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# The Psyche in Antiquity:

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*Early Greek Philosophy*

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Marie-Louise von Franz, Honorary Patron

Studies in Jungian Psychology  
by Jungian Analysts

Daryl Sharp, General Editor

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# The Psyche in Antiquity: Book One

Early Greek Philosophy

From Thales to Plotinus

Edward F. Edinger  
Edited by Deborah A. Wesley



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## Author's Note

*The Psyche in Antiquity* began as two lecture series given at the C.G. Jung Institute in Los Angeles in the winters of 1993 and 1994. Book One (*Early Greek Philosophy*) and Book Two (*Gnosticism and Early Christianity*) were originally transcribed from audiotape by Charles Yates, M.D., who also, along with Dianne Cordic, partially edited Book One. Deborah Wesley edited Book Two, completed work on Book One, and unified the style of the whole. The illustrations are by Charlene M. Sieg.

I thank all for their devoted work and especially Deborah Wesley for bearing the responsibility for putting this difficult material into final form.

EDWARD F. EDINGER  
LOS ANGELES

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## 1

## Introduction

Depth psychotherapy and nuclear physics are unique phenomena of the twentieth century, and in certain respects have no predecessors. Because of this, a little explanation is needed as to why this book arising from depth psychotherapy, a most modern vocation, should take up material from so long ago. Although depth psychotherapy is original, born almost *sui generis*, in its practical application it is the heir of three noble traditions: the medical tradition of the care of patients, the religious tradition of concern for the soul, and the philosophical tradition of dialogue in the search for truth. This particular study centers on the third tradition, the philosophical one.

The early Greek philosophers were the first to articulate certain ideas and images that are central to the Western psyche. It behooves depth psychologists to be familiar with these images and their origins and to recognize them as they appear in modern dreams and other psychic contents. We know that many cultures hold it vital to their well-being to be in touch with their ancestors; it promotes our psychological health as well to be in touch with the early Greeks, our cultural ancestors. Such study connects us with our own psychic roots, which reside in the collective unconscious, laid down like geological strata during the evolution of the human psyche.

In general the human embryo's physical development echoes the stages of the evolution of the species, a parallel expressed as "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." Something of the same sort happens in psychological development. As a personal analysis leads one back to childhood or family origins, it returns one at the same time not just to personal childhood but also to the childhood of the species. Knowledge of these earlier ideas and psychic images as they were experienced by the human race as a whole is relevant for the analyst at a practical level.

## C. G. Jung speaks of this:

In consequence of the collective nature of the [archetypal] image it is often impossible to establish its full range of meaning from the associative material of a single individual. But since it is of importance to do this for practical therapeutic purposes, the necessity of comparative research into symbols for medical psychology becomes evident on these grounds also. For this purpose the investigator must turn back to those periods in human history when symbol formation still went on unim-

peded, that is, when there was still no epistemological criticism of the formation of images.<sup>1</sup>

This certainly applies to the early Greeks. They had no epistemological criticism of the metaphysical doctrines they spun out and projected onto the universe. What they espoused was almost pure psychology. It was the phenomenology of the psyche expressing itself in a naive way.

In a later work, Jung states:

Any renewal not deeply rooted in the best spiritual tradition is ephemeral; but the dominant that grows from historical roots acts like a living being within the egobound man. He does not possess it, it possesses him.<sup>2</sup>

That remark speaks to the practical importance of making these archetypal amplifications in the course of the analytic process. The psychological renewal that the patient experiences in analysis becomes rooted in the best spiritual tradition of the human race and not just in the shallow roots of his or her own personal life. Certainly ancient Greek philosophy is part of our best spiritual tradition. If we are not connected to these roots, we are ephemeral.

The early Greeks stood at the dawn of rational human consciousness. They had just stepped out of the mists of *participation mystique* with nature. They were beginning to reflect on the nature of human existence with a bit of objectivity. Wordsworth characterizes this transition in "Ode: On Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood":

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
    To me did seem  
Apparell'd in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; . . .

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
    Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
    And cometh from afar:  
    Not in entire forgetfulness,  
    And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
    From God, who is our home:

<sup>1</sup> "The Philosophical Tree," *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13, par. 353. [CW refers throughout to *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*]

<sup>2</sup> *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, par. 521.

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!<sup>3</sup>

We can think of the early Greek philosophers similarly: they are trailing clouds of glory, so to speak. They are not abstract rationalists; they are just stepping out of identification with the archetypal psyche, trailing clouds of that dimension with them. This means that their concepts and images are laden with the numinosity that accompanies all newborn things. When these same ideas are paralleled in the dreams and fantasies of patients in analysis, recognizing such connections is highly therapeutic.

The modern notion of a philosopher is that of an academic, dry-as-dust rationalist. The early tradition of philosophy was anything but that. Philosophers were visionaries, quite similar to the great Hebrew prophets. Like the prophets they were gripped by the numinosity of certain archetypal images. The prophets proclaimed the reality of their visions in the idiom to which they were born: the Hebrew religion. Similarly the Greek philosophers expressed their visions in their particular idiom, the language of dawning Greek rationalism. They were attempting to conceptualize the images that gripped them. It is no coincidence that Thales, the first documented Greek philosopher, became prominent in 585 B.C., the year of the capture of Jerusalem by Babylon and the deportation of the Israelites, their exile and the prophetic activity of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

It is my premise that philosophy, especially early philosophy, like religion, is primarily psychology. It is the phenomenology of the psyche revealing itself in a particular setting, rather than an abstract intellectual discourse. Nietzsche was perhaps the first person to recognize this. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he says:

Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.<sup>4</sup>

Jung agrees that the psyche is the foundation of all philosophical assertions:

How much "soul" is projected into the unknown in the world of external appearances is, of course, familiar to anyone acquainted with the natural science and natural philosophy of the ancients. It is, in fact, so much that we are absolutely incapable of saying how the world is constituted in itself and always shall be, since we are obliged to convert physical events into psychic processes as soon as we want to say anything about knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>*Poetical Works*, p. 460.

<sup>4</sup> Sect. 6, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, CW 9i, par. 116.

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It does not surprise me that psychology debouches into philosophy, for the thinking that underlies philosophy is after all a psychic activity which, as such, is the proper study of psychology. I always think of psychology as encompassing the whole of the psyche, and that includes philosophy and theology and many other things besides. For underlying all philosophies and all religions are the facts of the human soul, which may ultimately be the arbiters of truth and error.<sup>6</sup>

Looking over the phenomenon of Greek philosophy as a whole, one has the impression that the initial and overriding interest of the Greek philosophers was in what lies beyond the visible world. They sensed that there was something behind what was ordinarily seen. Their basic questions were metaphysical, that is, beyond the physical. It is remarkable to see that the dawning rational consciousness of our species made that assumption so gratuitously: that there is something beyond what one can see. As we now understand it, that assumption demonstrates the projection of the reality of the psyche, which lies behind sensible, concrete existence.

John Burnet, who was a scholar of Greek philosophy in the earlier part of the century, grasped this same idea. He does not refer to the psyche per se but he makes the same point. Burnet speaks as a classicist:

Greek philosophy . . . is dominated from beginning to end by the problem of reality [meaning metaphysical reality]. In the last resort the question is always: "What is real?" . . .

The problem of reality, in fact, involves the problem of man's relation to it, which at once takes us beyond pure science. We have to ask whether the mind of man can have any contact with reality at all, and if it can, what difference this will make to his life. To anyone who has tried to live in sympathy with the Greek philosophers, the suggestion that they were "intellectualists" must seem ludicrous. On the contrary, Greek philosophy is based on the faith that reality is divine, and that the one thing needful is for the soul, which is akin to the divine, to enter into communion with it. It was in truth an effort to satisfy what we call the religious instinct. Ancient religion was a somewhat external thing, and made little appeal to this except in the "mysteries," and even the mysteries were apt to become external, and were peculiarly liable to corruption. We shall see again and again that philosophy sought to do for men what the mysteries could only do in part, and that it therefore includes most of what we should now call religion.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to observe how this problem of the nature of reality had evolved by the time of Plato, about 200 years after Thales. By then the issue had

<sup>6</sup> "General Aspects of Dream Psychology," *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, par. 525.

<sup>7</sup> *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato*, pp. 11f.

polarized into two opposing views, which Plato describes in "The Sophist" in terms of a battle between gods and giants. One must recall that in early Greek mythology the Olympian gods destroyed the Titans in a great war. The Olympian deities then became the rulers. Plato refers to this as he says:

What we shall see is something like a battle of gods and giants going on between them over their quarrel about reality.

. . . One party is trying to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands, for they lay hold of every stock and stone and strenuously affirm that real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define reality as the same thing as body, and as soon as one of the opposite party asserts that anything without a body is real, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen . . . .

[The listener in the dialogue responds:] The people you describe are certainly a formidable crew. I have met quite a number of them before now.

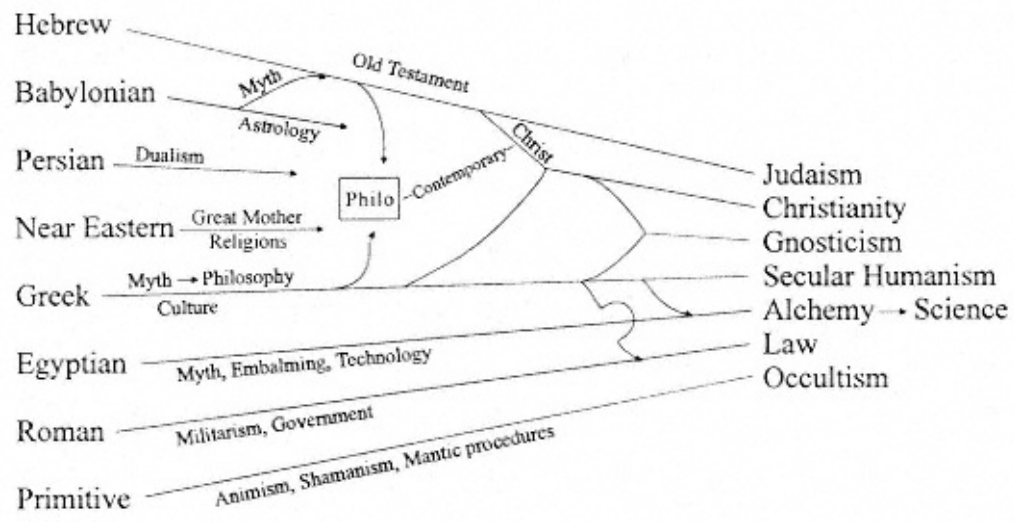
[The speaker continues:] . . . Yes, and accordingly their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true reality consists in certain intelligible and bodiless forms. In the clash of argument they shatter and pulverize those bodies which their opponents wield, and what those others allege to be true reality they call, not real being but a sort of moving process of becoming. On this issue an interminable battle is always going on between the two camps.<sup>8</sup>

The battle between the gods and giants, which began over two thousand years ago, is not over yet.

Greek philosophy has its own particular psychological context in antiquity. It was only one of a number of currents which came together as the sources of the modern Western psyche. The figure on the next page shows some of these currents. Each will be described in turn to show how Greek philosophy fits into the larger context of antiquity. One can think of them as rivers which join each other when the conditions are right.

The Hebrew source is one of the largest, chiefly through the Old Testament. A Babylonian tributary has poured itself into that great Hebrew river, so that if you look closely at the Hebrew Bible you will find Babylonian mythology there also. A small stream from the Hebrew river joins a small one from the Greek river, ending in Philo. He was the first to document explicitly the synthesis of Hebrew religion and Greek philosophy. Hebrew and Greek streams underwent another synthesis at a later time as the Jewish heresy, Christianity, joined Greek philosophy to create Christian theology. Another prominent stream is Persian

<sup>8</sup> Sect. 246a, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *Plato's Collected Dialogues*.



Sources of the Western Psyche

dualism, Zoroastrianism, later an aspect of Gnosticism also. The Near-Eastern Great Mother religion made real contributions to Christian theology as well, with the increasing emphasis on the Virgin Mary.

The other major river is the Greek one, which starts as mythology and develops into philosophy and culture in general, especially into the arts. The Hebrew and the Greek streams are the primary ones, which is signified in the traditional educational maxim that modern Western civilization is a product of Athens and Jerusalem. An important intermingling between the Greek and the Egyptian generated alchemy. The parents of alchemy are Egyptian embalming and technology, a practical tradition, and Greek philosophy. Alchemy later led into science itself, including depth psychology.

The Roman tradition was substantially influenced by the Greek. It appears largely in the realm of practical military and civic affairs and in the whole legacy of law. Finally there is the primitive stream, which is behind all the others and includes animism, shamanism and mantic procedures of various kinds, and which continued to live mixed into these other currents and is still alive today. Greek philosophy is in a central position, having interacted with almost all the other streams in its vicinity.

This book is organized around fourteen major personalities in the history of Greek philosophy. Jung, who refers to all of them in his *Collected Works*, has included the main Greek tradition in the body of data he used in his formulation of the psyche. Each of these fourteen is associated with one or more central concepts or metaphysical images. Nietzsche observed that the Greeks have embodied for us "all the eternal types [and] . . . all the archetypes of philosophical thought."<sup>9</sup> These archetypal ideas which gripped the Greek philosophers have given birth to and underlie much human reflection.

For the early Greeks, philosophy was a way to study the archetypes. The word *philosophia* in Greek means "love of Sophia," and philosopher means "lover of Sophia," that is, of Wisdom. In some settings Sophia was highly personified. In the Hebrew wisdom literature and in Gnosticism, Sophia was the feminine consort of the Deity. At the root of the word *philosophia* is the image of a love affair with a goddess. F.E. Peters, in his lexicon of Greek terms, says:

By the traditional Greek account Pythagoras was the first to use the term *philosophia* and endowed the word with a strongly religious and ethical sense . . . which can best be seen in the view of the philosopher put forth by Socrates in *Phaedo*

<sup>9</sup> *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, p. 2.

---

62c69e. In Aristotle it has lost these Pythagorean overtones . . . *philosophia* has now become a synonym for *episteme*, in the sense of an intellectual discipline seeking out causes.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of this book, however, is not to study philosophy, but to track the psyche as it manifests itself in early philosophy. The archetypal ideas which so gripped the early Greek philosophers are living psychic organisms and they undergo differentiation and evolution as various minds grapple with them. Eventually they become dried up, desiccated, so that what is left in Greek philosophy is an abstract skeleton, all structure and no life. In depth psychology, however, we still encounter these ideas as living organisms in the unconscious. Jungian psychology redeems the relevance of ancient philosophy.

Connecting one's individual experience of the psyche, its evolution and development, to the larger process of the evolution and development of the collective psyche as a whole, is of practical importance for the understanding of unconscious processes. If one accepts this premise, then only with the knowledge of these earlier expressions can the parallels with modern ones be seen. Then it is apparent that they manifest the same basic archetypal images.

Analysis attempts to bring about a renewal of the individual's psychology. It follows then that the most profound and the most satisfying and enduring renewal in the analytic process needs to be deeply rooted in the best spiritual tradition that the individual is a part of.

In the course of analysis the ego changes its standpoint. It finds a broader context. The personal, the contemporary, relates to a the larger perspective if large enough, the perspective of eternity. It does, however, make quite a difference whether this takes place consciously or unconsciously. There is a world of difference between being unconsciously contained in a particular tradition and being consciously related to it.

<sup>10</sup>*Greek Philosophical Terms*, p. 156.



## The Milesian Philosophers

The three Milesian philosophers, all from the city of Miletus, are usually considered as a group. Thales lived from about 585 B.C.; Anaximander, a student of Thales, lived from about 560 B.C. and Anaximenes, a student of Anaximander, lived about 546 B.C. As a group they brought to birth two primordial concepts: *physis* and *arche*.

*Physis* (in Latin, *natura*; in English, nature) is a profoundly complex and ambiguous term with a number of references. First, it is used for the source, origin, descent and lineage of something. Secondly, it refers to the natural, original condition of something, to a state or character of an entity, to its nature. Thirdly, it can refer to the efficacious, generative power of the organic world, the power of growth. The word *physis* derives from the root of the Greek verb *pheo*-meaning "to grow," thus it has an organic quality. As early as Aristotle, *physis* and God are mentioned in the same breath, both having the power to create things. Finally, *physis* refers to the regular order of things, an innate organic unity as contrasted with human law or human contrivance. Democritus, for example, says that men's lives are determined by the twin forces of nature and law, "nature" referring to an original organic or divine derivation. Among the Stoics *physis* became a god of the universe. Marcus Aurelius, a late Roman Stoic, says, "O Nature [*physis*], from you comes everything, in you is everything, to you goes everything."<sup>11</sup> A dictum of Chrysippus, one of the early Stoics, was: "Live by following [keeping close to] nature [*physis*]."<sup>12</sup>

The Hebrews lacked the Greek conception of nature. They had no term corresponding to *physis*. This meant that when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, *physis* did not appear because it did not exist as a concept. Philo was the first to make use of the word consciously. To him *physis* is no longer the origin or the creative power that it was for the early Greeks. Instead it has become an agent of divine activity. The Hebrew mentality, which gives priority to the religious dimension, had taken over the original word and subordinated it to its own usage.

In Gnosticism there appears the image of Sophia falling into the embrace of

<sup>11</sup>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 2, p. 657.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 658.

*physis*. Sophia, a divine personification, falls into nature and then calls out to be rescued. In early Greek alchemy we have the well-known dictum: "Nature rejoices in nature, nature subdues nature, nature rules over nature."<sup>13</sup> This indicates that nature is split and is in conflict with itself at a certain level.

The classical feeling toward nature was totally reversed by Christianity which demonized nature, turning her into an enemy of the spirit.<sup>14</sup> This is an outstanding feature of collective Christian psychology. With the coming of the Renaissance this attitude was again reversed, and nature was again given respect and consideration. Science gave her further respect by studying her.

When we reach the Age of Enlightenment, nature has been deified. The first sentence of the American Declaration of Independence, which was substantially a product of the French Enlightenment, reads:

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them.

This is a late manifestation of *physis* appearing in modern political doctrine; "the laws of nature and of nature's God" represents the highest authority to which Jefferson could appeal. Finally, to bring the matter up to the present, Jung has taken the step of identifying the unconscious psyche with nature:

The products of the unconscious are pure nature. "If we take Nature for our guide, we shall never go astray," said the ancients. [This is an old Stoic dictum]. But nature is not, in herself, a guide, for she is not there for man's sake. Ships are not guided by the phenomenon of magnetism. We have to make the compass a guide and, in addition, allow for a specific correction, for the needle does not even point exactly to the north. So it is with the guiding function of the unconscious. It can be used as a source of symbols, but with the necessary conscious correction that has to be applied to every natural phenomenon in order to make it serve our purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Jung is reminding us that the ego is not a piece of nature. It is, in fact, *contra naturam* to a very large extent. To use nature as its guide, the ego has to be very careful because nature is not interested in mankind.

There are modern words which have *physis* as a root: physics, physical, physician, physiology, physiognomy and so on. *Physis* is still a living entity in our evolving language.

<sup>13</sup>*Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, par. 21, n. 152.

<sup>14</sup> See *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5, pars. 105ff. '

<sup>15</sup> The Role of the Unconscious," *Civilization in Transition*, CW 10, par. 34.

It is noteworthy indeed that *physis* was the first concept to crystallize out of early Greek philosophy. Considered psychologically, the discovery of *physis*, nature, means that one has perceived the separation between subject and object, between the ego and its surrounding environment, nature. The most basic prerequisite for consciousness is thereby established. Once there is an awareness that subject and object are two different entities, then a dialogue becomes possible between the ego, the subject, and nature, the object. Science becomes possible. In the physical sciences the ego asks questions of nature. By the way the questions are formulated and the experiments are set up, one coerces nature into giving specific answers. This works somewhat differently for the depth psychologist, in that although one puts questions to nature, nature also puts questions to us. Each patient is a part of nature submitting a question for us to answer. What follows is a two-way dialogue unlike pure physical science. In one case humanity is experimenting on nature, and in the other case nature is also experimenting on humanity.

The other fundamental concept of the Milesians is the term *arche*. It means beginning; principle; original substance; in German, *urstoff*, ruling element. In alchemy the term *arche* was translated as *prima materia* or first matter. Derivatives with the stem *arche-* include such words as archetype, archeology, archaic; then, monarchy, patriarchy, etc. those terms refer to the "first" as the ruler; the *arche*, since it comes first, is the ruler. Other such words are archbishop, archangel and so on. Understood psychologically, these terms refer to the projection onto the material world of an elemental, original condition of the psyche.

In this projection, the psyche announces the fact that it derives from an original, prime matter, and the conceptual image *arche* expresses the nature of the primordial state of the unconscious. It is quite remarkable that early in Western speculation, the unity of the psychic Self should be projected into the world in spite of the latter's obvious multiplicity. The world obviously does not derive from one individual stuff; it is a multiplicity. The assumption that there is an original *arche* that lies behind the multiplicity is a daring one, yet it is made quite naively. No one argued about the basic assumption that there was one thing as an origin. Rather, they argued about the nature of the one thing.

Of the three Milesians, Thales is a semi-legendary character. Some of the remarks preserved about him have an almost mythical quality. Interestingly, the name Thales is close to the Greek word for sea, *thalassa*. Thales, who thought water was the *arche*, may have a name which is the Greek equivalent of "seaman." He announced that the *arche* was *hydor*, water. So one could say that

the first Western philosopher believed that the unconscious psyche is equivalent to water. It is a familiar image, akin to the understanding of water symbolism in dreams. The alchemists certainly picked up this idea, applying alchemical procedures to the *arche*, the *prima materia*, saying that in the course of making the Philosophers' Stone one must first reduce the *materia* one was dealing with to its original *arche* which many thought of as water by means of a *solutio*. Various kinds of water were thought of as the end goal of the alchemical process: the *hydor theion* or divine water, the *aqua vita*, the *aqua permanens*.

The Gnostic Naasenes equated their serpent, Naas, with Thales' concept of water. It will become apparent that both alchemy and Gnosticism are products of the primitive conceptions of Greek philosophy. For example Jung says:

The Naasenes themselves considered Naas, the serpent, to be their central deity, and they explained it as the "moist substance," in agreement with Thales of Miletus, who said water was the prime substance on which all life depended. Similarly, all living things depend on the Naas; "it contains within itself, like the horn of the one-horned bull, the beauty of all things." It "pervades everything, like the water that flows out of Edem and divides into four sources."<sup>16</sup>

The living vitality of the symbol was demonstrated as subsequent symbol systems picked up and amplified the original. A symbol has the power to draw various other images to it in an organic process of amplification. Thales even shows up in the nineteenth century in Goethe's *Faust*, Part Two. In the Aegean sea festival scene at the end of act two, Thales appears and leads the homunculus to the sea and to his experience of the epiphany of the sea goddess. Thales sings a paean to water:

Hail, hail, once again. How I exult, possessed as I am with the true and the beautiful. . . . Everything came out of the water. Everything is sustained by the water. Ocean, may you hold your sway for ever. If you didn't send your clouds, and brooks in abundance, and streams twisting this way and that, and the great rivers, where would our mountains and plains be, where the world? It is you who keep life at its freshest. <sup>17</sup>

As can be seen, these early images and figures frequently appear in later examples of cultural history as an expression of the continuity of the collective psyche. One can perceive these symbols not just as dissociated layers or fragments but as living currents that run through the centuries.

<sup>16</sup> *Aion*, CW 9ii, par. 311.

<sup>17</sup> Act 2, lines 84328443, trans. Barker Fairley.

Anaximander, who flourished about 560 B.C., held that the *arche* was the *apeiron*, which means the boundless, the unlimited or the infinite. *Peiron* or *peiros* means limit. *A-* is a privative, so *apeiron* means unbounded. It announces the fact that the unconscious is fundamentally infinite or unlimited. Jung remarked, "The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not?"<sup>18</sup> The German word used by Jung for infinite is *unendliches*, exactly Anaximander's word. Our experience of the unconscious, when we go deeply enough, leads to implications of this sort. The Self,<sup>19</sup> as we understand it in its phenomenology, is beyond the limits of the ego to define and therefore, for the purposes of the ego, it is unlimited or infinite. That is what wholeness is when it is experienced by the ego.

Anaximander gives us our first significant fragment of Western philosophy:

Things perish into those things out of which they have their birth, according to that which is ordained; for they give reparation to one another and pay the penalty of their injustice according to the disposition of time.<sup>20</sup>

This fragment seems to have a numinous power to fascinate scholars and commentators. Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy* is no more than an extended commentary on this text of Anaximander, which is presented at the beginning of the book and followed by a long dissertation on its meaning.

Cornford's exposition is not psychological; however his understanding is that the multiplicity of individual, differentiated things we see around us is born out of an original *apeiron*, an original unlimited stuff, through the intermediaries of the four elements. This means that the *apeiron* first gives birth to the four elements. Then the individual things arise from various mixtures of the four elements. (This view is disputed by some scholars, as the four elements had not yet been delineated as such.) The four elements in various mixtures bring to birth the multiple objects in the world and then when these objects perish, they return to the four elements from which they came, as punishment for their injustice in coming into existence. Their existence was a crime for which a penalty or reparation must be paid.

It is probably more suitable to think of the multiplicity of things as reverting

<sup>18</sup> *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 325.

<sup>19</sup> The Self is Jung's term for the central archetype expressing the totality of the psyche as organized around a dynamic center. It is experienced as the objective, transpersonal center of identity and cannot be empirically distinguished from the image of God.

<sup>20</sup> F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*. p. 8.

to the original *apeiron* when they die, rather than to the four elements. It is against the *apeiron* that the crime has been committed. Either way one looks at it, the remarkable fact remains that an ethical issue, justice or injustice, is attributed to nature, to a physical reality. This indicates that the psyche is still not differentiated from nature. If we extract this fact about the psyche from the physical world where it has been projected by Anaximander, we can then reformulate his statement thus: the existence of the conscious ego which is what the multiplicity of the world refers to psychologically is based on a crime or an injustice which requires reparation. It is a familiar idea, found for example in the myth of Prometheus stealing fire for mankind or in the myth of the fall of Adam in the garden of Eden. Understood psychologically both have the same meaning: human consciousness derives from a crime and is fundamentally guilt-laden.<sup>21</sup> Later, Empedocles makes reference to a prenatal crime to explain the nature of life on earth. Jung expresses the same idea:

The opposites are the ineradicable and indispensable preconditions of all psychic life, so much so that life itself is guilt. Even a life dedicated to God is still lived by an ego, which speaks of an ego and asserts an ego in God's despite, which does not instantly merge itself with God but reserves for itself a freedom and a will which it sets up outside God and against him.<sup>22</sup>

One can read Jung's passage as a psychological paraphrase of Anaximander's text which says that things that pass away return to that infinite stuff out of which they came and pay reparation for their injustice. Jung speaks of the infinite as God in relation to the ego, which must pay for the injustice committed in being born into separate, individual existence. It is a subtle psychological point, but Jung states it unequivocally.

Cornford's discussion, of course, takes a different direction, as his interpretation is based on a different set of categories. He focuses on the term *chreon*, destiny, which can be translated as "what must be." Noting that fate and right are linked together, he discusses at length the term *moira*, which means lot or portion determined by the gods. Here he is still in the realm of mythology. Psychologically speaking, every individual human psyche, as it emerges and establishes itself out of the original totality of the unconscious, the original *apeiron* or infinite, takes on a specific character and a shape that is unique to it.

<sup>21</sup> This is further explored in my *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche*, pp. 16ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, par. 206.

For example, one particular psychological function is given preference over others, so that the more neglected functions are treated unjustly, so to speak. The particular lot or function or *moira* that determines what character an individual psyche will have, must necessarily be lopsided. There is no such thing as total symmetry in an individual human ego, so that each one has its own particular injustices as well, so to speak, which came with it into existence. This is another way of understanding Anaximander's text.

Later philosophers, notably Plato, elaborated the concept of *dike*, meaning justice or right behavior. They extracted it from the physical world of Anaximander and put it in the context of ethics.

Finally there was the third Milesian, Anaximenes, who flourished about 546 B.C., and who announced that the first principle was *aer* (air). Peters's lexicon says about the concept of air:

For Anaximenes the *apeiron* of Anaximander and the *arche* of all things was air, probably because of its connection with breath and life (cf. *pneuma*). It was, as were most of the pre-Socratic *archai*, divine. [It is important to realize that these early men thought of the original stuff as divine, *theion*]. The later popularizer of *aer* was Diogenes of Apollonia who made it the substance of both soul (*psyche*) and mind (*nous*). . . . [A symbol which is alive "magnetically" attracts to it other things, so *psyche* and *nous* have also been associated with air.] The connection *aer*pneumapsychezoe [*life*]theion [meaning divine] remained a constant one. The air-like nature of the soul is raised in [Plato's] *Phaedo*. . . . Since the heavenly bodies dwell in the *ether* [a kind of upper air], another possibility was that the soul might be absorbed into the stars. . . . This belief was incorporated into later Pythagoreanism, [which held that] . . . the *aer* between the moon and the earth was filled with *daimones* and heroes. [Later, in Philo, the *daimones* became angels.]<sup>23</sup>

Peters here points out that, initially, Anaximenes stated that the original divine stuff was air. Later thinkers said that it is also soul or mind, and that the whole layer of air surrounding the earth between the earth and the moon is filled with spiritual, incorporeal beings. One finds this thinking even in Paul in the New Testament. It became widespread belief that air was the medium containing spiritual entities which affected human beings. The symbolism here is basically air-breath-wind-spirit. The later word *pneuma* became an image of immense importance for the thinkers who followed and for the psychology of modern dream interpretation, in which one encounters air, wind and tornadoes for example. The symbolism started with Anaximenes and a whole complex of

<sup>23</sup>Greek Philosophical Terms, p. 4.

symbolic images in which wind and spirit are equated.

To put it in a nutshell, this symbol combination refers to the invisible, autonomous dynamism of the objective psyche dynamic of the Self expressed in the symbolism of air and wind. Very likely the imagery derives from primitive observations of what was called the breath-soul. When a warrior died on the battlefield, he gave out a last breath, often associated with hallucinatory phenomena. We see it even today. Individuals witnessing a death will sometimes say that they see a wraith-like creature ascend from the mouth of the dying person. It is the old idea of the breath-soul which leaves the body at death to go back to its source, to the surrounding air.



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