

JOHN WARDEN

THE DIAMOND & THE STAR

An Exploration of their Symbolic
Meaning in an Insecure Age.

Twinkle,
twinkle,
little
star,
How
I
wonder
what
you
are!
Up
above
the
world
so
high,
Like
a
diamond
in
the
sky

The Diamond
and
The Star

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An exploration of
their symbolic meaning
in an insecure age

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To Jung, the great rebel

‘Socrates is charged with corrupting the youth
of the city, and with rejecting the gods of
Athens and introducing new divinities.’

Apologia, Plato

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Foreword

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to introduce this inspiring and thoughtfully written book by Living Tao Foundation's long time Tai Ji friend, John Warden. I have known John for a number of years now and have been consistently amazed by his multi-dimensional interest in life and his ever-enthusiastic ways of pursuing his diversity of learning.

Here, in this gem of a book, he offers us the enrichment of many creative ideas from his lifelong exploration of the scientific, psychological, intellectual and spiritual realms.

I am honored to read about his personal understanding of the Taoist 'Mystery of the Gateway' and the *I Ching* wisdom inspired by reading my book, *Quantum Soup*. I am also delighted to see how easily he could run with my suggestions of playing with the Hexagrams as potent symbolic language, linking them with all the variations in the *I Ching*. By doing so, he has managed to delve deeper into the subconscious, and the 'collective unconscious' of all life's 'ever presence' of learning.

This book uses the multiple facets of the diamond to explore the metaphors of the solar system and reveal the underlying light of awakening consciousness. Congratulations, John!

CHUNGLIANG AL HUANG

Preface

JOHN WARDEN has written a fascinating book, at once a spiritual autobiography and a psycho-cosmological adventure. Making deft use of symbolic resources from East and West, from Jungian Psychology and chemical analysis, the author constructs a taut but widely extended net of ideas which bring to our attention the need in the modern/post-modern world for a new kind of spirituality, transcendent yet inner-worldly, drawing on many ancient traditions, yet mindful of the awe-inspiring world that modern science has revealed to our gaze.

A key notion in all of this is Jung's idea of 'individuation'. Not everyone views this concept as having clearly spiritual content. The ideal of a well-balanced psychic life may seem to some as lacking in the kind of transcendence that they see as an essential ingredient of the spiritual life, perhaps too tied down to earth, to the chthonic, and to the collective unconscious. However, Jung's attempt to rethink the psychic life beyond Christian doctrine and beyond Freudian reductionism provides a powerful stimulus to our imagination that has far wider significance than the typically psychological realm.

The burgeoning interest in a renewed but secular spirituality has much to gain from Jung's approach. The major feature of this new spiritual impulse lies in its eclecticism. Here Jung's approach shines forth strongly, in his concern to take heed of, if not actually to emulate, Eastern models of the spiritual life. It is evident too in his refusal to adopt the easy dichotomy between the scientific and the personal, and to find some way of integrating the new scientific paradigm which emerged in the twentieth century with a fuller account of the psyche. The psychic life could only be conceived as a whole, and as integrated in some way with the wholeness of the cosmos at large. And Jung's powerful contribution towards a fresh understanding of the important role of symbols in our search for meaning and integration is an important message for our

times in which the public imagination has been dredged of many of its archetypal resources.

John Warden's own life path, which has evidently traversed many different fields of human experience and endeavour, has enabled him to approach in many creative ways the deep issues that concern our contemporary search for meaning and hope. His wide reading is very evident throughout this book, with its discussions ranging over issues of consciousness, Gaia theory, the *I Ching*, mandalas and synchronicity as well as many other ramifications of Jungian psychology.

But what shines through most to me is his ability to bring the world of science alive and to give it the kind of heart and soul, a deep symbolic significance, which to many it seems to lack. This is especially impressive in his penetrating discussion of the various transformations of what he calls 'the miracle of carbon ... the magic element on which life itself depends', an element which, like the Tao, is 'filled with infinite possibilities'.

This is an inspired book and I hope it will be widely read and meditated upon.

JOHN CLARKE
*Professor Emeritus in the History of Ideas
at Kingston University, London*

Author's Preface

SINCE THE INTRODUCTION which follows is rather long and discursive it was suggested that I preface the book with a brief explanation of its content and purpose. However I do not think this would be meaningful without a brief account of how it came to be written.

The book is an amplification of an essay written in 1988 at the end of a period of study and analysis at the Jung Institute near Zurich, a time of some emotional turmoil when I seemed in close touch with my unconscious and visited with visions and synchronistic events. Something – possibly contemplation of the Diamond Body, a Self symbol described in Richard Wilhelm's *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, made me wonder, as a chemist, why Jung, so concerned as he was with quaternity, and its expression in the Indian and Tibetan Self symbol of the mandala, had never seemingly recognised the important nature of the tetrahedron, both as the simplest form of solid, with four corners and faces, and its crystalline expression in the Chinese Self symbol of the Diamond Body. Again, as a chemist, I could visualise the huge symbolic importance of the quaternity represented by the four valences of carbon in the structure of all living matter.

This experience led me to draw what I have called the 'diamond mandala' and subsequently to follow it up with the 'star mandala' (Plate 1). It may interest some readers to start by reading the account of this experience which forms the second appendix. What prompted the drawing of the star mandala is difficult to understand, but having drawn it I recognised a close correspondence or association between the two symbols, diamond and star, which can be observed in so many emotional contexts, in poetry in particular. This seemed to me no coincidence, since they are such vital components of all life, related much as *yang* and *yin*, the star representing energy and the diamond matter. Life, particularly life on earth, in Chinese eyes the Tao, could be seen as the offspring of their marriage or symbiosis.

At the time in question my interest in Wilhelm's book (above) and his translation of the *I Ching* had led me into an exploration of Lao Tzu and to a workshop on Tai Ji where I met Chungliang Al Huang. I read Capra's *The Tao of Physics*; but it was after reading James Lovelock's *Gaia* and I could foresee the dangers to the planet, that the importance of the symbols for others than myself began to make itself felt. The original essay was only read by my analyst and a few friends. Now, some twenty years later, the crisis is manifest and is the topic of widest public concern. Much has been written and will continue to be written about our attitude to the planet which is our home, but we are dogged by the belief that the solution, if any, to the present crisis must lie somewhere in and among the various collectives – scientists and politicians and attendant lobbies – in which we, as individuals, can lay the responsibility and which we can comfortably blame when things go wrong. Jung may not have been the first to lay emphasis on the unconscious shadow in the individual psyche and its consequence in the phenomenon of the scapegoat, but if there was something which he held of the first importance it was the responsibility in every individual to understand himself. 'If the whole is to change,' he wrote, 'the individual must change himself.' Some fifty years after his death, Jung's ideas, the product of a lifetime of effort, have reached comparatively few. To understand Jung is impossible without experiencing for oneself the magic of the symbol. If this book has any central purpose it lies in the hope that readers may begin to recognise its place and purpose in their own lives. The diamond and the star are such wonderful symbols that I have tried to observe them in a variety of contexts, so that their magic may stimulate the imagination. Without this experience as part of the life of many more of us who, in the end, make up the responsible collectives, I fear for the future. In the end, the book is less about the diamond and the star than about the symbol itself. Many ideas will emerge, among them the close correspondence between the thinking of Jung and Lao Tzu and the emergence of a more image-oriented view of science, but the reader need not, perhaps should not, look for specific messages in each chapter so much as lean back and try to enjoy and integrate the kaleidoscope of images presented, and perhaps meditate on their personal meaning.

JOHN WARDEN 2007

Publishers' Note: The author sadly died before the book was published.

Introduction

*And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end;
and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* Ecclesiastes 12.12

CERTAINLY WHAT STUDY I have made has made me recognise in some despair how much has been written and what little hope there is to read even what I feel I should have taken into account. Yet the prophet also said, ‘The words of the wise are as goads.’ Who will ever read this book, I wonder? It is certainly vanity to suppose myself wise. And, however much the world needs them, it is not so much goads I seek to bring (others are trying) as more gently, I hope, to open some eyes.

This is not an academic book. Nor is it an autobiography or *apologia pro vita sua* – certainly not a sermon. Rather it is an attempt to show, or project, like an old fashioned lantern slide, some of the images and experiences and their background that have been instrumental in opening my own eyes, in fashioning what I am today.

Perhaps too much has been written and continues to be written in a rhetorical or evangelistic way, as though society can somehow be swayed into adopting some new or improved consciousness. The truth is that any such effort is doomed. As Jung so cogently put it:

*If the whole is to change, the individual must change himself.*¹

In spite of his efforts to change society E.F. Schumacher also recognised it:

It is no longer possible to believe that any political or economic reform, or scientific advance, or technological progress could solve the life-and-death problems of industrial society. They lie too deep, in the heart and soul of every one of us. It is there that the main work of reform has to be done – secretly, unobtrusively.²

How is an individual to change? Indeed, why ever should he? Only by some inspiration. So if this book has a purpose it can only be, however

grandiose a hope, to inspire; or rather to catalyse some inspiration within the reader.

When I first felt impelled to write about the diamond and the star, back in 1988, I was in a state of some turmoil at the end of a prolonged stay at the Jung Institute in Zurich and reconciling myself to the fact that continuing to pursue my ambition to become an analyst was a mistake. The decision would involve also an end to a long analysis with Dr Richard Pope for whom I had developed a great affection. Symbols came flooding in and I felt impelled to draw them as a first and then a second mandala (Plate 1). I then started to write in a kind of fever. As I wrote, a thesis of a sort took form and developed into a reconciliation of Eastern and Western approaches to psychology, Eastern being focused more on the Taoist tradition, and based largely on Jung's writings in Richard Wilhelm's translations of the *I Ching* (the ancient Chinese *Book of Changes*) and *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

The original work was quite brief and made no concessions to a general readership. Some eighteen years later something impelled me to return to it. I feel keenly the new anxiety over the state of the planet and one of the seeds must have been a re-reading of James Lovelock's *Gaia: The Practical Science of Planetary Medicine*. Although my original intention is still evident, what now seems important is to use the insights granted to me then to illustrate and encourage a new attitude to life, whatever life and of whatever kind, remains to us and our descendants

There is a common thread extending through Jung's psychology and Taoism, and I believe it extends to the infant science of our planet and its system. In the three disparate disciplines lies an exhortation to an awakening of minds to a fresh understanding of ourselves, our habitat, and our place within it, and among its inhabitants, as whole entity. This cannot come about through a blinkered pursuit of reductive analysis, whether of psychology or the more objective sciences. The process of rational thinking through cause and effect has led to enormous strides in understanding, but at the cost of ever increasing division and subdivision to an extent that – to use one of the metaphors our language relies on so heavily – we can no longer 'see the wood for the trees'. Indeed so great are the divisions in science that it seems sometimes that we can barely discern trees among the myriad cellular species individually studied by different specialists. James Lovelock has put it more robustly:

Unfortunately, science is divided into a myriad of facets like the multi-lensed eye of a fly and through each separate lens peers a professor who thinks that his view alone is true.³

The divisions are not peculiar to science but extend through language and religion, the result of the remnants of tribalism prevailing in the human species.

Jung is probably best known for his advocacy of what he termed ‘individuation’ – the reintegration of suppressed contents of the unconscious psyche⁴ to produce a whole or rounded individual. This is not an instant fix but rather a lifelong quest, never fully achievable, which can be assisted by an analyst although many highly individuated people, past and present, have never been near one. A first step is an acknowledgement and experience of the ‘shadow’ – the suppressed, unacknowledged inferior qualities and even evil within. I was interested to note that the only references to Jung in Mary Midgley’s book *The Essential Mary Midgley* concern the shadow:

The trouble is not, of course, that vanity is the worst of the vices. It is just that it is the one which makes admitting all the others unbearable, and so leads to the shadow-shedding project. And the reason why this project is doomed is because, as Jung sensibly points out, shadows have a function:

Painful though it is, this [unwelcome self-knowledge] is in itself a gain – for what is inferior or even worthless belongs to me as my shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial if I fail to cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole; and inasmuch as I become conscious of my shadow – I also remember that I am a human being like any other.

Quoted from *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*

The acknowledged shadow may be terrible enough. But it is the unacknowledged one which is the real killer.⁵

What a great symbol is the shadow. It is the real killer of course because unconscious shadow contents are inevitably projected on to others as scapegoats. The true possessor never feels to blame. The shadow, constituting as it does the whole personal unconscious, is not wholly evil. It contains complexes (autonomous groupings) many of which have a collective nature – the various inherited and instilled prejudices of the family and the tribe. Seen in this light the well meaning

efforts of institutions to ‘eradicate’ racial and religious prejudice are laughable.

While Jung continued his work on the neuroses of his individual clients he studied extensively and was arguably the greatest polymath of the twentieth century. He also wrote prolifically – his collected works extend to over twenty volumes. Many of his papers and lectures demonstrate his concern for the effect of neglect of the unconscious on the state of humanity which he regarded as the greatest of all dangers both to humankind and the planet. In 1944 he wrote:

Psychology is the youngest of the sciences and is only at the beginning of its development. It is, however, the science we need most. Indeed, it is becoming ever more obvious that it is not famine, not earthquakes, not microbes, not cancer but man himself who is man’s greatest danger to man, for the simple reason that there is no adequate protection against psychic epidemics, which are infinitely more devastating than the worst of natural catastrophes.⁶

This was of course written in the midst of World War 2 and reflects the focus of the period, but there is still no shortage of psychic epidemics. He felt that the only hope for the world lay in an increased consciousness, particularly of the shadow, in every individual. But he was far from optimistic. Towards the end of the same lecture he wrote:

To be sure, a bloodless operation of this kind [bringing unconscious forces to consciousness] is successful only when a single individual is involved. If it is a whole family, the chances are ten to one against ... But when it is a whole nation the artillery speaks the final word ...

If the whole is to change, the individual must change himself.

We might prefer these days to substitute sect or tribe for nation and bomb or machete for artillery, yet his words ring true. And they ring true not only for epidemics of a purely psychic nature. The following passage may be prescient:

When mankind passed from an animated Nature to an exanimated Nature, it did so in the most discourteous way: animism was held up to ridicule, and reviled as a superstition. When Christianity drove away the old gods, it replaced them with one God. But when science de-psychised Nature, it gave her no other soul, merely subordinating her to human reason ...

What science has discovered can never be undone. The advance of truth cannot and should not be held up. But the same urge for truth that gave birth to science should realise what progress implies. Science must recognise the as yet incalculable catastrophe which its advances have brought with them.⁷

Compare Schumacher, writing from a Christian point of view in 1979, while the Soviet Union was still a threat:

It may or may not be right to ‘ban the bomb’. It is more important to overcome the roots out of which the bomb has grown. I think these roots are a violent attitude to God’s handiwork instead of a reverent one. The unsurpassable ugliness of industrial society – the mother of the bomb – is a sure sign of its violence.⁸

I was interested to see Mary Midgley’s comment in *Science and Poetry*, ‘Gods are much easier to remove than demons.’⁹ How true. Bringing to consciousness unpleasant personal episodes and prejudices is not merely an exercise of the mind or even the will; it must involve their re-experience, and suffering the feelings involved, whether of shame, anger or sadness. It will involve the withdrawal of long held projections, and this is experienced as what one might call ‘withdrawal symptoms’ so obvious in teenagers. It will affect not only the protagonist but all those involved with his or her projections. But an awakening consciousness brings its rewards in the form of a fresh outlook on life and fresh psychic energy.

In Jung’s psychology unconscious contents are brought to the light of consciousness through symbols – the language of the unconscious, which the rational function of the mind must interpret. Symbols are made apparent through psychic experiences, particularly dreams, but also waking fantasies and strange coincidences, called by Jung ‘synchronistic’ events, and always having some symbolic character. It is through reflection on the symbol that the true recognition of the event and its significance comes about.

I hope to show in this volume the value of symbols, and their importance in our lives. They are fundamental to Jung’s contribution to human wisdom, directed as it is to Western thought. Jung’s first major work is entitled in English *Symbols of Transformation*,¹⁰ and his collections of essays and lectures *The Symbolic Life*.¹¹ A symbolic life may be a step forward the planet needs.

While my own experience has been centred around Jung's contribution to psychology, I do not mean to undervalue that of Freudian psychoanalysis, especially in its modern movement. I have found a great deal of inspiration and support in Margaret Arden's *Midwifery of the Soul*,¹² which has the subtitle 'A Holistic Perspective on Psychoanalysis', to which I shall be referring. Many of my references to Jung might equally refer to 'depth psychology'.

It is through symbols that the thread reaches out to Eastern thought, and to planetary science which I believe is showing the way to a more comprehensive and less hubristic approach to the quest for scientific truth. Planetary science, perhaps now, to mimic Jung's words, the youngest of the sciences, embraces and endeavours to integrate all the principle divisions: chemistry, physics, biology and geology. It cannot afford to ignore psychology. Yet it must beware, here as elsewhere, of being lured down specialist pathways, many of which have lost sight of their origins.

In the West the Abrahamic religions pursued the conscious/unconscious split, emphasising its attendant polarities, in particular sin and virtue, affirming a quest for perfection at the expense of the shadow and dividing inevitably into numerous sects each propounding its own belief as the only truth. It was left to the underground, the Kabbala and in particular the alchemists, to seek out bravely an alternative path – the *Magnum Opus* of transmuting the base metal to gold. Since the alchemists pursued their 'science' in fear of their lives, they made full use of symbols: the *prima materia* – the original state, often symbolised by a joined male/female figure signifying the opposites, tramping on putrefying remains or excrement (Plate 3a), and the *hieros gamos* or *conjunctio* – the final sacred marriage, signifying the integration of the opposites and leading to the Philosopher's Stone and finally the Elixir of Life, the end of their quest (Plate 4a). As Jung realised and described in his books *Psychology and Alchemy* and *Mysterium Conjunctionis*, this was in truth a psychological quest for individuation, although hidden in magical codes and rituals and confused by charlatans. Tramping the putrefaction was experiencing the shadow.

Eastern history is very different; so different in fact that the West has difficulty in empathising with its thought and outlook. The split to consciousness has never been sharp and even now it seems to proceed from a limbo region.