powers*. Since the text is indubitably heretical and a Bogomil document at that, there can be no question of a uniform interpretation of the two fishes as Christ. It may be that they symbolize, as might easily be conjectured, two different persons or powers, from before the creation of the world: Satanaël the elder son of God, and Christ the younger. In the thirtieth heresy of his *Panarium*, Epiphanius reports that the Ebionites believed in a double sonship: "Two, they maintain, were begotten by God, one of them Christ, the other the devil." ⁹³ This doctrine must obviously have spread throughout the Near and Middle East, for it was there that the Bogomil doctrine of Satanaël as the demiurge

⁸⁹ Dragomanov ("Zabelezhki vrkhy slavyanskite religioznoeticheski Legendi," p. 7) merely remarks about "suum Osob" that, in a Gipsy legend, the devil was hampered by burning sand when creating the world.

⁹⁰ Cf. supra, n. 36, on Artefius.

⁹¹ "But the two fishes . . . seem to signify those two persons by whom that people was governed . . . that is, the kingly and the priestly" (*De diversis quaestionibus*, LXI, 2; Migne, *P.L.*, vol. 40, col. 48). The derivation of the two fishes from II Esdras 6: 49ff. (Soederberg, *La Religion des Cathares*, p. 97) seems to me questionable. The passage runs (Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, II, p. 579): "Then didst thou preserve two living creatures; the name of the one thou didst call Behemoth and the name of the other thou didst call Leviathan. And thou didst separate the one from the other. . . ." This image does not fit in at all with the two fishes mentioned in the Catharist text.

⁹² "So is our Lord Jesus Christ shown to be our king. He is also our priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek" (Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus*, LXI, 1).

⁹³ Cap. XVI (Oehler edn., I, p. 266).

arose among the Paulicians and Euchites.⁹⁴ Our document is nothing but a Latin version of the report in the *Panoplia* of Euthymios Zigabenos, which in its turn goes back to the confession of faith made before the emperor Alexius Comnenus by the Bogomil bishop Basilius in the year 1111.⁹⁵

²³⁰ Note that Satan finds the two fishes *before* the creation, i.e., "in the beginning," when the spirit of God still brooded upon the dark face of the waters (Gen. 1 : 2). Had it been *one* fish only, we could interpret it as a prefiguration of the Redeemer, as the pre-existent Christ of St. John's gospel, the Logos that "was in the beginning with God." (Christ himself says in this document, with reference to John 1 : 2: "But I shall sit with my Father.") There are, however, two fishes, joined by a commissure (= the yoke), which can refer only to the zodiacal fishes. The zodia are important determinants in horoscopes, modifying the influence of the planets that have moved into them, or, even if there are no planets, giving the individual houses a special character. In the present instance the Fishes would characterize the ascendent, the moment of the world's birth.⁹⁶ Now we know that cosmogonic myths are, at bottom, symbols for the coming of consciousness (though I cannot go into this here).⁹⁷ The dawn-state corresponds to the unconscious; in alchemical terms, it is the chaos, the *massa confusa* or *nigredo*; and by means of the *opus*, which the adept likens to the creation of the world, the *albedo* or *dealbatio* is produced, the whitening, which is compared sometimes to the full moon, sometimes to sunrise.⁹⁸ It also means illumination, the broadening of consciousness that goes hand in hand with the "work." Expressed psychologically, therefore, the two fishes which the devil found on the primeval waters would signify the newly arisen world of consciousness.

²³¹ The comparison of the fishes with a yoke of oxen ploughing merits special attention. Oxen stand for the motive power of the plough. In the same way, the fishes represent the driving forces of the coming world of consciousness. Since olden times the plough has stood for man's mastery over the earth: wherever

⁹⁴ Psellus, "De daemonibus," in Ficinus, *Auctores Platonici* (1497), fol. N. Vv.

⁹⁵ Migne, *P.G.*, vol. 130, cols. 1290ff.

⁹⁶ This interpretation accords with modern astrological speculations.

⁹⁷ Concerning such symbols, see Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*.

⁹⁸ Ripley, *Chymische Schriften* (1624), p. 25.

man ploughs, he has wrested a patch of soil from the primal state and put it to his own use. That is to say: the fishes will rule this world and subdue it by working astrologically through man and moulding his consciousness. Oddly enough, the ploughing does not begin, like all other things, in the east, but in the west. This motif turns up again in alchemy. "Know," says Ripley, "that your beginning should be made towards sunset, and from there you should turn towards midnight, when the lights cease altogether to shine, and you should remain ninety nights in the dark fire of purgatory without light. Then turn your course towards the east, and you will pass through many different colours," etc.⁹⁹ The alchemical work starts with the descent into darkness (*nigredo*), i.e., the unconscious. The ploughing or mastery of the earth is undertaken "at the command of the Father." Thus God not only foresaw the enantiodromia that began in the year 1000, but also intended it. The Platonic month of the Fishes is ruled by two principles. The fishes in this context are parallel, like the oxen, and point to the same goal, although one is Christ and the other the Antichrist.

²³² This, roughly, would be the early medieval line of reasoning (if such an expression be permitted). I do not know whether the argument we have outlined was ever discussed consciously. It would nevertheless be possible, since the Talmudic prophecy concerning the year 530 leads one to conjecture astronomical calculations on the one hand and on the other an astrological allusion to the sign of Fishes favoured by the Jewish masters. As against this, it is possible that the fishes in our text are not a conscious reference to astrological ideas but rather a product of the unconscious. That the unconscious is quite capable of "reflections" of this kind we know well enough from dreams and the analysis of myths and fairytales.¹⁰⁰ The image of the fishes as such belonged to the common stock of conscious ideas and may—unconsciously—have expressed the meaning in symbolic form. For it was about this time (11th cent.) that the Jewish astrologers began calculating the birth of the Messiah in Pisces, and the universal feeling that a new age had commenced was given clear expression by Joachim of Flora.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 33f.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Laiblin, "Vom mythischen Gehalt unserer Märchen."

- ²³³ The text of our Johannine revelation can hardly be earlier, or much later, than the eleventh century. With the beginning of this century, which is astrologically the middle of the Pisces aeon, heresies sprang up everywhere like mushrooms, and at the same time Christ's adversary, the second fish, alias the devil, appears as the demiurge. Historically speaking, this idea represents a kind of Gnostic Renaissance, since the Gnostic demiurge was regarded as an inferior being from whom all evil comes.¹⁰¹ The significant thing about this phenomenon is its synchronicity, that is, its occurrence at a time that had been fixed astrologically.
- ²³⁴ That Catharist ideas found their way into alchemy is not altogether surprising. I have not, however, come across any texts which would prove that the Catharist fish symbol was assimilated into the alchemical tradition and so could be held responsible for Lambspringk's fish symbol, signifying the arcane substance and its inner antinomy. Lambspringk's symbol appeared not much earlier than the end of the sixteenth century and represented a revitalization of the archetype. It shows two reversed fishes swimming in the sea—*nostro mari*—by which was meant the *aqua permanens* or arcane substance. They are designated "spiritus et anima," and like the stag and unicorn, the two lions, the dog and wolf, and the two fighting birds, they indicate the double nature of Mercurius.¹⁰²
- ²³⁵ If my reflections, which are based on some knowledge of the symbolic thinking of the Middle Ages, are justified, then we have here a remarkable confirmation of the views I expressed in an earlier chapter. With the year 1000 a new world begins, proclaiming its advent in a strange medley of religious movements such as the Bogomils, Cathari, Albigenses, Waldenses, Poor Men of Lyons, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Beguins, Beghards, etc., and in the Holy Ghost Movement of Joachim of Flora. These movements are also associated with the rise of alchemy, Protestantism, the Enlightenment, and natural science, leading ultimately to the increasingly devilish developments we have lived to experience in our own day, and to the evaporation of Christianity under the assaults of rationalism, intellectualism, materialism, and "realism."

¹⁰¹ According to Irenaeus, the Gnostics held that the demiurge was the younger brother of Christ.

¹⁰² *Mus. herm.*, p. 343.

In conclusion, I would like to give a concrete example of the way the symbol of the fish springs out of the unconscious autochthonously. The case in question is that of a young woman who had uncommonly lively and plastic dreams. She was very much under the influence of her father, who had a materialistic outlook and was not happily married. She shut herself off from these unfavourable surroundings by developing, at a very early age, an intense inner life of her own. As a small child, she replaced her parents by two trees in the garden. In her sixth or seventh year, she dreamt that God had promised her a golden fish. From this time forth she frequently dreamt of fishes. Later, a little while before starting psychological treatment on account of her manifold problems, she dreamt that she was "*standing on the bank of the Limmatt and looking down into the water. A man threw a gold coin into the river, the water became transparent and I could see the bottom.*"¹⁰³ *There was a coral reef and a lot of fishes. One of them had a shining silver belly and a golden back.*" During treatment she had the following dream: "*I came to the bank of a broad, flowing river. I couldn't see much at first, only water, earth, and rock. I threw the pages with my notes on them into the water, with the feeling that I was giving something back to the river. Immediately afterwards I had a fishing-rod in my hand. I sat down on a rock and started fishing. Still I saw nothing but water, earth, and rock. Suddenly a big fish bit. He had a silver belly and a golden back. As I drew him to land, the whole landscape became alive: the rock emerged like the primeval foundation of the earth, grass and flowers sprang up, and the bushes expanded into a great forest. A gust of wind blew and set everything in motion. Then, suddenly, I heard behind me the voice of Mr. X [an older man whom she knew only from photographs and from hearsay, but who seems to have been some kind of authority for her]. He said, quietly but distinctly: 'The patient ones in the innermost realm are given the fish, the food of the deep.' At this moment a circle ran round me, part of it touching the water. Then I heard the voice again: 'The brave ones in the second realm may be given victory, for there the battle is fought.' Immediately*

¹⁰³ The transparency of the water means that attention (value, gold) is given to the unconscious. It is an offering to the genius of the fountain. Cf. the vision of the Amitābha Land in my "Psychology of Eastern Meditation."

another circle ran round me, this time touching the other bank. At the same time I saw into the distance and a colourful landscape was revealed. The sun rose over the horizon. I heard the voice, speaking as if out of the distance: 'The third and the fourth realms come, similarly enlarged, out of the other two. But the fourth realm'—and here the voice paused for a moment, as if deliberating—'the fourth realm joins on to the first.'¹⁰⁴ It is the highest and the lowest at once, for the highest and the lowest come together. They are at bottom one.' Here the dreamer awoke with a roaring in her ears.

²³⁷ This dream has all the marks of a "big" dream, and it also has the quality of something "thought," which is characteristic of the intuitive type. Even though the dreamer had acquired some knowledge of psychology by this time, she had no knowledge whatever of the historical fish symbol. The details of the dream may be commented on as follows: The bank of the river represents the threshold, so to speak, to the unconscious. Fishing is an intuitive attempt to "catch" unconscious contents (fishes). Silver and gold, in alchemical parlance, signify feminine and masculine, the hermaphrodite aspect of the fish, indicating that it is a *complexio oppositorum*.¹⁰⁵ It also brings about a magical animation.¹⁰⁶ The older man is a personification of the archetype of the "wise old man." We know already that the fish is a "miraculous food," the eucharistic food of the τέλειοι. The first circle that touches the water illustrates the partial integration of the unconscious. The battle is the conflict of opposites, maybe between consciousness and the shadow. The second circle touches the "other bank," where the union of opposites takes place. In the Indian "quicksilver system" the arcane substance is called *para-da*, 'leading to the other shore'.¹⁰⁷ The fourth realm, stressed by a weighty pause, is the One that adds itself to the three and makes all four into a unity.¹⁰⁸ The circles naturally produce a mandala, the outermost circle paradoxically coinciding with the centre, and recalling the old image for God:

¹⁰⁴ Cf. ch. XII.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Psychology and Alchemy*, s.v. "coniunctio."

¹⁰⁶ The Ichthys (= Christ or Attis) is the food that bestows (immortal) life.

¹⁰⁷ Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, pt. iii, pp. 336ff. and "The Spirit Mercurius" (Swiss edn., pp. 126ff.).

¹⁰⁸ *Psychology and Alchemy*, pars. 26 and 209, and "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity," pars. 184ff.

"God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere." The motif of the first coinciding with the fourth was expressed long ago in the axiom of Maria: "One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the One as the fourth."

²³⁸ The dream sums up in condensed form the whole symbolism of the individuation process in a person who was totally unacquainted with the literature of the subject. Cases of this kind are by no means rare and ought to make us think. They demonstrate the existence of an unconscious "knowledge" of the individuation process and its historical symbolism.