

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1. SYMBOL

A symbol is something that represents an idea, a process, or a physical entity. The purpose of a symbol is to communicate meaning. A symbol is something such as a particular mark that represents some piece of information. For example, a red octagon may be a symbol for "STOP". On a map, a picture of a table might represent a campsite. Numerals are symbols for numbers. All language consists of symbols. Personal names are symbols representing individuals. A red rose symbolizes love and compassion. Love at first sight, and the immediate recognition of certain symbols and the meaning of certain myths. Such examples can also be found in the creative experiences shared by artists and musicians, spiritual experiences of mystics of religions, or parallels in dreams, fantasies, mythologies, fairy tales, and literature.

The word *symbol* came to the English language by way of Middle English, from Old French, from Latin, from the Greek σύμβολον (*sýmbolon*) from the root words συν- (*syn-*), meaning "together," and βολή (*bolē*), "a throw", having the approximate meaning of "to throw together", literally a "co-incident", also "sign, ticket, or contract". The earliest attestation of the term is in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes where Hermes on seeing the tortoise exclaims σύμβολον ἦδη μοι μέγ' ὀνήσιμον "*symbolon* of joy to me!" before turning it into a lyre. [Naqi, S.B, 2010]

In this thesis, the writer uses the approach by Carl Jung to talk about symbols. Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychotherapist and psychiatrist who founded analytical psychology (Cowgil,C, 1997). Jung proposed and developed the concepts of the extroverted and the introverted personality, archetypes, and the collective unconscious. His work has been influential in psychiatry and in the study of religion, literature, and related fields.

According to *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (C.G, Jung, 1963, p. 209), the central concept of analytical psychology is individuation – the psychological process of integrating the opposites, including the conscious with the unconscious, while still maintaining their relative autonomy. Jung considered individuation to be the central process of human development.

Jung created some of the best known psychological concepts, including the archetype, the collective unconscious, the complex, and synchronicity (Soul Therapy Now, 2008). Jung saw the human psyche as "by nature religious", and made this religiousness the focus of his explorations (Jaffe, ¶.10). According to *Symphony of Love*, Jung is one of the best known contemporary contributors to dream analysis and symbolization.

Though he was a practicing clinician and considered himself to be a scientist, much of his life's work was spent exploring tangential areas, including Eastern and Western philosophy, alchemy, astrology, and sociology, as well as literature and the arts (Lachman, 2010, p. 258.). His interest in philosophy and the occult led many to view him as a mystic.

Carl Jung, who studied archetypes, proposed an alternative definition of symbol, distinguishing it from the term sign (Jung, C.G, 1921, p. 601). In Jung's view, a sign stands for something known, as a word stands for its referent. He contrasted this with symbol, which he used to stand for something that is unknown and that cannot be made clear or precise. An example of a symbol in this sense is Christ as a symbol of the archetype called *self*. Another example is, written languages which are composed of a variety of different symbols that create words. Through these written words, humans communicate with each other.

In Christianity, there are some symbols, for example In Christianity there is a mixture: God the Father and God the Son are usually represented in art as human beings, and the Holy Ghost is sometimes represented as an old man with a beard, absolutely as a cliché for God the Father just identical but frequently by an animal, which is another form of personification, or it may be represented by fire, or wind, or water, or the breath between God the Father and God the Son. So the Holy Ghost, even in the Bible, has certain forms in which it is described or likened to such natural phenomena as fire or water or breath. Thus Christianity has a god image representing both aspects. But in other religions there are either a number of human or other gods, so that we probably have to make the hypothesis that the unconscious likes to appear in its ultimate, archetypal manifestations, sometimes symbolized in natural phenomena and sometimes personified.



For example: William Blake's image of God the Father as a wise old man with a beard, a typical personification of the Self, archetype of wholeness and the centre of the personality

It seems, therefore, that symbolism handed on by tradition is to a certain extent rationalized and purged of the scurrilities of the unconscious, the funny little details which the unconscious tags on, sometimes contradictions and dirt. That, on a small scale, happens even within us. A young doctor suddenly became very skeptical over the way we write down our dreams, believing that a lot was falsified when one wrote down one's dreams in the morning. So he put a wire recorder by his bedside and when he woke in the night, even if in a half sleepy state, he recorded his dream and in the morning wrote down the dream as he remembered it and compared the two. He then discovered that his skeptic was exaggerated. The reports we make of dreams the next morning are almost correct, but involuntarily we introduce order into them. For instance, he dreamt that something happened in a house and that then

afterwards he went into the house. In retelling the dream in the morning he corrected the time sequence and wrote down that he went into the house and then experienced this and that. Actually, the dreams recorded at once are more confused as to time, but otherwise they are pretty correct. Therefore even when a dream crosses the threshold of consciousness, consciousness in reporting it does something to it, amends it and makes it a little more understandable.

2.2. THE MEANING OF SYMBOLS

Equipped with the theory of Sigmund Freud, and an exhaustible knowledge of mythology, religion, and philosophy, Carl Jung dedicated his life to discovering the inner self of human beings. Through his theory of symbols, he tried to explain the content of the human psyche in symbolic form and in several parts, including ego, collective unconscious, archetype, and persona. Jung had a capacity for very lucid dreaming and occasional visions. He carefully recorded his dreams, fantasies, and visions through a variety of methods such as drawing, painting, and sculpting. Jung developed a system of meaning around the images that occurred in his dreams, and came up with the definition of “collective unconsciousness.”

Of symbols Jung wrote: “A symbol is the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown psychic content”. He also wrote, the dream is “a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious” [C. G. Jung, 1953, ¶. 505]. A symbol doesn’t just tell us about what the dream may appear to

be about on the surface, but has meaning and resonance above and beyond the particular situation. As Marie Louise von Franz said: “The unconscious doesn’t waste much spit telling you what you already know” In expressing what is not known, particularly related to an imbalance, Jung thought that dreams were a form of compensation. If we look at a dream that Jung used to describe his particular approach to dreams this may become clearer. A woman patient dreamt as follows:

She is about to cross a wide river. There is no bridge, but she finds a ford where she can cross. She is on the point of doing so, when a large crab that lay hidden in the water seizes her by the foot and will not let her go. (She wakes up in terror). [C.G. Jung, 1953, ¶.123]

It is worth pausing to remember what Jung says about dream interpretation at this point:

“So difficult is it to understand a dream that for a long time I have made it a rule, when someone tells me a dream and asks for my opinion, to say first of all to myself: ‘I have no idea what this dream means’. After that I can begin to examine the dream”. [C. G. Jung, 1953, ¶. 533]

There are a number of symbols in his patient’s dream: the river, crossing a river, a ford, a crab, and the foot. To begin to understand the meaning of these symbols Jung asked his patient for her associations to the dream. She said she thought the river formed a boundary that was difficult to get across, something she had to overcome, probably something to do with the treatment. She thought the ford offered a way of overcoming the difficulty, probably in the treatment. She associated the crab with cancer which she thought was a terrible disease, of which she was afraid and

which had killed an acquaintance, Mrs X. She said the crab obviously wanted to drag her into the river, and she was terribly frightened. “What keeps stopping me getting across?” she mused, “Oh yes, I had another row with my friend [a woman]”. Jung describes his patient’s relationship with her friend as “a sentimental attachment, bordering on the homosexual, which has lasted for years”. The dreamer adds that Mrs X had “an artistic and impulsive nature which the dreamer felt was punished by the cancer – in particular, Mrs X had an affair with an artist after her husband died”.

In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Dr. Jung has, as it were, introduced alchemy into psychology, first by publishing a series of the dreams of a natural scientist which contain a great amount of alchemical symbolism, and then by quoting from old texts, whereby he hoped to show how important and modern this material is, and how much it has to say to modern man. The roots of alchemy can be traced back to Egypt. The word alchemy may be derived from the Arabic “al kimiya” meaning “the magical craft of the Black Country”. Ancient Egyptians were master metalworkers and believed that magic powers were contained in all matter. When Egypt was conquered by Arabs, they took the science back with them to Spain. From there, the science of alchemy along with the knowledge of alchemy signs spread to England, France, and Germany. Alchemical symbols, originally devised as part of alchemy, were used to denote some elements and some compounds until the 18th century.

Jung himself discovered alchemy absolutely empirically. Jung once told me that he frequently came across certain motifs in his patients' dreams which he could not understand, and then one day he started to look at old books on alchemy and

noticed a connection. For example, a woman patient dreamt that an eagle was at first flying up to the sky, and then suddenly, turning round its head, began to eat its own wings and dropped back onto the earth. Dr. Jung was naturally able to understand this symbolism without historical parallels the high soaring spirit, or thought bird, so to speak. The dream indicates a sort of enantiodromia, the reversal of a psychic situation.

All the same, he was very much struck by the motif which one at once recognizes as archetypal and which one feels convinced must have parallels; it strikes one as a general motif, yet it was nowhere to be found. Then one day he discovered the Ripley Scroll, which gives a series of pictures of the alchemical process partly published in *Psychology and Alchemy* where there is an eagle with a king's head, which turns back and eats its own wings.

The coincidence struck him very forcibly and for years he kept it in mind and felt that there was more to alchemy and that he should go into the subject, but he hesitated to attack this most complex field, realizing how much work it would involve and that it would mean rubbing up on his Greek and Latin and reading so much. Finally, however, he came to the conclusion that it had to be done, that there was too much buried in the subject which was important to us for a better understanding of the dream material of modern people.

For Jung it was not a theoretical problem, but a striking parallel to the material with which he was dealing. But now we might ask ourselves why alchemical symbolism should be closer to the unconscious product of many modern people than

any other material. Why would it not suffice to study comparative mythology, fairytales, and the history of religions? Why has it to be particularly alchemy?

Kenneth Burke described *Homo sapiens* as a "symbol-using, symbol making, and symbol misusing animal" to indicate that a person creates symbols in her or his life as well as misuses them. One example he uses to indicate his meaning behind symbol misuse is the story of a man who called a particular food item as 'whale blubber' which could be barely swallowed. Later, his friend discovered that it was actually just a dumpling. The symbol, "blubber", is representing something inedible. Burke emphasizes that humans learn to create symbols by seeing various print sources, learning from their life experiences, and learning about the symbols used in the past.

Burke goes on to describe symbols derived from Sigmund Freud's work on condensation and displacement which is developed further by Jung by stating that symbols are not just relevant to the theory of dreams, but also to "normal symbol systems". He says they are related through "substitution" where one word, phrase, or symbol is substituted for another in order to change the meaning. In other words, if a person does not understand a certain word or phrase, another person may substitute a synonym or symbol in order to get the meaning of the original word or phrase across. However, when faced with that new way of interpreting a specific symbol, a person may change their already formed ideas to incorporate the new information based on how the symbol is expressed to the person.

Jean Dalby Clift says that people not only add their own interpretations to symbols, they also create personal symbols that represent their own understanding of their lives: what she calls "core images" of the person. She argues that symbolic work with these personal symbols or core images can be as useful to help working with dream symbols in psychoanalysis or counseling. [Franz, Marie-Louise von, 1980]

