

A Critical Study of The Old High German Physiologus
and Its Influence

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ABSTRACT

Hitherto, criticism of the Old High German Physiologus has been preoccupied with the philological and historical problems which it raises. Important as these are, research must not stop here. The document's lack of discrimination in its presentation of zoological material has led scholars to depreciate its value and to consider it an example of a regressive attitude in the field of natural science. The text throws up additional problems which cannot be understood by the application of scientific standards.

The attempt to understand the real meaning of the Physiologus leads to a consideration of the relationship of symbolism to the processes of the unconscious mind as set forth by C. G. Jung. In this context Jung's studies of religion, alchemy, and myth offer an insight into the text which has so far been obscured. A somewhat veiled but nevertheless remarkable correspondence is discovered between the naturalistic material of the Physiologus and the universal motifs of myth, fairy-tale, and religion. Particularly in the relation of the Physiologus to alchemy, for which Jung has postulated a "psychic" background, can the effectiveness of the document be seen and understood.

Mythical motifs occurring in the Physiologus can only be understood as the product of universal processes of the unconscious mind. Jung has called the part of the mind in which such processes take place the "collective unconscious". His study of the "collective unconscious" shows the importance of understanding and accepting its symbolical manifestation.

This casts new light upon the Physiologus. Whereas critics formerly found it difficult to understand its popularity and effectiveness during the Middle Ages, it is now found that this was due to the dynamic force of unconscious processes which operate in its symbolism. This makes a revaluation of the Physiologus imperative. Rather than a regressive form of natural science it can be understood as a symbolical document with great value for the spiritual life of the Middle Ages.

The symbolical formulation of religious themes in the Physiologus is unique in that it represents not only a mental condition, but also the process of transformation which gave rise to Christian thought. Its symbolical presentation of this transformation is a phenomenon which Jung takes to be beneficial and healing in its effect. Its refining function allows man to "ransom himself from the fear of death" and "reconcile himself to the demands of Hades."

The Physiologus is a document of considerable value as an expression of the archtypal images of the unconscious mind. It is not a mediaeval treatise on natural science, and cannot be understood or interpreted by means of scientific criteria.

PREFACE

The Old High German Physiologus came to my attention by chance as I perused the first volumes of Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur. The introductory sentence of der Ältere Physiologus, "Hier begin ih einna reda umbe diu tier uuaz siu gesliho bezehinen," immediately aroused curiosity. With the first reading of the text curiosity turned into peculiar fascination. It seemed imperative to become more closely acquainted with the text and to interpret and explore its nature and meaning.

In dealing with the ways and habits of animals as a zoological treatise, the document could hardly claim scientific distinction of a high order. Nor did it seem to fare better with its theological interpretations of animal characteristics. They appeared to be decidedly incongruous. Such evident shortcomings could not affect adversely the original fascination and the charm which clung to the work remained. In an effort to grasp the astonishing character and meaning of the text recourse was taken to the standard works of literary criticism of the Old High German period and later to more specialized studies. This proved informative to a degree but did not answer the question why the Physiologus should arouse such absorbing interest. Although many historical data were available there was nowhere a sign of awareness that the text might have

significance beyond its theological platitudes. The value judgements on the work tended to be depreciatory. It was taken to be a clear-cut example of the regressive attitude which was prevalent in natural science during the Middle Ages.

This type of criticism failed to do justice to the Physiologus. Some important aspects of this text eluded any scientific or rational approach. The available literature failed to illuminate them and an effort had to be made to broaden the basis from which the document might be approached. A more general study of the nature of symbolism was undertaken and this led to a reading of C. G. Jung's discoveries in this direction. Here lay the key to a wider and deeper understanding of the Physiologus. Not only did Jung's studies of religion and comparative mythology offer an important insight into the text, but his discussion of alchemy revealed a close relationship between this "science" and the Physiologus. The veiled but unquestionable correspondence of the symbols of the Physiologus to the universal motifs of myth, fairy-tale, and religion had never before been noted in the criticism of the texts. Thus it was found that the mythical motif of the "life of the hero", so characteristic of the mediaeval spirit, was represented in numerous sections of the Physiologus and occurred in many variations and guises.

Jung's demonstration of the "seelische Ursprung" of myth and the dynamic force with which mythical motifs operate finally made the effectiveness of the Physiologus comprehensible. It is therefore the purpose of the following study to demonstrate the relationships between the Physiologus, myth, and alchemy, and to explore the basis of these relationships. The parallel symbolism of these three entities can only be fully understood if we see their symbolical form as a product of the unconscious mind. The value, and indeed necessity, of "coming to terms" with symbolism in its various aspects will be discussed and will be taken as justification for a reevaluation of the Physiologus.

The first chapter will provide a summary of Physiologus research. It will try to explain the nature of the problem and the procedure to be followed in the subsequent chapters. The second chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the unconscious formation of symbols and their relation to intellectual processes. Its relevance to the Physiologus will be established. The third chapter will deal with the three surviving texts of the Old High German Physiologus and their Latin prototype. The twenty-seven animals of the texts will be considered individually and the existence of characteristically mythical motifs and their implications will be demonstrated. The fourth chapter will

provide a survey of the repercussions of the Old High German Physiologus on later German culture and a summing up of the findings and conclusions of the preceding chapters.

The Physiologus cannot be properly appreciated by the use of merely scientific criteria and we must look for its contribution and inner meanings in its use of central and dynamic images which spring from both the conscious and unconscious layers of the mind.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following publishers respecting the reproduction of illustrations: Bruckmann Verlag, Munich, for the picture of the unicorn-hunt (Fig. 1), which was taken from Kunstkalender 1958; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, for the two plates illustrating Jason and the Dragon (Fig. 2), and the crucified serpent (Fig. 3), which were taken from C. G. Jung's Psychology and Alchemy, pages 337 and 383 respectively; the F. H. Kerle Verlag/Wilhelm Röhling, Heidelberg, for the plate showing Mataré's pelican-mosaic (Fig. 4), taken from Dr. Leopold Zahn's calendar, Moderne Religiöse Kunst.

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CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSIOLOGUS RESEARCH

The Old High German Versions and Editions

The Physiologus is preserved in three Old High German versions. These are known as der #ltere Physiologus,¹ a text of the late Eleventh Century, der j#ngere Physiologus,² dating from the first half of the Twelfth Century, and the Milstat or rhymed Physiologus,³ likewise dating from the early Twelfth Century. All three texts are treatments of a Latin Physiologus abbreviatus known as the Dicta Chrysostomi which was apparently in wide circulation during the Middle Ages. Der #ltere Physiologus is an abbreviation of the Dicta Chrysostomi which, besides treating only the first twelve of the latter's twenty-seven sections, shows a considerable contraction of the material treated. This older text, often referred to as a fragment, is one of the oldest preserved

¹ Codex Vindabonensis 223 p.31r. - 33r., Vienna Hofbibliothek.

² Codex Vindabonensis 2721 p.130r. - 158v., Vienna Hofbibliothek.

³ Formerly belonging to the Kloster Milstat in K#rnten but now in the library of the Verein f#r die Geschichte und Landeskunde K#rntens in Klagenfurt.

vernacular versions of the Physiologus in European literature.
 Only a very short Anglo-Saxon metrical version of three
 chapters (panther, whale and partridge) antedates the Old High
 German "fragment". Der jüngerere Physiologus is a version which
 cleaves very closely to the Dicta Chrysostomi, covering the full
 number of sections and introducing no significant modification
 of the material. This applies likewise to the rhymed Physio-
 logus which is thought to be based directly on der jüngerere
 Physiologus.

Modern interest in the Physiologus was initiated by the
 philological positivists who followed the pioneers of Germanic
 Philology, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. In a series of editions
 beginning in 1824 the Old High German Physiologus was rescued
 from the dust and subjected to a succession of studies which
 led, on the one hand, to a flush of historical research in the
 second half of the century, and on the other hand, to Friedrich
 Wilhelm's⁵ critical edition of the texts in 1914. Wilhelm, in

⁴ Codex Exoniensis, published by Thorpe, Codex Exoniensis
 p.355-67 and Grein, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie I,
 p.233-238.

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm, Denkmäler deutscher Prosa des
 elften und zwölften Jahrhunderts, Münchener Texte, Heft VIII,
 Munich 1914. Kommentar, 1. und 2. Hälfte, Münchener Texte,
 Heft VIII, 1916 and 1918.

conjunction with his parallel edition of der Ältere and der jüngere Physiologus, also brought out a critical edition of the Dicta Chrysostomi which is of great interest and value. Wilhelm's work represents the sum of linguistic criticism done to date on the Physiologus texts and is by far the most serviceable modern edition. This edition was used as the basis for the present study. The only Physiologus edition to appear since Wilhelm's work is the excellent reproduction of der Ältere Physiologus in Elias Steinmeyer's Die kleineren althochdeutschen Sprachdenkmäler which appeared in 1916. It is interesting to note that this collection of Old High German documents is not listed in the catalogues of the Library of Congress or of the British Museum.

The first edition of der Ältere Physiologus was brought out by Friedrich von der Hagen⁶ in 1824 and followed a transcript of the manuscript made by a certain Schottky.⁷ This transcript was not a reliable foundation for the publication of the text, and the next editor, E. G. Graff,⁸ introduced a number of

⁶ Friedrich von der Hagen, Denkmale des Mittelalters, 1829.

⁷ Cf. A. H. Hoffmann, Verzeichnis der altdeutschen Handschriften der K.K. Hofbibliothek zu Wien, p.363.

⁸ E. G. Graff, Diutiska, vol. III, 1829.

corrections in 1829. Graff edited both der ältere and der jüngere Physiologus. A. H. Hoffman⁹ likewise edited both these texts in 1830 and his reliable editing resulted in an accurate reproduction of the manuscripts. In 1837 H. F. Massmann¹⁰ brought out der jüngere Physiologus but in an edition since considered inferior to Hoffmann's, except with respect to the punctuation which he represented accurately. Müllenhoff and Scherer¹¹ published der ältere Physiologus in 1864 and provided a valuable commentary which contained linguistic criticism and an account of the most significant variations from a text of the Dicta Chrysostomi which had been published a few years earlier. In Kürschner's Deutsche National-Literatur¹² der ältere Physiologus was edited by P. Piper, accompanied by a modern German translation, and der

⁹ A. H. Hoffmann, Fundgruben für Geschichte deutscher Sprache und Literatur, vol. I, 1830.

¹⁰ H. F. Massmann, Deutsche Gedichte des zwölften Jahrhunderts, 2. Teil, 1837.

¹¹ Müllenhoff and Scherer, Denkmäler deutscher Poesie und Prosa aus dem VIII - XII Jahrhundert, 1864.

¹² P. Piper, Die älteste Literatur, 1885.

jüngere Physiologus¹³ was given a four-page discussion by the same writer. A selection comprising seven of the original twelve chapters of der Ältere Physiologus was also included in Braune's Althochdeutsches Lesebuch which first appeared in 1885 and is now enjoying its twelfth edition as a basic reader for students of Old High German literature. Between Massmann's edition in 1837 and Wilhelm's in 1914 der jüngere Physiologus made one more appearance in print. Friedrich Lauchert appended the text to his Geschichte des Physiologus along with a Greek text and a Latin fragment.

If it would be an understatement to say that editors have given due attention to der Ältere and der jüngere Physiologus, it would be as great an overstatement to say this of the third Old High German Physiologus. The single edition of the Milstat or rhymed Physiologus was brought out by Th. G. v. Karajan¹⁴ in 1846. Karajan put great emphasis on strict adherence to the manuscript and overlooked the re-arrangement of the material which is required to do justice to

¹³ F. Piper, Die geistliche Dichtung des Mittelalters, Vol. I, 1888.

¹⁴ Th. G. v. Karajan, Deutsche Sprach-Denkmale des zwölften Jahrhunderts, 1846.

its metrical qualities. The manuscript does not separate the verses but runs them together in long lines. Lauchert¹⁵ has, in fact, used the word Reimprosa to characterize the text. However this may be, the text is still awaiting a critical edition in which due attention is given to word-usage and the employment of rhyme.

Manuscript Problems

Since all three Old High German texts are extant in one manuscript only, textual criticism has never played a conspicuous part in any work done on the texts. The condition of the manuscripts is such that only minor emendations have been required to produce a satisfactory and reliable text. Wilhelm's critical texts of 1914 differ in minor points from the previous editions with respect to emendations but the difference is not sufficient to warrant discussion. Only single words or two-word phrases have been involved and there has usually been little or no variation in meaning. In many cases the emendation has been quite obvious,

¹⁵ Lauchert, Geschichte des Physiologus, 1889, p.119.

such as spor/spror ms., occurring in the first chapter of der #ltere Physiologus. Editors have unanimously agreed on the existence of a number of lacunæ in the texts. The missing passages could easily be reconstructed by reference to the Dicta Chrysostomi but no editor, with the exception of van Karajan, has attempted to do this. It has undoubtedly been felt that artistic merit was not at stake. There are a number of peculiarities to be noted in the texts, especially in that of der #ltere Physiologus. The information in this respect has been furnished largely in the Müllenhoff-Scherer and Wilhelm editions. Attention has been drawn to the fact that chapters 1-8 of der #ltere Physiologus differ considerably from the remaining four chapters. First of all, there is a suggestion that more freedom has been taken with the Latin prototype in the first eight chapters. These chapters are "bald mehr, bald weniger gekürzt und auch geändert",¹⁶ whereas chapters 9-12 appear to adhere more carefully to the Dicta Chrysostomi. As Wilhelm (p.17) has pointed out, the possibility is not precluded that the original already existed in this form. However, the separation of the two parts is made more distinct by linguistic differences,

¹⁶ Müllenhoff and Scherer op. cit., vol. II p.410.

a fact which weighs against the latter view. In chapters 1-8, for example, 't' is predominantly used for both 't' and 'd', while chapters 9-12 reverse this principle, frequently employing 'd' for 't' as well as 'd'. Further linguistic marks peculiar to chapters 1-8 are: 'n' for 'nd' and 'nt' (un for und), 'n' for 'ng' (sprinet for springet), the assimilation of 't' (gesliho for geistliho), 'ī' for 'ie' (fīnc for fienc), 'ū' for 'uo' (fūter for fuoter), and 'ē' for 'ei' (bezēchinen for bezeichinen). On the other hand, chapters 9-12 have the following distinguishing features: 'ū' for 'iu' (gebūdet for gebiutet), 'ui' for 'iu' (entluide for entliuhete), 'ō' for 'uo' (fōren for fuoren), and 'ē' for 'ie' (vērceg for vierzec). In addition to this linguistic evidence, the two parts of the text are distinguished from each other by the fact that the chapter-headings begin with chapter 9. Up to this point room has been left for the headings but not filled in. These facts have received different interpretations. Millenhoff and Scherer believed that they clearly indicated dual authorship of der #ltere Physiologus, while it has been alternatively suggested that different scribes worked on this particular manuscript. Wilhelm says discreetly but rather enigmatically:

"Ob man aus den MSD II, 411 (Müllenhoff und Scherer) zusammengestellten sprachlichen Unterschieden auf zwei „Verfasser“ schliessen darf, lasse ich dahingestellt, Man könnte auch an zwei „Schreiber“ der Vorlage denken." 17

There seems little more that can be said on this problem in view of the limited material available for research.

The manuscript of der jüngere Physiologus presents fewer problems although it is not entirely free of inconsistencies. It is to be noted that this text contains no chapter headings, or spaces for them as does der ältere Physiologus. However, the individual articles are clearly distinguished by the beginning of a new line for each article and by the use of a large coloured initial (or there is space for such an initial). In his edition of the text, Wilhelm printed the initials for which space was left in italics. It was evidently the intention of the author, and may certainly have been carried out in other manuscripts, to have the text illustrated. Space has been left for illustrations in the present manuscript but has not been utilized. There is, in fact, a reference in the text itself to an illustration which was to accompany it. Chapter 10 begins, "Ein ander tier ist indem mere unt heizit sarra unt ist getan so hie gemalet ist." An example of what the illustrations might have been like is available not only in the rhymed Physiologus (reproduced by

17 Wilhelm op. cit. p.44

Karajan in his edition) but also in the Icelandic Physiologus. Verner Dahlerup¹⁸ edited the latter text in 1889 providing a lithographic reproduction of the manuscript. A photographic facsimile-edition of the manuscript can be found in Islandica, vol. XXVII, edited by Halldór Hermannsson. In the Vienna manuscript der jüngere Physiologus is located between the well-known poetic versions of Genesis and Exodus, and the third version, the rhymed Physiologus, occupies the same position in the Milstat manuscript. The significance of this fact has not passed entirely unnoticed by commentators but it has been given no prominence in the interpretation of the text. The intellectual framework of the Physiologus hangs upon the concept that "natural" phenomena have a supernatural derivation and meaning, a fact which follows from the unity and integrity of Creation. The animal stories of the Physiologus, with their spiritual interpretations, must have been seen as a completion of the biblical account of creation, or at least as an amplifying gloss. This is an interesting piece of evidence bearing on the status of the Physiologus in the intellectual world of the Middle Ages.

¹⁸ Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie, 1889, 11. Række, IV. Bind, p.199.

The rhymed Physiologus, as Ehrismann¹⁹ points out, may have been cast into rhyme in order to be more in harmony with the verses immediately preceding and following it. Ehrismann²⁰ has made an error in stating that the rhymed Physiologus is based on der #ltere Physiologus. It is agreed by other commentators²¹ that the rhymed Physiologus is based on der j#ngere Physiologus and the fact speaks for itself when the texts are compared.

The question of the original from which the Old High German Physiologus is derived has occupied M. F. Mann²² and Friedrich Wilhelm.²³ Mann ascertained that the Old High German

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Gustav Ehrismann, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters, 1922, 2. Teil, 1. Abschnitt, p.230.

20 ibid, p.230

21 Lauchert op. cit., p.119, Wilhelm op. cit., p.46

22 M. F. Mann, "Die althochdeutschen Bearbeitungen des Physiologus," Beitr#ge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur, XI. Band, 1886, p.310.

23 Wilhelm, op. cit., Kommentar, p.15

versions were all adaptations of the Latin Physiologus which, since Gustav Heider's²⁴ publication of the Göttweih manuscript in 1850, has been called the Dicta Chrysostomi. However, Mann is perhaps open to the criticism of having oversimplified and overstated his case when he said, "Sie (die althochdeutschen Bearbeitungen) sind also nach einer Vorlage gearberit, die wörtlich nach G (die Göttweiher Hs.) übereinstimmt, wenn G nicht selbst diese Vorlage gewesen ist."²⁵ Mann did not have at his disposal the number of manuscripts which Friedrich Wilhelm was able to command. For his critical edition of the Dicta Chrysostomi Wilhelm utilized ten manuscripts. The results of his study of these manuscripts show that der ältere Physiologus resembles very closely a superior branch of the text which is represented by the two manuscripts, Clm. 14693 from St. Emmeran and Clm. 536 from Pruel. The Göttweih manuscript is one of the less reliable variants. Der jüngere Physiologus, unlike the older German text,

²⁴ Cf. Archiv für die Kunde Österreichischer Geschichtsquellen, 3. Jahrgang, 1850, II. Band, p.550

²⁵ M. F. Mann, op. cit., pp.328-29.

is related to the less reliable branch of the texts , but cannot be connected directly with any of the seven manuscripts in this group. The rhymed Physiologus, as already mentioned, is based directly on der jüngere Physiologus.

The dialect of der ältere Physiologus is, by unanimous opinion, Alemannic, although Ehrismann²⁶ noted traces of Rhenish-Franconian in Chapters 9-12. Wilhelm²⁷ postulated a place of origin in Alemannic territory but very close to the "südrheinfränkische Sprachgrenze." Relying on Johann Kelle, Wilhelm has pointed to the monasteries of the Black Forest, especially Hirschau, as the centre of interest in Physiologus literature. He has also cited linguistic evidence in favour of Hirschau:

Einige sprachliche Eigentümlichkeiten des älteren Physiologus weisen auf Grund der von H. Fischer im Atlas zur Geographie der Schwäbischen Mundart verzeichneten modernen Verhältnisse in die Hirschauer Gegend, so die Assimilationen von hs zu ss in wahsen (vgl. Fischer Karte 20), von nd und ng zu n(n) (Fischer Karte 19) und das g für älteres w in uspiget . . . (Fischer Karte 16).²⁸

²⁶ Ehrismann, op. cit., p.228.

²⁷ Wilhelm, op. cit., p.44.

²⁸ ibid., p.44.

The linguistic problem presented by der jüngere Physiologus is that of the -ent endings of the Second Person Plural of the verb, which occur on three occasions. This stands in sharp contrast to the otherwise Bavarian characteristics of the language. Wilhelm has devoted considerable space to this difficulty. Mustering an impressive array of evidence to support his opinion he has shown that these -ent endings are the chief characteristic of Swabian-Alemannic and are entirely foreign to the Bavarian of the Twelfth Century. He has thus arrived at the conclusion, "Schwäbische Arbeit in Bairischer Umschrift." In his Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters, Gustav Ehrismann²⁹ has noted Wilhelm's opinion on this problem but has himself characterized the document as Austro-Bavarian. The rhymed Physiologus lacks this inconsistency and therefore presents no problem as a document of Austro-Bavarian provenance.

Ehrismann has dated the three Old High German versions as follows: der Ältere Physiologus -- second half of the Eleventh Century, der jüngere Physiologus -- around 1120 or 1130, the rhymed Physiologus -- between 1130 and 1150. This agrees with the

²⁹ Cf. Ehrismann, op. cit., p.229 note.

dating of previous writers except that the latitude has been narrowed by Ehrismann in the case of the latter two documents.

There is a fourth Physiologus fragment in Old High German which must be mentioned in passing although it does not fall into the category of a full-fledged text. Wilhelm termed this a, "kümmerlicher Versuch, der vielleicht auf Nr. III (dem jüngeren Physiologus) fusst, aber nicht weit gedieh . . ." ³⁰. The text is to be found on page 436v. of the Schäftlar Manuscript Clm. 17195 (Münchener Hs. Cod. Lat. 17195, Ehrismann) and dates from the end of the Twelfth Century. It treats only two animals, the Onozentaurus and Einhorn and comprises in Wilhelm's reproduction less than nine lines.

The History of the Physiologus

In the latter half of the Nineteenth Century the Physiologus became a topic of avid historical interest. Dozens of historical contributions were made, especially during the 80's and 90's, of which an exhaustive account cannot be given here. ³¹ At first modest efforts were made and the general outlines of

³⁰ Wilhelm, op. cit., p.46.

³¹ Reference is made to the extensive bibliography provided by M.F.Mann and A.L.Jellinek in the following numbers of the Beiblatt zur Anglia: vol. X, p.274, vol. XII, p.13, vol.XIII, p.18 and p.236.

the historical background were sketched. Then came more comprehensive studies which were concerned exclusively with the Physiologus in its whole span of life. Pitra³² and Martin-Cahier,³³ the early editors of Greek, Latin and Old French texts had a good deal to say about the background of the Physiologus in their commentaries, but the fate of many a pioneer has overtaken them. To a large extent their views have been either disproven or superseded by later research.

Among the preliminary studies belonging to this body of literature the most significant were the commentary in Hommel's³⁴ edition of the Ethiopian Physiologus, and the studies made by Eduard Kolloff³⁵ and Adolf Kressner.³⁶

³² Pitra, Spicilegium Solesmense, Bd. III, 1885.

³³ Martin-Cahier, Mélanges d'archéologie, vol. II-IV and Nouveaux Mélanges, 1874.

³⁴ Fritz Hommel, Die aethiopische Übersetzung des Physiologus, 1877.

³⁵ Eduard Kolloff, "Die sagenhafte und symbolische Tiergeschichte des Mittelalters," Raumers Historisches Taschenbuch, 4. Folge, 8. Jahrgang, 1867.

³⁶ Adolf Kressner, "Über die Tierbücher des Mittelalters," Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, XXX. Jahrgang, LV. Band, Braunschweig, 1876.

These contributions were not of equal value. Hommel adduced the historical facts which led to the belief that the Physiologus was composed in Alexandria, a view which has recently been strongly questioned. Kressner worked on the sources of the Physiologus and advanced what were obviously no more than conjectures about its origin. His conclusions were partly disproven and partly superseded by the more reliable and more detailed results of later research. The most interesting of these early studies was Eduard Kolloff's Die sagenhafte und symbolische Tiergeschichte des Mittelalters, Kolloff's aim was to provide a general outline of the appearance of animals in European art, literature and folklore during the Middle Ages. His terms of reference were broad and he made many comments which cast light on more than strictly historical facts. It is tempting to think that he came remarkably close, at several points early in his essay, to a fully modern appreciation of symbolical forms of thought. Unfortunately, however, the Historismus which informed his approach "rescued" him from these uncharted waters and produced, for the modern reader, a most disappointing anti-climax. Notwithstanding this deficiency, the article is very readable and useful, achieving its obvious purpose of providing a general orientation in its field. It

was without doubt an important precursor of the more ambitious historical studies which followed twenty or thirty years later.

Max Wellmann,³⁷ the most recent contributor to the history of the Physiologus, has recognized three Nineteenth Century scholars as those responsible for the complete history of the document as it was known until his time. These were Max Goldstaub,³⁸ Karl Ahrens³⁹ and Friedrich Lauchert.⁴⁰ The last of these scholars to publish the results of his research was Friedrich Lauchert. His Geschichte des Physiologus is a painstaking compilation of historical material whose profuse detail makes it rather burdensome reading. This work was criticized in contemporary reviews for offering little new material and for leaning heavily on the research of others. A few instances were noted in which Lauchert overlooked certain

³⁷ Max Wellmann, "Der Physiologus. Eine religions- geschichtlich-naturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung", Philologus, Zeitschrift für das klassische Altertum, Supplementband XXII, 1931.

³⁸ Max Goldstaub, "Die Entwicklung des lateinischen Physiologus", Verhandlung der 41. Versammlung deutscher Philologen und Schulmänner in München, 1885.

³⁹ Karl Ahrens, Zur Geschichte des sogenannten Physiologus, Programm des Gymnasiums zu Ploen, 1885.

⁴⁰ Lauchert, op. cit.

historical details, especially with regard to the Latin manuscripts, but such gaps appear to have been made good, to a large extent, by the reviews themselves. M. F. Mann described the work as a "höchst wünschenswerte Zusammenfassung alles bisher über den Physiologus Bekannten."⁴¹

The Physiologus was originally composed in Hellenistic Greek but the original text has not survived. The work consists of a series of short nature stories which, in the early texts, are each prefaced by a biblical quotation containing the name of the natural object to be treated. A number of observations are made regarding the imagined habits or characteristics of the object, be it animal, plant or rock, and then follows the all-important interpretatio. This is the allegorical application of the "facts" to the tenets of the Christian faith. These interpretations are studded with direct and oblique quotations of biblical passages which seem, more or less, to propose or support the interpretations. Lauchert⁴² points out that the

⁴¹ Cf. Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland, 1890, p.249.

⁴² Lauchert, op. cit., p.43.

word "Physiologus" is first found in the works of Aristotle and means a naturalist, or "one who studies and comprehends Nature," implying a philosophical penetration rather than mere observation. It is to be noted that throughout the long life of the Physiologus this word was considered to refer, not to the text itself, but to the authority represented by the text. Lauchert considered it possible that this personality was none other than Aristotle himself, in which event the author of the Physiologus must have used a late Pseudo-Aristotelian Nature Book as his source. With the eclipse of Aristotle in the dawning Middle Ages, the words of the learned "Physiologus" were put into the mouths of other well-known personalities. The wise Solomon came off well and is, in fact, expressly named in the Icelandic Physiologus as the authority. Other popular choices were St. Basil the Great and Johannes Chrysostomus.

The postulation of a single source, a large compilation of naturalistic material which would suit the intellectual climate of Alexandria under the Ptolemies, had to share the field with other conjectures as to the origin of the Physiologus. At the time when Lauchert wrote, it was likewise a moot point whether the Physiologus represented an independent collection of stories or whether it grew out of an "Ur-Physiologus". This

"Ur-Physiologus" was pictured as a document resembling the present Physiologus except in the fact that it lacked the allegorical interpretations. Lauchert did not resolve this problem, nor did he even take a decided stand, although he seemed to prefer the latter view. He did, however, clearly refute the suggestion that the work was a collection designed for rhetorical purposes. Apart from the problem of an immediate source, the naturalistic material of the Physiologus was related to similar material occurring in the works of Aristotle, Herodotus, Pliny, Horopollo and Aelian. Possibly it was derived indirectly from oral tradition as well.

Until Max Wellmann⁴³ published the results of his research in 1931, it was commonly believed that Alexandria was the home of the Physiologus. Behind this belief, which was established by Hommel, was the uniqueness of Alexandria as a metropolitan city lying at the cross-roads of the ancient world. Besides its ideal location for the conjunction of knowledge and information from many different quarters, it was

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Wellmann, op. cit., p.15

a breeding place of mysticism and a centre of interest in the occult side of nature. Multifarious relationships have been suggested between the Physiologus (or its source), Egyptian animal symbolism, Greek natural science, and Jewish-Hellenistic biblical exegesis, which emphasized the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. To this picture Wellmann added the revival of interest in magic and alchemy which spread through the Hellenistic world in the First Century after Christ.

An important part of Lauchert's presentation was his refutation of Pitra's claim that the Physiologus made its appearance as a heretical piece of literature. Lauchert examined the text for evidence of Gnostic philosophy and found only a few shreds which point to a very early form of incipient Gnosticism. At a time when such a form of Gnostic thought was possible it was by no means considered heretical and was widespread enough to be found even in the works of Origen. Although this Gnostic ring is of no interest for the study of the Old High German Physiologus, having long since disappeared from the text, it must be mentioned with regard to the history of the document as it is the principal tool by which Lauchert dated the original Greek text. Had the Physiologus been written after the formal development of Gnostic theology it would

either have been silent on points which by that time were heretical or would have shown the results of the more developed Gnosticism. By means of this reasoning Lauchert placed the composition of the Greek text in the first third of the Second Century.

With his impressive command of Hellenistic literature, Max Wellmann was in a position to pay more attention to the sources of the Physiologus than Lauchert. A most important point with him was the manner in which the Physiologus stood apart from other purely naturalistic writings of its time. By emphasizing these unique qualities he was able to show that many supposed references to the Physiologus in early patristic literature were not genuine but were based instead upon independent naturalistic material. Establishing more reliable criteria he re-examined the allusions in patristic literature and concluded that there was no reliable reference before the latter part of the Fourth Century. This coincided with the opinions of Ahrens,⁴⁴ Schultze⁴⁵ and Kraus. Kraus had argued

⁴⁴ Ahrens, op. cit.

⁴⁵ V. Schultze, "Der Physiologus in der kirchlichen Kunst des Mittelalters," Christliches Kunstblatt, 1897, N. IV, p. 50.

effectively that "die Ausführungen des Textes des Buches hinsichtlich der Lehre von der Trinität, Incarnation und der hypostatischen Union die dogmengeschichtliche Entwicklung des 4. Jhrdts. voraussetzen."⁴⁶ This presented a new problem because the centre of Hellenistic theology with its mystical-allegorical emphasis had by this time shifted its location from Alexandria to the principal city of Palestine, Caesarea Stratonis. Wellmann now produced striking linguistic evidence which pointed to a provenance in Asia Minor. The home of the Physiologus, he concluded, was not Alexandria but Caesarea. His painstaking comparative study of naturalistic texts also led him to the conclusion that there existed, in the First Century after Christ, a Jewish Nature Book which was known and used in Asia Minor and had perhaps been written in Palestine itself. This contained exactly the quasi-scientific treatment of organic and inorganic nature, and the mixture of Jewish, Greek and Egyptian elements, which he postulated as a source for the Physiologus. This, indeed, was the source. Wellmann devoted much space to determining the character of this source

⁴⁶ F. X. Kraus. Geschichte der christlichen Kunst, 1896-1908, p.107, cited by Wellmann.

and its relation to magic, medicine, mysticism and alchemy. The picture is indeed a complicated one. In shifting the date of the Physiologus from the early Third Century to the late Fourth Century Wellmann did not directly attack Lauchert's method of dating the document. Rather he outlined a difficult picture, only dimly seen, of the place, the time, and the cluster of shadowy personalities, from which the Physiologus emerges in clearer outline. Occupying a place in this picture are Simon the Magician, according to Wellmann the father and founder of Gnosticism, and the Jewish revivalists of alchemical science. This picture suggests a much more subtle and difficult explanation of the Gnostic ring in the Physiologus than that conceived by Lauchert. It is an explanation, however, which lies hidden from recorded history.

The early popularity of the Physiologus led to its translation into Latin, Ethiopian, Armenian, Syrian and Arabic. The work was familiar, either in its Latin translation of the early 5th Century or in the Greek original, to Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Pope Gregory the Great and Isidor of Seville. It enjoyed a popularity and distribution which, in Lauchert's estimation, was exceeded only by that of the Bible

itself. Lauchert surmised that the reason for this wide distribution lay in the fact that the Church made use of the Physiologus for educational purposes. Since the text was never considered a unified and formal literary work, it was subject to all kinds of modifications. Individual sections could be borrowed at will and new versions rendered. Thus a metrical version of twelve sections arose called the Physiologus Theobaldi, and an abbreviated text called the Dicta Chrysostomi which is already familiar as the basis of the Old High German Physiologus.

In the later Middle Ages many details from the Physiologus were absorbed into the voluminous encyclopaedias of naturalistic material written by Thomas of Cantimpré, Albertus Magnus, Vincent of Beauvais and Bartolomaeus Anglicus. It is interesting to note that in the Fifteenth Century much of this material found its way into the German language in its new form when Konrad of Megenburg produced a German translation of Thomas of Cantimpré's de naturis rerum.

The first known vernacular version of the text which is of any proportion belongs to the late Eleventh Century. This is the old High German text, der #ltere Physiologus. In the

Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries there followed a host of vernacular versions: der jüngere Physiologus and the rhymed Physiologus in Old High German, the Anglo-Norman Physiologus of Philippe de Thaon, the English Bestiary, the Physiologus of Pierre le Picard, the Bestiaire Divin of Guillaume de Normandie, a Waldensian Physiologus, a Provençal version and an Icelandic version.

It was not only as a literary document that the Physiologus was prominent. It extended its symbolism into the spheres of plastic and graphic art. Monasteries and churches of the late Romanesque period were ornamented with an ever increasing array of animals and chimerical figures bearing their symbolical messages. This continued into the late Gothic period and even beyond, but both architecture and literature now saw the familiar symbolical figures pressed into the service of satire. This spirit appeared even as the Twelfth Century wore on. "Das 13. Jahrhundert, die Zeit der lustigen Lieder, der Märchen, der Romane, der gereimten Erzählungen, des Tierepos, ist im Anzug, und der skeptische Witz lässt sein höhnisches Gelächter erschallen."⁴⁷ In this age the ascendant Beast Epic

⁴⁷ Eduard Kolloff, op. cit., p.203

overtook the Physiologus in popularity and the religious significance of the old symbols was supplanted by profane, satirical interpretations. The fox, the evil dissembler who had hitherto represented the devil, was now to be seen in the pulpit preaching sanctimoniously to a flock of geese. Poorly concealed beneath his surplice bulged a feathered victim from his flock. Parody and caricature were the new interests. As an independent piece of literature the Physiologus had almost run its course. In a vicarious way, however, its life was greatly prolonged, for the old symbols had a tenacious hold upon the memory. For hundreds of years these symbols continued to furnish material for the poetic imagination, performing a subordinate but more truly literary service than ever before. Lauchert has discussed this aspect of the Physiologus in the last chapter of his history. The result is a long list of passages in mediaeval and modern literature whose imagery, metaphor or symbolism is derived from the Physiologus. In spite of the length of this list, Lauchert has assured his readers that he is noting only the outstanding examples.

A New Approach to the Physiologus

A very recent publication in the field of Physiologus

literature is an English translation of a Latin Bestiary⁴⁸ from the Twelfth Century by T. H. White. White's commentary is of considerable interest with respect to the Physiologus. On p.233 there is a "Family Tree" which represents graphically the relationship between the Bestiary and its sources, among which is the Physiologus. Unfortunately, though understandably, the emphasis is not on the sources of the Physiologus itself, which is presented practically in vacuo. Moreover, Wellmann's important study seems to have escaped his notice as it is not even listed in his extensive bibliography. However, in his section entitled "Moralization"⁴⁹, White provides a sample of the attitude which modern scholarship is likely to take to mediaeval animal symbolism. Captivated by its charm, White allows the text to speak for itself and to stand on its own inherent merits. It is not necessary or relevant to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the modern age by super-imposing the most advanced "scientific" criteria. White's criticism has likewise outgrown the accumulation and classification of historical data. This criticism is clearly the result

⁴⁸ T. H. White, The Book of Beasts, 1954.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.243.

of a new attitude toward such symbolical products as the Bestiary and the Physiologus. It is an attitude which is in harmony with new insights gained into the symbolizing process of the human mind. Hitherto scholarship has all but by-passed the problem of how the Physiologus was able to achieve its success and why it harboured a fascination enduring for two thousand years and more. Only perfunctory and superficial approaches have been made to this problem. For example, its success was due to its espousal by the Church, its symbolism explained as the zoomorphism⁵⁰ of Hellenistic christians in reaction to Coptic anthropomorphism, or again it was the natural outgrowth of the Eastern doctrine of metempsychosis.⁵¹ Lauchert's history represents the approach of those who have been more interested in the material and historical determinants of the document than in its intrinsic meaning. New avenues of approach to the Physiologus are now open.

In her book Philosophy in a New Key, Susanne Langer sees "symbolic transformation" as one of the basic functions

⁵⁰ Cf. Eduard Kolloff, op. cit., p.188.

⁵¹ E. P. Evans, Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture, 1896.

of the human mind. The use of symbols is peculiarly characteristic of the human race and is evident in every product of its mental activity. It is the basis, not only of all intellectual processes, but also of the irrational products of the mind which serve no biological purposes. For this reason Langer feels that the use of symbols can be explained only as something which constitutes a basic human need. The spectacular results of modern science provide the best examples for the constructive manner in which the mind operates. In its reliance upon mathematics, a discipline which expresses relationships by means of pure symbols, modern science demonstrates the process of combining sense-data into structures of meaning which leave the results of simple observation far behind. It is this active human response to the world of experience which forms the basis of language, myth, ritual and religion, for these are the forms of expression in which the symbolizing activity of the mind terminate. With the acceptance of this theory, interest shifts from the "acquisition of experience", and the collection of observable data, to the uses which are made of this data.

The issue of mental activity into symbolical forms of expression has been examined from a different point of view but with no less significant results by modern psychologists. Of

special interest are the studies of C. G. Jung in which the conscious and unconscious components of the mind are distinguished. In Jung's research the centre of interest is not the conscious use of symbols in the reasoning process, but rather the unconscious aspect of symbolism. In dreams, waking fantasies and mental "projections," Jung recognizes the contents of the unconscious mind in symbolical form.

In a work Psychology and Alchemy, Jung interprets the chemical experiments of the mediaeval alchemists in the light of this theory. As long as the contents of the unconscious mind remain unintegrated in consciousness, they tend to be "projected," becoming fixed upon external objects which represent them symbolically and functionally. This is illustrated by the experiments of the alchemists. Jung shows that these experiments were actually a psychic process and that the search for the philosopher's stone represented a spiritual ascent and purification. It is of interest to note that the cryptic and hieroglyphic form of expression employed in alchemical literature involved a striking number of symbols which appear in the Physiologus. It is also to be remembered that the Nature-Book which, according to Wellmann, served as a source for the Physiologus, appeared at a time and in a place

with which history associates a revival of magic and alchemy.

It is not proposed to investigate the interdependence of alchemy and Physiologus literature, or to treat the Physiologus as a psychological problem in the strict sense. It is believed, however, that a more detailed consideration of the nature and use of symbolism as set forth by Jung and Langer, with particular reference to the symbolism found in alchemy, will help to remove the barrier between the modern reader and the meaning of the Physiologus. The following chapter will be devoted to this purpose. It is proposed to establish the validity of an empirically senseless piece of literature for a mind which is in constant need of symbols. In conjunction with this will be considered the unjustness of describing the Physiologus as a deprived and regressive form of natural science. In the chapter then following it will be necessary to relate the Physiologus specifically to the conclusions and criteria arrived at in Chapter II. A final chapter will be devoted to the influence of the Physiologus on mediaeval and modern German literature.

CHAPTER II

SYMBOL AND PSYCHE

The Meaning of Symbolism -- Langer and Jung

Any discussion of symbolism will have to come to terms with C. G. Jung. To him symbols are "agents" emanating from the unconscious part of the mind and the contents of the unconscious mind can be apprehended only by means of these symbols. Before we examine Jung's distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind, it is of interest to touch upon Susanne Langer's¹ study of symbolism and to note certain differences between her ideas and Jung's. This will help to illuminate both and will be relevant to the problems raised by the Physiologus. In this context it is not Langer's detailed explanation of the symbolical basis of language, ritual, and art which is important, but her discussion of the critical principles which she establishes in her book. Her main thesis is that symbolism, or rather the symbolizing activity in man, is the "essential act of mind."² Sense-data, Langer argues,

¹ Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, 1942

² Ibid., p.33, "As a matter of fact it is not the essential act of thought that is symbolization, but an act essential to thought, and prior to it. Symbolization is the essential act of mind . . . "

have no inherent meaning in themselves, but acquire their meaning through a process of combination which is the real secret of human knowledge. This process is symbolization. Langer enforces her argument by referring to the physical sciences, whose use of mathematics, she believes, has been largely responsible for the scientific achievements of recent years. Mathematics is taken to be nothing but a symbolical process:

Behind these symbols lie the boldest, purest, coolest abstractions mankind has ever made. No schoolman speculating on essences and attributes ever approached anything like the abstractness of algebra. Yet those same scientists who prided themselves on their concrete factual knowledge, who claimed to reject every proof except empirical evidence, never hesitated to accept the demonstrations and calculations, the bodiless, sometimes avowedly "fictitious" entities of the mathematicians.

.....
 The secret lies in the fact that a mathematician does not profess to say anything about the existence, reality, or efficacy of things at all. His concern is the possibility of symbolizing things and of symbolizing the relations into which they might enter with each other. . . . Mathematical constructions are only symbols; they have meanings in terms of relationships, not of substance; something in reality answers to them, but they are not supposed to exist in that reality.³

The prominence of mathematics in the attainment of scientific knowledge leads to the inevitable conclusion that meaning is not synonymous with observation.

³ Langer, op. cit., pp.14-15.

Having established the fact that the mind functions by the use of symbols, Langer proceeds to attack from every angle the earlier theory held by genetic psychologists that this principle was a skill adapted to biological needs. The burden of the argument rests on the idea that as a purely utilitarian, biological accessory, the symbolizing activity of the mind miscarries four times out of five. It is necessary "to reconsider the inventory of human needs, which scientists have established on a basis of animal psychology, and somewhat hastily set up as the measure of man." ⁴ The new principle which must serve as the starting point in the study of symbolism is, "to conceive the mind, still as an organ in the service of primary needs, but of characteristically human needs." ⁵ This characteristically human need is naturally the need of symbols. This recognition has had a great effect upon psychology, for as long as human knowledge was supposed to rest upon sense-impression, psychology was bound to direct its attention to "the organs that were the windows of the mind and . . . the details of their functioning." ⁶ Now, however, psychology has quite a different task, that of understanding

⁴ Langer, op.cit., p.30

⁵ ibid., p.30

⁶ ibid., p.20

human response to sense-impressions, which means the study of man's use of symbols. The argument up to this point, which takes us farther afield in the present study, is summed up in the following paragraph:

Ideas are undoubtedly made out of impressions --- out of sense messages from the special organs of perception, and vague visceral reports of feeling. The law by which they are made, however, is not a law of direct combination. Any attempt to use such principles as association by contiguity or similarity soon runs into sheer unintelligible complication and artifice. Ideation proceeds from a more potent principle, which seems to be best described as a principle of symbolization. The material furnished by the senses is constantly wrought into symbols, which are our elementary ideas. Some of these ideas can be combined and manipulated in the manner we call "reasoning." Others do not lend themselves to this use, but are naturally telescoped into dreams, or vapour off into conscious fantasy; and a vast number of them build the most typical and fundamental edifice of the human mind --- religion.⁷

At this point it is necessary to recall the emphasis which Langer has placed on experience. In spite of the symbolizing function of the mind, experience is the basis of

⁷ Ibid., p.33

mental activity, which is thus busy fashioning symbolical versions of sense-data. An important modification is brought into this picture by Jung's distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind. The symbols to which Jung devotes his interest are those emanating from outside the sphere of rational thought. They stem from the unconscious mind, whose contents, Jung believes, are not all the result of experience, at least not the personal experience of any individual. The "collective unconscious" is the term which he uses to designate the substratum of the mind which seems independent of personal experience. It can only be thought of as the record of collective human experience throughout all the ages of human history.⁸ The matrix contained in this part of the mind is that which explains the spontaneous and independent appearance of almost identical mythical and religious ideas amongst all the peoples of the earth.

"Symbols are not allegories and not signs; they are images of events which for the most part transcend consciousness."⁹ To Jung these contents of the unconscious mind are

⁸ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.188.

⁹ Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.77.

real, although lacking the substantiality of external reality, and are, moreover, "agents with which it is not only possible, but absolutely necessary for us to come to terms."¹⁰ The distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind is one of the central ideas in Jung's conception of symbolism. The conscious mind he conceives as that part of the mind which is responsible for directed thinking and for man's awareness of himself as a separate entity. However, there is in the conscious mind a lower storey which is "contaminated" with contents of the unconscious. It is the latter fact which accounts for day-dreaming, or "fantasy-thinking" even during times when the mind is supposedly fully conscious.¹¹ This is the area of thought from which fairy-tales and myth spring, with their semi-real, or more often completely bizarre and dream-like motifs. It is also the type of thought which characterizes primitive man. The ultimate origin of dream-material and fantasy-thinking is the unconscious mind. In this mental substratum is concealed a matrix which operates

¹⁰ Ibid., p.78

¹¹ This and the remarks immediately following are based largely upon Jung's Symbols of Transformation, pp.7-33.

according to its own autonomous principle and has a kind of energy which attracts material from the higher area of the mind. If this material was originally sense-data corresponding to external reality, it returns from the unconscious mind in quite another shape. The images which rise from the lower to the upper storeys of the mind are now a hieroglyphic language, a symbolical version of contents for which there is no other means of expression. The important point, however, is that these images truly represent the archaic part of the mind in which they originated. This lower mind, which has much in common with instinct and animal mentality, is as much a fact as the human body itself. It is in this sense that Jung speaks of "psychic reality" and "symbolical truth." Symbolism, to Jung, is the record of an inner reality which is real because its results can be observed and are amenable to empirical methods. The present context is naturally not the place to speak of psychic disorders and the therapeutic value of understanding unconscious symbols. It is sufficient to remark that apart from the question of mental health and therapy, unconscious processes are always in progress, and that they contain valuable insights for the mind which is able to come to terms with them. It will be necessary to return to this thought briefly in later pages.



Modern psychology's conception of the mind as a twofold entity is not the novel idea which it may first appear. With reference to psychology and philosophy Jung alludes to the works of Adolf Bastian and Friedrich Nietzsche, in French literature, to Hubert and Mauss, and also Levy-Bruhl.¹² The following passage from Nietzsche's Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, which Jung has quoted in the same context, illustrates the intuitive grasp of this idea:

Ich meine: wie jetzt noch der Mensch im Traume schliesst, schloss die Menschheit auch im Wachen viele Jahrtausende hindurch: die erste causa, die dem Geiste einfiel, um irgend Etwas, das der Erklärung bedurfte, zu erklären, genügte ihm und galt als Wahrheit. (So verfahren nach den Erzählungen der Reisenden die Wilden heute noch.) Im Traume übt sich dieses uralte Stück Menschentum in uns fort, denn es ist die Grundlage, auf der sich die höhere Vernunft sich entwickelte und in jedem Menschen sich noch entwickelt: der Traum bringt uns in ferne Zustände der menschlichen Kultur wieder zurück und giebt ein Mittel an die Hand, sie besser zu verstehen.¹³

Herder and "Das Unbewusste"

A more poetic and even more intuitive anticipation of this fundamental thesis of modern psychology, an example not

¹² Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.51.

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I, p.28.



noted by Jung, is the insight revealed by Johann Gottfried Herder, who, moreover, had some awareness of the effects of this phenomenon. Writing in 1774 Herder said:

Trefflich auch, dass es also, und die tiefste Tiefe unsrer Seele mit Nacht bedeckt ist! Unsre arme Denkerin war gewiss nicht imstande, jeden Reiz, das Samenkorn jeglicher Empfindung, in seinen ersten Bestandteilen zu fassen: sie war nicht imstande, ein rauschendes Weltmeer so dunkler Wogen laut zu hören, ohne dass sie es mit Schauer und Angst, mit der Vorsorger aller Furcht und Kleinmütigkeit umfinge und das Steuer ihrer Hand entfiel. Die mütterliche Natur entfernte also von ihr, was von ihrem klaren Bewusstsein nicht abhängen konnte, wog jeden Eindruck ab, den sie davon bekam und sparte jeden Kanal aus, der zu ihr führte. Nun trennet sie nicht Wurzeln, sondern genießet Blüte. Düfte wehen ihr aus dunkeln Büschen zu, die sie nicht pflanzte, nicht erzog: sie steht auf einem Abgrunde von Unendlichkeit und weiß nicht, dass sie darauf stehe; durch diese glückliche Unwissenheit steht sie fest und sicher. Nicht minder gut für die dunkeln Kräfte und Reize, die auf so subalternem Standort mitwirken müssen: sie wissen nicht wozu? können und sollens nicht wissen: der Grad ihrer Dunkelheit ist Güte und Weisheit. Ein Erdkloss, durchhaucht vom Lebensothem des Schöpfers, ist unser Leimengebäude.¹⁴

The supreme poetic example of the operation of unconscious processes is to be found, not surprisingly, in the works of Goethe. Here it can be seen, not only as a fundamental

¹⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder, Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele, Bd. II, p.361

principle in the poet's conception of life, but also as a function in his art. Goethe's name will recur later when the discussion turns to the subject of alchemy.

Herder was impressed, but not dismayed, by the thought of a mental Unendlichkeit which always stood just a pace in front of man's thinking organ. It was well, he thought, that the conscious mind should hardly recognize this vast dark sea, for its contents were far too overwhelming for man's limited understanding. Better that only the blossoms of the plant should be seen, its fragrance and beauty added to the graces of life still happily conceived as the "Lebensodem des Schöpfers." The growth and care of this plant, it seems, could be left to "die mütterliche Natur." This is the point from which modern psychology takes its departure.

When the functioning of the human mind is in question, nature has not the harmonizing and maternal character which Herder postulated for it. The course of events in the Twentieth Century has shown that it has more often been "die dunkeln Wogen" than the "Blüten" and "Düfte" of the unconscious mind which have entered actual life and played an overwhelming role. Still breast-deep in Eighteenth Century optimism, Herder might well believe it was the good Goddess Reason residing in the human

breast who accounted for man's "gottlich Selbst."¹⁵ This godly attribute was that which placed man at the crown of nature -- gave him, in fact, a Godhead within himself:

Zurück in Dich! In deinem innersten
Bewusstsein lebt ein sprechender Beweis
Vom höchsten Allbewusstsein. --Sei ein Tier,
Verliere Dich; und wunderst dich, o Tor,
Dass du die Gottheit mit dir selbst verlierst?¹⁶

It will be interesting to note later a somewhat similar conception of the "self" in C. G. Jung, with certain modifications. For Jung, reason in itself has nothing in common with godliness and he would hardly concur with Herder in praising it as "Die Ordnerin, die aus Verwirrungen/Entwirrend webt den Knäuel der Natur/Zum schönen Teppich . . ." ¹⁷ Reason, to Jung, is a differentiation proceeding from man's primitive mental state. This state he has described as analogous to the early childhood of modern man. Thought, if it can be called such, is spontaneous

¹⁵ Cf. Herder's poem Selbst, Ein Fragment, Werke I, p.49, "Sei Priester dieser Wahrheit, diene dir/Am heiligsten Altar, und ehre dich,/Und pfleg' in dir dein göttlich Selbst, Vernunft.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.48.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.48.

in the primitive. It is not summoned and directed but just comes. Consciousness he has described as a state in which man perceives himself thinking. The contents of the primitive mind are not differentiated as such but become fixed upon external objects and invest such objects with a peculiar energy which seems supernatural to the primitive beholder. This provides an important clue to the nature of the unconscious mind and the discussion will return to this point when the relationship between symbolism and religion is considered.

Primitive life was characterized by an almost complete "projection" of man's psychic contents. The gradual withdrawal of these projections and the consequent differentiation of thought brought about the existence of the conscious mind and its highest function, reason. Reason, however, is the exact anti-thesis of the mental state from which it arose. The more it widened its sphere, the more distinctly it brought about a division between itself and the instinctual forces of primitive life. It is unfortunately in the nature of this division that the rational mind, as Herder said, "sparte jeden Kanal aus, der zu ihr f"hrte."

Jung's concern is to re-establish the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious mind, for he considers the greatest human well-being to lie in the harmony of these two opposites.

It is not that such a bridge does not exist, but that it lies discarded because modern man will accept as real only that which he can grasp with his intellect. This principle denies even the existence of the unconscious mind. The bridge, as intimated earlier, is the hieroglyphic language of symbols in which the unconscious mind expresses itself. By recognizing symbols for what they are it is possible to come to terms with the instinctuality of archaic man so that life is not overwhelmed by nature's "dunkeln Wogen."

It seems likely that Jung would find Herder's optimism appropriate so long as the spark of human life was conceived as the "Lebensodem des Schöpfers." To him, religion is the greatest of all meeting places for the conscious and unconscious mind. Religion can be thought of as a symbolical expression of man's antithetical complex, including the irrationality which is such a large part of the whole. By facing his own irrationality in this manner, it is possible for man to make the ethical or moral choice without suppressing his own lower nature. This is a psychological view which makes no claims about the objective truth of religion. The concern is with the religious function of the human psyche, not with metaphysical truth.

So far the argument has proceeded with few direct references to Jung's studies. A difficulty exists in this regard because of the diffusiveness of his exposition and documentation. In order to make good this deficiency two passages have been selected which seem to contain Jung's most fundamental ideas. They not only provide an excellent illustration for the present discussion, but develop an additional point, namely, the religious function of the unconscious mind.

In the same way that the State has caught the individual, the individual imagines that he has caught the psyche and holds her in the hollow of his hand. He is even making a science of her in the absurd supposition that the intellect, which is but a part and a function of the psyche, is sufficient to comprehend the much greater whole. In reality the psyche is the mother and the maker, the subject and even the possibility of consciousness itself. It reaches so far beyond the boundaries of consciousness that the latter could easily be compared to an island in the ocean. Whereas the island is small and narrow, the ocean is immensely wide and deep and contains a life infinitely surpassing, in kind and degree, anything known on the island--so that if it is a question of space, it does not matter whether the gods are "inside" or "outside". . . Today accurate observation of unconscious processes has recognized, with all other ages before us, that the unconscious possesses a creative autonomy such as a mere shadow could never be endowed with. When Carus, von Hartmann, and, in a sense, Schopenhauer equated the unconscious with the world-creating principle, they were only summing up all those teachings of the past which, grounded in inner experience, saw the mysterious agent personified as the gods. It suits our hypertrophied and hybristic modern consciousness not to be mindful of the dangerous autonomy of the unconscious and to treat it negatively as an absence of

consciousness. The hypothesis of invisible gods or daemons would be, psychologically, a far more appropriate formulation, even though it would be an anthropomorphic projection.¹⁸

The next quotation concerns the numinous qualities of unconscious contents of the mind:

Not only is "freedom of the will" an incalculable problem philosophically, it is also a misnomer in the practical sense, for we seldom find anybody who is not influenced and indeed dominated by desires, habits, impulses, prejudices, resentments, and by every conceivable kind of complex. All these natural facts function exactly like an Olympus full of deities who want to be propitiated, served, feared and worshipped, not only by the individual owner of this assorted pantheon, but by everybody in his vicinity. Bondage and possession are synonymous. Always, therefore, there is something in the psyche that takes possession and limits or suppresses our moral freedom The truth is that we do not enjoy masterless freedom; we are continually threatened by psychic factors which, in the guise of "natural phenomena", may take possession of us at any moment. The withdrawal of metaphysical projections leaves us almost defenceless in the face of this happening, for we immediately identify with every impulse instead of giving it the name of the "other", which would at least hold it at arm's length and prevent it from storming the citadel of the ego. "Principalities and powers" are always with us; we have no need to create them even if we could.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp.85-85.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.86-87.

Much has been said about the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind, their functions, and the place of symbolism in this scheme. The Physiologus has now to be related to these ideas.

If the Physiologus is fashioned out of "images of events which for the most part transcend consciousness," it represents a reality of the inner man and has the religious function characteristic of symbols from the unconscious mind. The union of opposites on a physical plane was an all-important item in the programme of the alchemists, as will be seen in later pages. The physical aspect of alchemy, however, resulted in many cases from a projection of psychic contents into the matter with which the alchemists experimented. In a less tangible way, religion is capable of effecting the union which the alchemists had in mind, and moreover, of attaining the philosopher's stone which ever eluded alchemical experiment. The union of opposites means the union of conscious and unconscious elements, and the psychic or metaphysical gold is any renewal of the personality which gives a new impetus or fulfilment to life. Any symbolical product which performs this service for mankind, and the Physiologus is a case in point, deserves closer attention than is shown by the "enlightened

stupidity" of purely rational analysis. It has already been noted that even in the realm of the physical sciences, observation is not synonymous with meaning. If it is objected that the Physiologus does not do justice to natural science, then the question should be asked whether natural science does justice to the "psychic reality" reflected in the Physiologus and whether the claim should ever have been advanced that the Physiologus is in any sense a scientific document. This statement, admittedly, anticipates the demonstration of unconscious symbolism in the Physiologus.

Archetypal Patterns and The Doctrine of The Trinity

The Physiologus is connected in an important way with the change of thinking associated with the advent of Christianity. Since Christian dogma forms the superstructure of the Physiologus, any insight in this direction will also be an insight into the meaning of the Physiologus. The Christian Trinity is an important constituent of the symbolism of the Physiologus. Although a discussion of the Trinity at this point will to some extent anticipate the following chapter, it will help to illustrate Jung's concept of "archetypal" ideas, and will follow naturally from what has been said about the "psychic reality" in the Physiologus.

Christian dogma states in metaphysical terms that man was created in the image of God. Jung expresses a somewhat similar idea as a "psychic fact." Psychology takes man and the human psyche as its starting point and asserts no claims concerning metaphysical truth. The order is reversed when Jung states that God, in psychological terms, is the image of man's psychic totality.²⁰ It is always noted that the integration of unconscious contents into the conscious mind brings with it a numinous experience. This is the essence of religion. It is only in the irrational and transcendent entity of a God-image that man can glimpse his own totality. From this viewpoint God can be thought of as a symbol of man's psychic wholeness. In these terms the Trinity represents a transition from the "unthinking" life of primitive man to the intellectual life of civilized man. In the primitive age, before the differentiation of consciousness, God was only a single entity despite a flock of psychic projections into the material world. "Here man, world and God form a whole, a unity unclouded by criticism. It is the world of the Father and of man in his childhood state."²¹

²⁰ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.156 and p.194.

²¹ Ibid., p.134.

In this world the question of evil does not arise. "The world of the Father is characterized by a pristine oneness with the whole of Nature, no matter whether this oneness be beautiful or ugly or awe-inspiring."²² With the dawning of consciousness, however, the critical apparatus naturally began to do its work. The awareness of the world's imperfection and man's suffering became a great stumbling block to the previous feeling of oneness. Once the concept of evil and the question of its origin arose, a new situation made its appearance.

. . . . then reflection has already begun to judge the Father by his manifest works, and straightway one is conscious of a doubt, which is itself the symptom of a split in the original unity. One comes to the conclusion that the creation is imperfect -- nay more, that the Creator has not done his job properly, that the goodness and almightiness of the Father cannot be the sole principle of the cosmos. Hence the One is supplemented by the Other, with the result that the world of the Father is fundamentally altered and superseded by the world of the Son.²³

The division of the oneness of God which occurred with the advent of consciousness is at the same time symbolized and compensated by the figure of Christ. When God becomes incarnate in the person of the Son there emerges a duality which

²² Ibid., p.134.

²³ Ibid., p.134.

is parallel to the twofold human psyche. The idea of Christ's Godhead, however, makes him more than a symbol of man's conscious psyche. As a redeemer he symbolizes the fulfilment which lies in the union of these two opposite components of the psyche. The incarnation is brought about by the descent of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Ghost is certainly the most puzzling and paradoxical person of the Trinity. Jung has this to say about it:

It is of paramount importance that the idea of the Holy Ghost is not a natural image but a recognition of the living quality of Father and Son, abstractly conceived as the "third" term between the One and the Other. Out of the tension of duality life always produces a "third" that seems somehow incommensurable or paradoxical. Hence, as the "third", the Holy Ghost is bound to be incommensurable and paradoxical too. Unlike Father and Son, he has no name, and no character. He is a function, but that function is the Third Person of the Godhead.²⁴

In psychological terms the Trinity is thus synonymous with a "progressive transformation of one and the same substance, namely the psyche as a whole."²⁵

There is an interesting representation of the Trinity in an Old High German poem of the Twelfth Century which points

²⁴ Ibid., p.159.

²⁵ Ibid., p.194. One of Jung's clearest and most condensed statements of this transformation is found in Psychology and Religion, p.157

unmistakeably to the psychic background of this formula. This does not mean that the poet had any awareness of the fact. Rather such a feeling seems to have developed from "inner experience" during the centuries when Christian dogma was christallizing. The conception of the Trinity which is seen in the following verses can be traced back to the writings of St. Augustine. The poem referred to is known as the Summa Theologiae. After the first strophe of the poem describes the unity of God and his almightiness as Creator, Strophe Two proceeds to explain his triune aspect and how this is related to the human soul:

Ain gotis crafpht in drin genennidin
 daz ist ouch gilāzzin den sēlin
 di si habint insamint ungischeidin,
 rāt, gihugidi mid dim willin,
 disi dri ginennidi
 sint immir insamint woninti
 di ginādi uns got dō virliſ,
 do er unsich sīn ādim īn blīs.
 dannin birin wir an der sēli
 mid giloubin daz erlicht gotis bilidi.²⁶

(One godly power in three persons.
 the soul such frame is also given.
 together and undivided it holds them,
 understanding, remembrance and purpose.
 these three persons
 one in the other are always dwelling.
 His Grace God sent us
 when He breathed into us His breath.
 through the soul we thereby became
 in faith, God's true image.) ----- trans. by writer

²⁶ Paul Piper, ed., Deutsche National-Literatur, Die geistliche Dichtung des Mittelalters I, pp.66-67.

The similarity existing between the Christian Trinity and the human "seli" is clearly brought out. The tripartite formulation of the soul as rät, gihugidi and willi need not give offence if it does not agree in a definitive sense with Jung's conception of the psyche. The tripartite conception of the psyche is based upon the existence of the unconscious mind, its antithesis, consciousness, and the mediating "third", which is the functioning of psychic processes aimed at a synthesis of the two. The most recent interpretation of the Summa Theologiae by Heinz Rupp, explains the strophe as follows:

Den Aussagen über die Einheit Gottes folgt in Strophe 2 die Darlegung der Trinität in der Form, wie sie Augustin im 9. und 10. Buch seines Werkes 'De Trinitate' entwickelt: die Trinität als "memoria", "intellegentia", "voluntas" (amor). Und wie dort, so wird auch hier --- in vereinfachter Form --- die Beziehung zwischen Trinität und menschlicher Seele hergestellt. Darin aber liegt der Kern der Strophe; der entscheidende Satz ist -- rein vom Sprachlichen hergesehen -- nicht Vers 11 (1), sondern Vers 12 (2), denn 11 (1) ist nur Subjekt für 12 (2), der Schwerpunkt liegt auf dem Verb ("gilazzin") und dem Objekt ("den selin"). Nicht um eine Trinitätslehre geht es dem Dichter, er will vielmehr mit Hilfe der augustinischen Lehre von der Trinität den entscheidenden Bezug zwischen Gott und Mensch herstellen. Wie die Trinität so besteht auch jede Seele aus "rät", "gihugidi", und "willin" und ist damit "gotis bilidi", "imago Dei". Diese strukturelle Gleichheit von Trinität und Seele aber ist das grosse Gnadengeschenk Gottes an die menschliche Seele, und deshalb kann der Dichter auch sagen, dieses Abbild Gottes sei "erlich", habe Ansehen und dürfe Verehrung fordern.²⁷

²⁷ Heinz Rupp, Deutsche Religiöse Dichtungen des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts, p. 86.

The trinity-formula had to be given considerable attention in order to illustrate the psychic background of symbols employed by the Physiologus. In this manner the claim will be justified that the Physiologus does not suffer from its failure to depict nature in accordance with objective reality. A different concept of reality is required if one is to understand a document whose meaning, according to historians, exercised hardly less attraction in its time than that of the Bible itself. The key to this understanding is Jung's phrase "psychic reality". Strophe Eight of the Summa Theologiae explains effectively what nature meant to the mind which was under the spell of this inner reality:

Al des dir mennischi bidorfti
 in uimf dagin got uori worchti.
 an demo sechstin dagi worchter in.
 dis weilt irwart durch in.
 er habiti in allin gischephidōn
 wnni odir bilidi odir herzindūm
 unsir chunftic ellendi
 was er mit disin allin drōstinti,
 daz si unsich des irmanitin,
 daz wir heim zi der mendin hugitin. 28

(All things which man needed
 God made in the first five days.
 on the sixth day He fashioned man.
 through Him arose Creation.
 delight, example or stewardship
 had man in all created things.
 for our coming woe
 were all these things God's consolation,
 all this to us was admonition
 that we home our thoughts in glory.) ---- trans. by writer

It has been remarked by many investigators that the Physiologus served the purpose of turning men's minds towards the "higher things" by showing them the eternal world of the spirit in nature's transitory facade. The demonstration of actual psychic contents which are served by such an idea of nature places this simple observation on a new level of meaning.

A second reason for the discursive treatment of the trinity-formula is that the Trinity exemplifies Jung's concept of "archetypal" ideas. It will be important to recognize what is meant by the phrase "archetypes of the unconscious" and how this idea applies to the Physiologus. As we have seen, the lowest stratum of the unconscious mind is independent of personal experience. It is the "collective unconscious". Jung explains his conception of both the "collective unconscious" and its "archetypes" in the following paragraph:

Even dreams are made of collective material to a very high degree, just as, in the mythology and folklore of different peoples, certain motifs repeat themselves in almost identical form. I have called these motifs "archetypes", and by this I mean forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as autochthonous, individual products of unconscious origin. The archetypal motifs presumably derive from patterns of the human mind that are transmitted not only by tradition and migration but also by heredity. The latter hypothesis is indispensable, since even complicated archetypal images can be reproduced spontaneously without there being any possibility of direct tradition.²⁹

²⁹ Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.50

When any archetypal image becomes conscious it exerts great power over the mind in which it functions and commonly produces a numinous experience. The more distinctly such an image refers to its archetypal origin, the greater is its fascination and the more divine or daemonic its properties. The figure of Christ represents such an archetype of the collective unconscious.³⁰ The hero who saves his people from an overwhelming fate by performing superhuman deeds and at the same time undergoing great ordeals is a familiar motif. The formulation of this archetype in mythical literature and folklore needs no elaboration. Regarding this type of figure Jung says:

The content of all such symbolic products is the idea of an overpowering, all-embracing, complete or perfect being, represented either by a man of heroic proportions, or by an animal with magical attributes, or by a magic vessel or some other "treasure hard to attain," such as a jewel, ring, crown . . . This archetypal idea is a reflection of the individual's wholeness, i.e. of the self, which is present in him as an unconscious image. The conscious mind can form absolutely no conception of this totality, because it includes not only conscious but also the unconscious psyche, which is, as such, inconceivable and irrepresentable.³¹

³⁰ Cf. ibid., pp.152-157.

³¹ ibid., pp.155-156.

In psychological terms, however, man's wholeness is synonymous with his image of God. As a religious hero Christ appears as a member of the Trinity. The Trinity is itself an archetype of the collective unconscious whose images go back to grey antiquity. Jung has traced pre-Christian parallels to the Trinity in the philosophies and religions of Babylonia, Egypt and Greece.³² Hermann Schneider has pointed out that Germanic religion also knew a trinity of gods. Concerning the Germanic deities Tiwaz (Ziu), Donar and Wotan he says:

Beachten wir zunächst, dass hier eine Götterdreiheit genannt ist. Sie begegnet immer und immer wieder, wenngleich mit schwankenden Namen, auf der Nordendorfer Spange des 7. Jahrhunderts, in der altsächsischen Abschwörungsformel des 8., in einem der ältesten Skaldenlieder des 9., im Tempel zu Upsala nach einem Bericht des 11., in verschiedenen Erzählungen der beiden Edden des 13. Jahrhunderts -- und immer ist Wotan dabei, wenngleich nicht stets an der Spitze.³³

With specific reference to the Middle Ages the operation of the archetypes of Christ and the Trinity can be seen in the growth of the legend and lore which surrounds the lives of the Saints. An example of this is provided in the account of

³² Ibid., pp.112-128.

³³ Hermann Schneider, ed., Germanische Altertumskunde, p.236.

St. Olaf given by the mediaeval historian, Snorri Sturlason. In Óláfs Saga Helga Snorri relates that St. Olaf was martyred by three wounds and he circumstantially describes them.³⁴ Later, the recovery of Olaf's body after a year of interment is described as follows:

Twelve months and five days after King Olaf's death his holy remains were dug up, and the coffin had raised itself almost entirely to the surface of the earth; and the coffin appeared quite new, as if it had but lately been made. When Bishop Grimkel came to King Olaf's open coffin, there was a delightful and fresh smell. Thereupon the bishop uncovered the king's face, and his appearance was in no respect altered, and his cheeks were as red as if he had but just fallen asleep.³⁵

The burial, followed after an interval by disinterment, is part of the archetypal idea, as Jung has indicated in discussing the Christian parallel, Christ's three-day descent into purgatory and his subsequent resurrection. The same idea of descent into

³⁴ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.148: "That is to say, man's conceptions of God are organized into triads and trinities, and a whole host of ritualistic and magical practices take on a triple or trichotonous character, as in the case of thrice-repeated apotropaic spells, formulae for blessing, cursing, praising, giving thanks, . . . "

³⁵ Snorri Sturluson, The Heimskringla, ed. Rasmus B. Anderson, trans. Samuel Laing, II, p.641.

a subterranean region, i.e., the unconscious, is symbolically represented in the Divine Comedy and in the classical Walpurgisnacht of Faust II.³⁶ The sweet smell which emanated from Olaf's coffin is likewise part of the archetypal idea as the next chapter will show (see the panther). G. Turville-Petre says of the St. Olaf legend:

Tradition has it that St. Olaf was martyred on the 29th July, 1030, and his anniversary has been celebrated in many churches on that day. The scene at Stiklastadir, when the sun was darkened, resembled that at Calvary when Christ gave up the Ghost. Throughout the Middle Ages, Olaf was regarded as a symbol, or emanation of Christ.

.....
 Within a few hours of the saint's death miracles were recorded, and wounds were healed by his blood. His body was taken secretly from the battlefield, and buried in a sandbank by the River Nid.³⁷

Alchemy and "Seelische Polarität"

In his well-known novel Notre-Dame de Paris, Victor Hugo remarks when describing the great cathedral:

Il n'est pas jusqu'aux hermétiques qui ne trouvent dans les symboles du grand portail un abrégé satisfaisant de leur science, dont l'église de

36

Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, note, p.52.

37

G. Turville-Petre, The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, p.162.

Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie était un hiéroglyphe
si complet.³⁸

The apparent incongruity contained in this observation has much to do with the Physiologus. Its explanation lies in the identity of a large number of symbols used by both the Physiologus and the alchemists.

The manifest aim of alchemy was the conversion of base substances into gold. Side by side with this chemical process, however, was a psychic process whose goal was the perfection of the "self". There were charlatans amongst the alchemists and not a few hacks who took their laboratory work quite literally, but there were others who realized the psychic nature of their work. Such phrases as, "aurum noster non est aurum vulgi"³⁹ indicate this fact. The gold which they sought was an allegorical gold. In this sense, the chemical opus of alchemy was a projection of psychic contents and of their progressive transformation. In perfect harmony with the natural gradient

38

Victor Hugo, Notre-Dame de Paris, p.129.

39

Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.34.

of the psyche, the alchemists attempted to reach their goal by means of a union of opposites referred to as a chymical wedding or a coniunctio. This coniunctio was actually a special stage of the opus⁴⁰ in which the union of opposites was performed "in the likeness of male and female."⁴¹ There ultimately arose from this union a purer substance which was thought of allegorically as a hermaphrodite.⁴² This was the magic substance which brought about the transformation of lesser substances into gold. Jung has shown the parallel between this complectio oppositorum, the philosopher's stone, and the figure of Christ. The transformation itself was equated in alchemistic literature with Christ's resurrection and the whole idea was represented symbolically by the phoenix. It is perfectly in keeping with the psychic background of alchemy that the secret of this transformation could be revealed to the alchemist in a dream.

⁴⁰ For a short description of the opus cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, pp.218-221.

⁴¹ Cf. the laboratory scene in Faust II in which the alchemical opus is performed:
 Wagner leiser. Es wird ein Mensch gemacht.
 Mephistopheles. Ein Mensch? Und welch verliebtes Paar
 Habt Ihr ins Rauchloch eingeschlossen?

⁴² In the laboratory scene of Faust II this figure is the homunculus. For the identity of the homunculus and the philosopher's stone see Ronald D. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist pp.209-210. For the hermaphroditic nature of the homunculus, ibid., p.214.

It is of interest that the Trinity symbolism of Christianity was often replaced in alchemy by a quaternity. The alchemists symbolized man's wholeness by means of the number four. Jung has pointed out that such a vacillation in number symbolism existed even in pre-Christian thought. It is a problem which appears in psychology, philosophy and religion.

The first philosophical indication of the affinity between the numbers three and four is in Plato's Timaeus which begins with the question, "One, two, three -- but -- where is the fourth?"⁴³ Plato did not penetrate this problem, but formed a triadic conception of the cosmos. The insight of a poet reveals much more about this problem and shows what deep responsiveness to psychic contents is operative in artistic creation of Goethe's order. In the Cabiri scene of Faust II the problem surrounding three and four appears thus:

Drei haben wir mitgenommen,
Der vierte wollte nicht kommen;
Er sagte, er sei der Rechte,
Der für sie alle dachte.

Jung conceives Faust II as "an alchemical drama from beginning to end."⁴⁴ Psychologically he sees the Cabiri as the

⁴³ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.164.

⁴⁴ Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.66. For a modification of this view see Ronald D. Gray, Goethe the Alchemist, pp.219-220

creative forces which operate below the level of consciousness, just like the gnomes of myth and legend which live beneath the earth.

Just as, in Faust, the fourth thinks for them all, so the whereabouts of the eighth should be asked "on Olympus". Goethe showed great insight in not underestimating his inferior function . . . although it was in the hands of the Cabiri and was undoubtedly mythological and archaic. He characterized it perfectly in the line: "The fourth would not come."⁴⁵

The "fourth" indicates the dark and archaic part of the psyche which has its place in the collective unconscious. In religious terms the fourth is the fallen angel, the personification of evil. But the fourth is a necessary component of psychic wholeness and must therefore, in a sense, supplement the Christian Trinity.⁴⁶ Without sin there is no repentance, without repentance no grace, and hence no redemption. The conflict between good and evil was externalized in Christianity inasmuch as it was a personification which existed outside the Trinity. The evil in the human soul, or psychologically, the darkest aspect of the unconscious mind, could be comfortably

⁴⁵ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.165.

⁴⁶ Cf. ibid., p.156.

projected into this personification so that the realization was avoided that evil really emanates from the soul itself. This was, according to Jung, a psychological stumbling block since the process which leads to human wholeness is based upon the inner resolution of the psychic opposites. Jung says:

The unconscious conversion of instinctual impulses into religious activity is ethically worthless, and often no more than an hysterical outburst Ethical decision is possible only when one is conscious of the conflict in all its aspects.⁴⁷

By its use of quaternary symbolism and by its application of a synthetic method alchemy accepted the psychic conflict of opposites in all its implications. In this sense it reflected its psychic nature more accurately than Christian dogma.

The frequent appearance of the unicorn in alchemical symbolism illustrates the importance of the union of opposites. The common understanding of this animal as a religious symbol was that it represented Christ. Its single horn symbolized the unity of Father and Son and its habit of giving itself up to virgins by placing its head in their laps was obviously derived from the Christ-archetype. The older Physiologus texts state, however, that this animal was swift of foot and evilly disposed towards men. This must also have been a common idea. St. Basil

⁴⁷ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.72.

said, "And take heed unto thyself, O Man, and beware of the unicorn who is the demon. For he plotteth evil against man, and he is cunning in evil-doing."⁴⁸ The older texts, as well as der jüngerer Physiologus, relate that with the help of a maidenly decoy the hunters are able to make a captive of the animal and lead it away to the palace of the king. This appears consistent with the evil side of the beast's character. Nevertheless, it is allegorically equated in the same texts with Christ. Further traces of this contradiction are still discernible in the Old High German texts. Der ältere Physiologus states that the "einhurno" is "uile lucil un ist so gezal daz imo niman geuolgen nemag noh ez nemag zeneheinero uuis geuanen uuerdin . . . etc."⁴⁸ Der jüngerer Physiologus says that the animal is "lutzil tier. unte ist deme chitzine gilich. unte ist uile chune. Iz habit ein horn. andeme hobite. nehein man nimag in giuahen. neware mit disme liste . . . etc." Both texts go on to explain how the animal is captured by the 'list' of placing a virgin in its path. Concerning animal symbolism in alchemy and particularly the symbol of the unicorn Jung says:

⁴⁸

Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.426.

These examples should suffice to show how close is the connection between alchemical symbolism and the language of the Church. It is to be noted in the ecclesiastical quotations that the unicorn also contains the element of evil. Originally a fabulous and monstrous beast, it harbours in itself an inner contradiction, a coniunctio oppositorum, which makes it a singularly appropriate symbol for the monstrum hermaphroditum of alchemy.⁴⁹

The animal symbols which alchemy shared with the Physiologus are the lion, antelope, unicorn, ass, ape, stag, pelican, eagle, phoenix, fish, and, of course, the dragon (snake).

The foregoing discussion of alchemy was considered expedient for several reasons. Firstly, its use of a large number of symbols which are identical with those of the Physiologus is itself a matter of interest, even though a direct connecting link cannot be found. It is, in fact, more the absence of such a direct link which attracts our interest. Secondly, alchemy provides another illustration of how close the mediaeval mind was to its psychic roots. Moreover, the identity of the symbols used by the Physiologus and the alchemists gives a broader foundation to the assertion that "archetypal" ideas were operative in the formation of these symbols.

⁴⁹ Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, pp.426-427.

The Mediaeval Attitude to Nature and The
"Sovereignty of The Idea"

The label often put upon mediaeval thought is some phrase resembling Jung's "sovereignty of the idea."⁵⁰ It has been said that mediaeval thought was independent of material factors and consistently overlooked the particulars of the external world in favor of transcendental ideas. Whether or not this statement does justice to the whole of mediaeval thought, it must certainly have applied to some particular areas. One of the most striking examples of mediaeval subjectivity is a story told of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Once, when on a journey, he rode for a whole day along the shores of Lake Geneva. When at the end of the journey his companions spoke of the lake, he asked to what lake they referred, he had seen none.⁵¹ This division between man and nature has been succinctly described by Ernst Kantorowicz in his study of the Emperor Frederick the Second:

⁵⁰ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.76.

⁵¹ H. B. Workman, The Evolution of The Monastic Ideal, p.307.

The normal course of organic growth, to arrive at the general law by abstraction from the particular was reversed in the Scholastic age. The Scholastic mind always focussed on the Universal as the first given premiss, the thought accustomed to daily converse with the "Universal", was able more readily to grasp a general law about the collective Cosmos than the simplest single thing on Earth, and people learned to know Nature in her individual manifestations through intellectual speculation about Laws and Species. Anything related to Eternity and the Universal was quickly grasped by the trained mind: Astronomy and Mathematics were, therefore, more immediately understood than Botany and Zoology, and these in their turn more rapidly than the science of men. Plastic art shows every step of the road.

The recent fashion of ascribing to the Middle Ages a feeling for or observation of Nature is simply playing with words. The Middle Ages certainly considered Nature holy as the eternal order of the world, but no one before at earliest 1200 conceived it speculatively and yet intellectually as a live thing, moved by its own forces, throbbing with its own life. No importance attached to it in itself; men preferred to grasp natural phenomena abstractly as allegory and to interpret them transcendently. A late Alexandrine work, the Physiologus . . . reinforced this tendency.⁵²

This attitude towards nature can be traced back to the first centuries of the Christian era when the new religion was fighting for its life against Mithraism and pagan nature-worship.⁵³ The early Church Fathers were well aware of the dangers attached to an unchecked admiration of nature for its own sake. In this context Jung quotes the following passages from St. Augustine:

⁵² Ernst Kantorowicz, Frederick the Second 1194-1250, pp.335-336.

⁵³ Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.73.

And men go forth and admire lofty mountains and broad seas and turn away from themselves.

. . . they love these things too much and become subject to them, and subjects cannot judge.⁵⁴

Jung comments:

One would certainly think it possible to love something, to have a positive attitude towards it, without supinely succumbing to it and losing one's power of rational judgement. But Augustine knew his contemporaries, and furthermore how much godliness and godlike power dwelt in the beauty of the world.

.
It is not merely a question of sensuality and of aesthetic corruption, but -- and this is the point -- of paganism and nature worship. Because gods dwell in created things man falls to worshipping them, and for that reason he must turn away from them utterly lest he be overwhelmed.⁵⁵

Augustine's attitude can be supplemented by many other passages from patristic literature⁵⁶ which show how the conflict between Christianity and nature-worship led to the Christian separation from external phenomena. The necessity of this development can be realized when it is remembered that, to the

⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid., p.73 and p.74.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.74-76.

⁵⁶ For reference to St. Basil, Clement Alexandrinus and Origen see "Physiologus", Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.XI, 11th ed. pp.552-553, and E. P. Evans, Animal Symbolism In Ecclesiastical Architecture, p.28 and p.57.

pagan mind, nature was full of daemonic and magical influences. In Jung's terms, nature was the receptacle of every kind of psychic projection and this psychological phenomenon creates a mystical or unconscious relationship between the subject and the object.⁵⁷ The ideal of the imitatio Christi was based upon an inner spiritual development directed by a symbol of human wholeness. In aspiring to this ideal Christianity's first hurdle was that of subduing the animal instincts of late antiquity. The condition of late classical civilization, which needs no elaboration, is itself an eloquent explanation for the great cleavage brought about by the Christian ideal. It is understandable that such a psychic reorientation left little room either for the classical nature-feeling or for the dispassionate attitude of modern natural science. That this psychic reorientation was itself a natural phenomenon and not an arbitrary invention of the mind has been the central idea of the preceding pages.

Former Physiologus Research and New Critical Principles

All the critics with the exception of T. H. White, who have written on the Physiologus, have found in it an example of mental regression. The verdict has ranged from Wellmann's

⁵⁷ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, note p.245.

phrase, "den geistigen Niedergang wieder Spiegelnd",⁵⁸ to the following statements made by E. P. Evans:

Besides its value as a key to zoological symbolism as expressed in art and literature, and especially in hermeneutical theology and ecclesiastical architecture, the Physiologus is psychologically interesting as an index to the intellectual condition of an age which could accept its absurd statements as scientific facts, and seriously apply them to biblical exegesis and Christian dogmatics.⁵⁹

An even clearer example of this one-sided criticism is the following statement made by the same author:

It must be remembered that the men who wrote such hermeneutical stuff as this, and took such childish tales seriously as the testimony of nature to the truth of revelation, were not obscure and ignorant persons, but the most learned divines and eminent representatives of the early Church, the creators of patristic theology And yet it was by this credulous and utterly uncritical class of minds that the foundations of historical and dogmatic Christianity were laid, and the constitution and canonicity of our sacred Scriptures determined It is evident that minds so implicitly credulous could have had no proper appreciation of the problems which the rise and growth of Christianity during the early period of its dogmatic evolution presented for solution nor is it hardly possible that they should not have been deceived in any investigations they undertook⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Wellmann, op. cit., p.1.

⁵⁹ E. P. Evans, op. cit., p.171.

⁶⁰ E. P. Evans, op. cit., p.174.

What has not occurred to these critics is that their criteria have been incommensurable with the problem. It has not been disputed that the Physiologus is "wretched twaddle" by the criteria of natural science. It has, however, been proposed that scientific standards are at complete cross-purposes with the meaning of the Physiologus. Like the religious dogma which gave it its external form, the Physiologus states irrational psychic facts which forever elude the "enlightened stupidity" of "scientific" criticism. By the same means which are close to the hearts of the rationalists Jung has placed the existence of the irrational psyche and "symbolical truth" on an empirical foundation. This has given impetus to a type of literary criticism which, though not new, has long been in eclipse. Its "method" consists in fostering the state of mind which is receptive and responsive to knowledge from beyond the sphere of rational thought. Contact with this source of knowledge can obviously not be effected by an approach which does not recognize the existence of such knowledge. If the symbolical expression of the unconscious mind often appears in conundrums, the greater is the insight afforded to those who are able to come to terms with the "paradoxical truth" of such symbols.⁶¹ In this sense criticism

⁶¹ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.15 and Psychology and Religion, p.275.

must be an art rather than a science and it is obvious that criticism of this nature cannot operate with fixed rules and preconceived standards. This appears at once to be more in keeping with its object and purpose.

The author of the Physiologus was in complete accord with one of the most far-reaching mental processes in history. His literary product was not a mediaeval compendium of natural science but a record of the inner reality in which the human mind found its nourishment for a millenium. Jung has shown that the mediaeval surrender to this inward form of reality was not an aberration of the human intellect. It was but a reflection of the great problem of attaining human wholeness - a problem whose existence was and is one of mankind's deepest concerns.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANING OF THE PHYSIOLOGUS

Introduction - The Methods of White and Lauchert

In examining individually the twenty-seven animals comprising the Old High German versions of the Physiologus and their Latin prototype it will be seen that a few basic ideas recur in varying forms throughout the texts. Of these the motif of rebirth which is first clearly constellated in Section 4 is the most important. In the other sections containing the same motif, comment on the variation or modification which is introduced will suffice.

There are two tendencies which will be avoided in the following interpretation. The first is that indicated by T. H. White in his edition of a Latin Bestiary:

The real pleasure comes with identifying the existing creature, not with laughing at a supposedly imaginary one . . . Who would have supposed that there really was a dragon with a head at both ends? Yet the incomparable Mr. Druce easily ran it to earth in the official guide of the British Museum.¹

¹ T. H. White, The Book of Beasts, p.237

Since White is referring to the Bestiary as distinct from the Physiologus, a document which he insists is a "serious scientific work,"² he may have justification for this approach. The Physiologus, on the other hand, is not a scientific work but a religious document reflecting in a high degree the mental processes which were operative in the formulation of Christian dogma. Proceeding from the discussion of symbolism and psychic phenomena in Chapter II, it will be the object of the present chapter to relate the individual animals to the background which has been sketched. Thus the Physiologus' independence of accurate scientific observation will not have to be placed in the balance when the real value of the work is estimated.

The second tendency which will be avoided is that of documenting the various animal habits and characteristics by reference to ancient literature. This topic has been thoroughly exploited by Lauchert and others, whose interest was mainly historical. If the following remarks often seem to treat the characteristics of the animals as if they had been invented by the author of the Physiologus, this is because their appearance elsewhere in ancient literature is not important in the present context.

² ibid., p.237

It is recognized that the author neither took his animal stories out of thin air, nor entirely from the recesses of his unconscious. However, a separate study would be required if one were to approach the problem of distinguishing typically Christian from more archaic, pre-Christian archetypes in the formulation of the various animal characteristics. There would also be the problem of recognizing mistaken observation and genuine "scientific knowledge" in the naturalistic material. The interpretations of the texts are naturally not so problematical since they appear to be largely the work of the author. One fact has been definitely established and it may serve as a rough guide: The introduction of number symbolism is entirely the work of the author. In thus projecting one of the central archetypes of Christian thought into his work, the author has drawn his naturalistic material into the mainstream of Christian symbolism. One may assume that otherwise the choice of material from his much larger source was equally determined by a receptiveness to the foundations of Christian thought. That this is indeed the case will be shown in the following discussion.

It should be recognized that as literary documents the Physiologus texts were not ambitious undertakings. Much has been said about their faulty rhyme, mistranslations, and misunderstandings. The considerable dependence of der jüngerer Physiologus on the Latin prototype, as well as the relative independence and

superiority of der #ltere Physiologus has been noted. Some illustration of these facts will be given and outstanding defects of the Old High German texts will be mentioned. It is our concern to demonstrate the long unrecognized positive features of the texts, as well as their much-discussed defects. T. H. White provides an admirable maxim for the interpretation of the Physiologus when he says, ". . . the more the reader is amused by the foolishness of the Physiologus, the more he is liable to make a fool of himself."³

Textual Interpretation

Like the Dicta Chrysostomi, the Old High German Physiologus opens with the lion, an animal which signifies Christ "turih sine sterihchi." One wonders why one of the fiercest creatures of the animal kingdom should be chosen to symbolize Christ, "the gentle Saviour meek and mild." The same enigma presents itself in the section on the panther and elsewhere. It is a paradox of which the author of the Physiologus was himself fully aware, as is shown by his own words in Section 26. In the section on the panther the paradox is actually enforced when Christ is referred to as the "lamb" whom all mankind follows just as all the animals follow the panther. One sees in this mysterious contradiction a process of transformation. Jung has shown that animal symbolism on a more

³ ibid., p.237

primitive level represents the instinctual contents of the psyche.⁴ When animal-sacrifice attained its highest significance in religious rites it signified the victory of the purified "self" over the animal tendencies of the archaic psyche.⁵ This purifying process was reflected in alchemical symbolism in the "taming" of the lion or the severing of its paws.⁶ The same idea of transformation from a lower to a higher form of existence, effected through the sacrifice of the animal element, was seen in early Christianity. Here the crucifixion was conceived as a parallel to the Hebrew sacrifice of the easter lamb.⁷ The great importance attached to this kind of allegory in mediaeval thought explains the reference to Christ as a "lamb", the "agnus dei," in Section 2. This is far from an adequate explanation of the paradox of the lion but a more final answer must be reserved for Section 26 where the relevant statement of the text itself can be examined. Between the present section and Section 26 many variations of the same paradox will be observed and it will not be difficult to discern its relationship to the "seelische Polarität" discussed in Chapter II.

⁴ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.328f.

⁵ ibid., p.423.

⁶ Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.423.

⁷ Rupp, Deutsche Religiöse Dichtungen des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts, p.46.

The use of the lion as a symbol of deity is much older than Christianity. It is said that few animals are mentioned more frequently in the Old Testament than the lion,⁸ and it is noteworthy that its use here is almost always that of representing fierceness, vengefulness, and unbridled ire. It is frequently applied to Jehovah himself. The lion was also an ancient sun-symbol, not only throughout the land of Egypt, but in the myths and religions of other countries.⁹ Jung sees Samson and Hercules as sun heroes¹⁰ and their slaying of the lion as a formulation of the ancient idea that the sun dies (or commits suicide) in the course of its cycle, only to be reborn again later.¹¹ This motif plays a prominent part in subsequent sections of the Physiologus. It is well-known that sun-worship often figured largely in primitive religion. Moreover, the archetypal connection between God and the sun is left in little doubt when one examines the sun and light

⁸ Cf. Cheyne and J. Sutherland, editors, Encyclopaedia Biblica, p.2802, and Kolloff, op. cit., p.216

⁹ Cf. Lauchert, Geschichte des Physiologus, Chapt. I, and Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.280 and p.431.

¹⁰ Cf. Jung, ibid., p.121, p.296n. and p.386n.

¹¹ ibid., p.386n.

metaphors in which religious ideas are universally couched.¹²
 As an embodiment of divinity the sun was an object of fear as well as adoration. Withering as well as fructifying, taking as well as giving life, itself dying and being reborn, the sun harboured in its oneness the opposites and contradictions which flew apart in Christian thought.¹³ This undivided but paradoxical nature appears to have been common to the primitive sun-god, its symbol the lion, and the Jehovah of the Old Testament. These are, in fact, examples of the undifferentiated God-archetype, the archetype which in Jungian psychology is conceived as standing for human wholeness in its fullest possible extent. As such, these symbols must be "uniting symbols" (Cf. Chapter II).

The lion was the animal to which Jacob compared his son Judah when giving him his benediction (Gen. 49:9). Jacob meant to say that Judah possessed the mightiness to vanquish his enemies and that none dared to provoke his wrath. Jesus, however, was of the tribe of Judah. The archetype of the saviour-hero which was felt so strongly in Christianity transformed this passage of Genesis into a presage of Christ's coming. The texts of the Physiologus open with Jacob's benediction but the passage is misrepresented in such a way as to make it resemble a prophesy.

¹² Cf. Edwyn Bevan, Symbolism and Belief, pp.141-150.

¹³ Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.121

The Latin reads: "Catulus leonis Juda: ad praedam, filii mi ascendisti: requiescens accubisti ut leo, et quasi leaena, quis suscitabit eum." Indicating the real meaning of this passage, Luther translates the phrase, "quis suscitabit eum," as follows: "wer will sich wider ihn auflehnen." The texts of der jüngere Physiologus and its rhymed version clearly show their misconception of the passage. They translate it as follows: "wer scol irwekchen uon dineme geslahte einen man. wer. ane got" (j. Phys.). Only der Ältere Physiologus does not show this misconception. The latter text introduces the section with a sentence found in none of the other texts, which draws attention to the lion's strength: "Leo bezehinet unserin trohtin turih sine sterihchi." After an intervening sentence it continues: "Tannan sagita iacob to er namaete sinen sun iudam. Er choat iudas min sun ist uelf des leuin." The use of the word "tannan" makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that the author of der Ältere Physiologus saw the lion-metaphor in its context, and correctly interpreted it as an expression of strength. This does not mean that he did not attribute a mystical significance to the passage. If this is correct it does considerable credit to the author of der Ältere Physiologus.

The exposition of the lion's characteristics and the interpretation of these characteristics brings the symbolism of the number three into the foreground. The lion has three attributes and in the third attribute there is a further trichotomy. This number symbolism appears to derive its significance from the Christian Trinity. It was indicated in Chapter II, however, that the Trinity is derived from an archetype of the unconscious mind.

The lion's first characteristic is that of erasing its tracks with its tail when it is pursued by hunters. This signifies the fact that Christ hid the traces of his Godhead while he was on earth so that the devil would not recognize him as God's son. None of the texts explain why this was necessary. The idea rests upon a mediaeval topos which is traceable to the apocryphal gospels and was prominent in the works of Isidor of Seville.¹⁴ It consists of the idea that Christ struggled with the devil as a man, notwithstanding his divinity. At the time of the crucifixion the devil, failing to recognize God's son, seized the bait of his human body and was caught on the fishhook of his divinity. The Summa

¹⁴ Cf. Rupp, op. cit., p.96

Theologiae says:

do ächti der vīant di meinnischeit
dādir midi was uirborgin duv gotheit.
daz chordir urumit er irhangin,
mid dem angili wart er giuangin.¹⁵

According to Jung there was also an idea that the devil swallowed the bait of Christ's body but "found it so indigestible that he had to yield it up again as the whale spewed forth Jonah."¹⁶ He accredits the formulation of this idea to Cyril of Jerusalem. The motif of swallowing and regurgitating is an important archetypal idea for which reference is made to the fuller discussion in Section 4 and Section 11.

In view of the topical nature of this idea it is very surprising to find a complete misunderstanding in the rhymed Physio-
logus. Instead of relating that Christ concealed the attributes of his Godhead (Lat. intelligibilia deitatis suae vestigia, j. Phys., diu uil uernunftklichen spor siner gotheite), the author of this text has altered the entire idea. He says, "do bedahtte er gereite. der vinstern spor mit siner gotheite." He appears to equate the word "spor" with the curse which befell mankind when Adam sinned. Although this is not an unintelligent idea in itself,

¹⁵ P. Piper, ed., Die geistliche Dichtung des Mittelalters, vol. I, p.70.

¹⁶ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.368n.

¹⁷ Lauchert, op. cit., p.6n.

the failure to understand a well-known mediaeval topos cannot but reflect unfavourably upon the author's learning. Although it is impossible to distinguish between the mistakes attributable to the author of this particular text and those which may have existed in his prototype, the number and nature of the mistakes occurring in the rhymed version make the rhymer highly suspect.

The lion's second characteristic is that of sleeping with its eyes open. This signifies that Christ slept as a man among men, but as a God he was eternally wakeful at the right hand of the Father. The formal ground for this interpretation is given in all the texts as the verse from the Song of Solomon (5:5), "Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat." This reveals that the choice of biblical passages was indeed rather indiscriminate. In order to be at all applicable this passage must be a statement of the bridegroom, who was considered an allegory of Christ (D.C. testatur sponsus de se ipso). When the passage is read in its context it cannot be interpreted in any other way than as a statement of the Shulamite girl. In spite of this defect, the trait of wakefulness is no arbitrary choice as a symbol and certainly does not depend upon the biblical passage alluded to. Rather there is a strong suggestion that eternal wakefulness was attributed to the lion as part of its

personality as a sun-symbol. Friedrich Lauchert says:

Leemans in seiner Ausgabe des Horapollo weist in der Note zu der Stelle nach, dass auf ägyptischen Denkmälern der Löwe als Symbol der Wachsamkeit vorkomme, und dass auch in Hieroglypheninschriften ein Löwenhaupt so gebraucht werde.¹⁷

The third characteristic is that the lioness brings forth stillborn cubs and then guards them for three days. When this time has elapsed the old lion blows in their faces and they are immediately brought to life. Because of its number symbolism this characteristic is by far the most highly charged of the series and brings the section to a sort of climax. The prophecy of Jacob which formed the opening of the section is thus "fulfilled" in the closing sentences. Der jüngere Physiologus explains, "Same got almahtig sinen sun des tritten tages irchucti uon den toten. also iacob vore sagate." With the exception of der ältere Physiologus the texts close very suitably with another biblical quotation (Numbers 24:9) which brings in exactly the same lion-metaphor. The closing phrase is again "quis suscitabit eum", or as der jüngere Physiologus says, "wer wecchit in ane got."

In Section 2, which deals with the panther, there is an

¹⁷ Lauchert, op. cit., p.6n.

even more marked inner contradiction than was the case in the preceding section. On the surface, however, the panther is brought into harmony with Christian thought.

The panther is described as being "uil mammendi" -- a gentle beast. It is also attractive in appearance, being the possessor of a beautiful varicolored coat. These qualities comprise the first category in the description of the panther. There now follows a different kind of idea, formally set apart by its introductory phrase, "man lisit" (Phisiologus dicit). The hostile relationship between the panther (Christ) and the dragon (Antichrist) is now mentioned. Next the description moves into a third category in which the panther's habits are described in greater detail. In a loose sense, therefore, the description of the panther may be regarded as tripartite, just as was the case in the description of the lion. Only der Ältere Physiologus does not preserve this framework because of its contraction of the material.

The beautiful varicolored coat of the panther signifies the manifold wisdom which shines forth from God. The idea of color and brightness played a considerable part in alchemical symbolism. A certain stage of the alchemical opus was characterized by the emergence of a many-colored substance represented

allegorically as a peacock's tail.¹⁸ The ensuing process eventually led to a substance whose whiteness contained all colors. This was the magical philosopher's stone corresponding allegorically to Christ. The stone was also thought of as a "diamond whose prism contains all the hues of the rainbow."¹⁹

The second and third characteristics of the panther must be considered together. In the third characteristic Trinity symbolism again appears and here also the paradox of the panther as a religious symbol strikes one forcefully. In spite of the creature's reportedly gentle nature, the presentation of the third characteristic begins with the statement that the panther sleeps for three days after it has sated itself on its prey. Thereupon it arises and brings forth a mighty roar accompanied by an odor of such incomparable sweetness that all other animals far and near are attracted to it and compelled to follow it. Only the dragon is not susceptible. On the contrary, it is unable to endure the sweet odor of the panther's breath and hides away beneath the earth as if it were dead. Thus all mankind follows Christ the lamb.

¹⁸ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.220

¹⁹ ibid., p.178.

The quality of sweetness as part of the archetypal idea of the hero was met in the allusion to Saint Olaf in Chapter II. It is told that the Argonaut hero, Jason, wore a panther's skin about his shoulders²⁰ and in the Nibelungenlied the heroic aspect of Siegfried is enhanced by his possession of a quiver covered with the skin of the panther.

Str. 952 hey waz er richer porten an sinem kochaere truoc!

953 von einem pantele was dar über gezogen
ein hut durch die süeze . . .

956 Sit daz ich iu diu maere gar bescheiden sol,
im was sin edel kocher vil guoter strale vol,²¹
. . .

The hero Siegfried also had about him an odorem nimiae suavitatis. It is tempting to see more than mere coincidence in the fact that the above lines occur in the very scene in which Siegfried wins renown as a hunter. He had overcome and captured a bear singlehanded -- a reminder of the sun-heroes Samson and Hercules who wrestled with lions. As a rather gross animal the

²⁰ Pauly - Wissowa - Kroll, editors, Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, vol. IX, p.766.

²¹ Karl Bartsch, ed., Das Nibelungenlied, p.165.

bear can be regarded as a substitute for the dragon. In alchemy it often took the place of the dragon as a symbol of base and unrefined substances. The equivalent of such substances in unconscious processes has been intimated in Chapter II.

The motif of sweetness recurs in the last section of the texts. The phoenix, a symbol of Christ's resurrection, gathers sweet herbs into its wings before "sacrificing" itself in the flames. This is strongly reminiscent of the use of incense in religious rites, which has the significance of spiritualizing physical substances, driving away evil spirits, and symbolizing the ascent of prayer to God.²² Apart from religious usage the custom was prevalent in ancient Oriental countries of sprinkling incense or perfume upon persons of high estate as a gesture of great respect.²³ The Physiologus says that Christ descended from Heaven and snatched mankind away from the devil with the sweetness of his incarnation. This is only a variation of the conception of sweetness as an attribute of the heroic or divine being. Only der Ältere Physiologus varies this idea slightly in

²² Cf. James Frazer, The Golden Bough, (abridged version), pp.195-196, p.561, and S. M. Jackson, ed., The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, pp.468-469, vol. V.

²³ S. M. Jackson, ed., The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, vol. V, p.468.

saying that the panther betokens our Lord "ter al manchunne zu zime geladita turih tie suzi sinero genadon." The latter statement is in closer conformity with the reported nature of the panther.

It is seen that sweetness is one of the qualities which aptly express the paradoxical and divided condition of the human mind. Its natural and indispensable antipode is perhaps seen in the vinegar and gall offered to Christ on the cross -- obviously a form of irony. The antithesis is made clear in the Physiologus by the explicit statement that the dragon cannot endure the panther's sweetness.

The fearsomeness of the panther is expressed without disguise in the text's allusion to Hosea 5:14, where the wrath of Jehovah is compared to that of a rampant lion: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away, and none shall rescue him." The Physiologus substitutes the word "panther" for "lion". Here there is no loving forgiveness and no intimation of the God who is proclaimed in the New Testament. The Dicta Chrysostomi relates that this signifies the vocatio gentium, the universal judgement ushered in by Christ's descent from Heaven. This particular passage appears in very corrupt form in der jüngere Physiologus and the rhymed Physiologus, and is omitted altogether

from der Ältere Physiologus. It is tempting to ascribe this to the fact that the Old High German authors were either uncomfortable with the idea or unable to grasp its relevance.

Friedrich Wilhelm²⁴ has pointed out that this section of der jüngere Physiologus offers several examples of the homoioteleuton which is found in other parts of the same text. Examples are: quot:fruoꝛ, gnadig:statig, Christ:ist.

All but one of the texts end this section with a series of biblical quotations intended to support the symbolical interpretatio. However, der Ältere Physiologus omits the welter of quotations and closes instead with a statement which completes and rounds out the idea expressed in its introduction. The first sentence of the section is as follows: "Ein tier heizzit pantera un ist dem drachen fient." The last sentence reads: "Unde uberuand den drachin den mihchelin tieuel."

Section 3 of the texts is devoted to the unicorn. Some indication was given in Chapter II of the nature of unicorn-symbolism and only a few additional remarks will be made here. The unicorn is a "uniting symbol" par excellence. In his study of alchemical symbolism Jung has used the unicorn as a paradigm

²⁴ Wilhelm, op. cit., pp.48-49.

and has devoted an entire chapter of his book to the demonstration of the union of opposites symbolized by this animal.

The horn as an emblem of vigour and strength has a masculine character, but at the same time it is a cup, which, as a receptacle, is feminine. So we are dealing here with a "uniting symbol" that expresses the bipolarity of the archetype.²⁵

An even more important and far-reaching significance attaches to this animal as a religious symbol. The fact that such a fierce and dangerous animal becomes gentle and tame in the lap of a virgin reflects the differentiation of the God-archetype which took place in Christianity. "Of a truth God, terrible beyond measure, was peaceful and wholly tamed when he appeared before the world after having entered the body of the most blessed Virgin."²⁶ In the following paragraph Jung explains the way in which the unicorn represents both the "bipolarity" of the God-archetype and its differentiation in Christian thought:

Like this irritable beast (unicorn), he (Jehovah) reduced the world to chaos and could only be moved to love in the lap of a pure virgin. Luther was familiar with a deus absconditus. Murder, sudden death, war, sickness, crime, and every kind of abomination fall in

²⁵ Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.449.

²⁶ ibid., p.424.



Fig. 1. The Hunting of the Unicorn
Franconian tapestry (Nürnberg?), ca. 1450-1460
Bavarian National Museum, Munich

with the unity of God. If God reveals his nature and takes on definite form as a man, then the opposites in him must fly apart: here good, there evil. So it was that the opposites latent in the Deity flew apart when the Son was begotten and manifested themselves in the struggle between Christ and the devil ..."²⁷

Like the lion and the panther the unicorn thus represents not only a mental condition, but a progression of spiritual events. Perhaps most clearly of all the symbols in the Physiologus the unicorn shows the "progressive transformation" of the psyche as it occurs in religious experience. This is one of the telling examples of the meaning of the Physiologus and it helps to explain why and how it fascinated mediaeval minds to such a degree. Like all symbolism of the unconscious mind, it provides a means of "coming to terms" with that part of the human psyche which cannot be understood rationally. It is not necessary to demonstrate in greater detail the relationship of the unicorn to the archetypal ideas of Christian thought.

Section 4 is devoted to the drama of the "ydris" and the crocodile. The texts relate that the "ydris" coats itself with mud to become slippery, and then jumps into the open mouth of the crocodile as it sleeps on the river bank. When the crocodile

²⁷ Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.175.

awakens and swallows the hydra, "so bizzet siun innan unzin er stirbit."

The crocodile signifies "die hella. unte den tot. unt einen iewelichen fiant des haltares unseres trehtines." The hydra is Christ who descended into hell, destroyed its power, and arose raising many of those who had formerly been damned.

This is one of the most interesting and important of the Physiologus' symbols. It corresponds perfectly with the ancient motif of the saviour-hero who fights with the dragon, is swallowed, then overcomes the monster and escapes from its maw. The story of Jonah and the whale belongs to the same archetypal pattern. It is the theme of death and rebirth which has preoccupied mankind since time immemorial.

This is the almost worldwide myth of the typical deed of the hero. He journeys by ship, fights the sea monster, is swallowed . . . and having arrived inside the "whale-dragon", seeks the vital organ, which he proceeds to cut off or otherwise destroy. Often the monster is killed by the hero lighting a fire inside him -- that is to say, in the very womb of death he secretly creates life, the rising sun.²⁸

As in the case of the lion-symbol there is a relationship between the hero of this drama and the sun. The sun's descent every evening into the sea (a natural symbol of the unconscious

²⁸ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.347.

mind and of the maternal womb²⁹), only to be reborn in the blood-red sunrise, is the natural phenomenon to which the motif of rebirth is related. This relationship is evident from the fact that the hero who is reborn is clearly a sun-hero in primitive myths.³⁰

There is an important spiritual event reflected in this drama which gives it its universal efficacy and popularity. Psychological experiment has established by empirical means a fact which has been sensed by mankind for ages. In psychological terms this fact is the "descent" of the conscious mind into the unconscious, a state of marked mental introversion in which man seeks to know himself and searches for a deeper and more meaningful existence. It would be easy to document this experience from the lives of philosophers, poets and saints of all ages. This "descent", however, is a dangerous and often terrifying experience, for the unconscious mind may be overwhelmed and retained -- the hero may disappear forever within the monster. This has been described in psychological terms as a "disintegration which may be functionally or occasionally a real schizophrenia."³¹ Ideally, however, the conscious mind emerges from this experience, like the hero from the monster, revitalized, in a sense reborn. Jung says, "It is easy to see what the battle with the sea-monster

²⁹ Cf. ibid., p.218.

³⁰ Cf. ibid., p.346.

³¹ Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.323.



Fig. 2. The dragon spewing forth Jason, after drinking the potion prepared by Athene
Attic vase (5th century B.C.)
Etruscan Museum, Vatican

means: it is the attempt to free the ego-consciousness from the deadly grip of the unconscious."³² This archetype is again represented in Christ's interment in the sepulchre, his descent into hell, and his subsequent resurrection. In his study, Symbols of Transformation, Jung has vividly demonstrated the universal appearance of this motif in the religions and myths of the world.³³ James Frazer³⁴ likewise relates in The Golden Bough that many primitive tribes initiate boys into manhood by a ceremonial death and resurrection. Being symbolically swallowed and regurgitated by a monster, the boys enter a hut actually constructed in the likeness of a monster, and after remaining inside for several days they emerge "reborn" as men. The Siegfried legend contains the same idea. It is in a cave, like the sepulchre and the monster's stomach, an analogy of the maternal womb, that Siegfried overcomes the dragon. He emerges not only with a new life, symbolized by the treasure, but in many other ways a man transformed.

It may seem strange that the Physiologus represents Christ in this drama as a snake. In early texts the intruding animal was an ichneumon, or mongoose. This animal was noted in

³² Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.348.

³³ cf. ibid., pp.345-393.

³⁴ James Frazer, The Golden Bough, vol. XI, pp.240-241.

Egypt for its habit of destroying crocodile eggs. However, the mongoose was confused at an early date with the otter, an animal which was designated in Greek by the same word as that used for the water-snake (Indogermanic udro-).³⁵ In Latin the water-snake was natrrix. Thus it happened that the crocodile's adversary in der Ältere Physiologus is the "näter", and in the other texts, the "hydus". In spite of the etymological explanation of this usage, one is reminded of the polarity between Christ and the devil, who is normally symbolized by the snake. It must suffice to point out that the snake is an ideal "uniting symbol", combining the qualities of both Christ and Anti-Christ. Jung has indicated in Symbols of Transformation that any function of "seelische Polarität" can change its guise in a moment and appear as its opposite.³⁶

The only point to be noted here concerning the Old High German texts is the existence of several lacunae. Der Ältere Physiologus omits the phrase, "cum viderit corcodrillum in litore fluminis dormientem ore aperto," which certainly is required in some form even in the abbreviated text. However, the omission does not seriously distort the meaning. Der jüngere Physiologus is incomprehensible in its preserved form. It not only omits to

³⁵ Cf. Friedrich Kluge, ed., Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, p.541, "Otter."

³⁶ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.374-375.

relate that the "ydris" descends into the body of the crocodile, but leaves out one of the essential phrases of the interpretatio. Instead of destroying hell, Christ "zebrach elli u dei drinne tot waren." The text then relates senselessly that he "leitte si mit ime alle von der helle." The rhymed Physiologus contained only the latter lacuna and van Karajan has reconstructed the passage as follows: "unde fuor zehelle. zebrac diu mit schalle. und die sine darinne waren. die leitot er von danne zware."

In Section 5, for the first time, animals are encountered which do not symbolize Christ. These animals are sirens and centaurs (onocentauri). As creatures with human form above and animal form below, they are excellent symbolical representations of the unconscious mind, whose lowest stratum contains the instinctual forces of animal life. Moreover, the female sex of the siren is consistent with the fact that the unconscious mind itself is often (in the case of men) personified by a woman.³⁷ The siren symbolizes those "burdened" with worldly frivolities and endangered by moral sloth (mit deme slafe ir muotes). The latter is obviously a reference to the classical myth of the sirens but it can also be regarded as an expression of the regressive mental condition discussed in the last section. The

³⁷ Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp.29-30.

danger of being destroyed by the sirens and the vices which they personify is synonymous with that of succumbing to the animal forces of the unconscious psyche. The fact that der Ältere Physiologus reverses the description of the siren, giving it a bird's head and torso, and a woman's lower extremities, has been discussed and variously explained by Müllenhoff and Scherer and Friedrich Wilhelm.³⁸

A clue to the symbolism of the onocentauri is given in Jung's discussion of the motif of horse and rider.³⁹ He says, "The hero and his horse seem to symbolize the idea of man and the subordinate sphere of animal instinct."⁴⁰ Similarly, the Encyclopaedia Britannica explains that man's contest with the centaurs in classical mythology "typified the struggle between civilization and barbarism."⁴¹ However, the centaur is once again a "uniting symbol", for besides being wild, lawless, inhospitable and drunken, it was considered a god of the wind.⁴²

³⁸ Cf. Wilhelm, op. cit., p.47.

³⁹ Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.275-279.

⁴⁰ ibid., p.276.

⁴¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., vol. IV, p.669.

⁴² Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.279.

The symbolical interpretation of this creature in the Physiologus is consistent with the Christian conception of God. However, it is very interesting to note an insight here which invests the interpretation with a good deal of the original polarity of the God-archetype. The onocentaurus symbolizes "didir zuiualtic sint inir zunon un in iro herzon. unde das pilide des rehtis habin. unez an ir werchin niht eruullint."

The hyena in Section 6 is an unclean animal and must not be eaten. This is a clear reference to the ancient Hebrew laws concerning clean and unclean animals. The possibility that the laws of cleanness and uncleanness express "seelische Polarität" becomes evident in Cheyne and Sutherland's discussion of this subject. After showing that biological and physiological explanations of the law fail, they state:

Obviously, "holy and profane", "clean and unclean" is a cross-division uncleanness often seems, like holiness, to have something supernatural about it; unclean animals often seem to be "abominable" like "idols"; the uncleanness of the dead, and of women at certain times, is as likely to savour of awe as of disgust.⁴³

And again, ". . . it seems as if holiness might be explained as a relation rather than a quality."⁴⁴

⁴³ Cheyne and Sutherland, editors, Encyclopaedia Biblica, p.836.

⁴⁴ ibid., p.836.

The hyena is bisexual, "sumstunt ist iz er. wilen si."

This characteristic is a basic part of unconscious symbolism:

" . . . from time immemorial, man in his myths has expressed the idea of a male and female coexisting in the same body. Such psychological intuitions are usually projected in the form of the divine syzygy, the divine pair, or in the idea of the hermaphroditic nature of the creator . . . Then there is Hermetic philosophy with its hermaphrodite and its androgynous inner man . . ." ⁴⁵

The interpretatio of the Physiologus again shows a receptiveness to the inner polarity of the archetype. Der #lttere Physiologus brings this out clearly: "Daz bezeichnenet dider neuuedir noh ungeloubige noh rehtegeloubige nesint."

In all the texts but the latter there is an interpolation at this point. At the end of the section which deals with the hyena, the bird fulica (hereon) is mentioned and is said to be an unclean animal. In these texts the fulica represents those who are neither orthodox nor heretical, while the hyena signifies the Jews who first worshipped "the living God" and then turned to idols. Wilhelm has numbered the fulica 6a in his text of der jüngere Physiologus. M. F. Mann considers this mention of the fulica to be a corruption of the texts. He argues that it could not be distinct from the hyena as a separate section, since the texts devote Section 22 entirely to the fulica. Moreover, the latter section presents the fulica as a "clean" bird and lets it symbolize the true-believer.

⁴⁵ Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.29.

There are two further examples of textual corruption in this section. Both are attributable to the Dicta Chrysostomi. The phrase in der jüngere Physiologus, "Diu holi des tieres hine. daz ist min erbe," is attributed by the Physiologus to Isaiah but is surely taken from Jeremiah 12:8. Similarly, a biblical quotation at the end of the section is accredited to "Solomon" but is actually from James 1:8.

Section 7 introduces the wild ass, known as the onager. Looking back upon Job 6:5 ("Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?"), the texts relate that the onager never brays unless it is hungry. An exception to this rule occurs on the 25th day of March (21st day, §: Phys.) when it brays twelve times during the day and twelve times at night in order to indicate the presence of the equinox. The connecting link between these two characteristics is ingeniously provided by the interpretatio. Thus the devil brayed when he saw that darkness no longer prevailed and that he had lost his "food". Mankind had been rescued from the darkness by the light of Christ. Again the appearance of polarity is noted and most aptly in the contrast of light and darkness. The connection between Christ and the equinox, or more accurately, the zodiac (note the onager's twelve brays) is a phenomenon which Jung has observed.⁴⁶ It has been noted before that the motif of

⁴⁶ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.107

the hero's death and rebirth is closely related to the sun-cycle. This relationship is shown once more. The survival of a number of vestiges of solar worship in Christianity did not escape Jung's attention and the correspondence of Christ's twelve disciples to the twelve signs of the zodiac must be singled out here.⁴⁷ This will be encountered again in Section 12.

It is disappointing that der #ltere Physiologus, so often a superior text, is rather inadequate in this section. The interpretatio reads simply, "Ter onager bezeichenet ten fient der tac undiu naht bezeichenet didir rehto uerchon sulin. tages unde nahtes." It must, however, be remembered that it is impossible to distinguish between the errors and lacunae peculiar to the Old High German texts and those which may have existed in the authors' Latin prototypes.

The onager is followed by the monkey in all the texts except that of der #ltere Physiologus. No explanation has yet been put forward for this omission. It is possible that this section was lacking or contracted in the prototype used for the composition of der #ltere Physiologus. Some manuscripts of the Dicta Chrysostomi show a marked contraction of the section⁴⁸ and

⁴⁷ ibid, pp.106-108.

⁴⁸ Cf. M. F. Mann, Die althochdeutschen Bearbeitungen des Physiologus, p.314.

this leads one to surmise that a tendency developed to overlook the monkey or to give it short shrift. The further contraction of material in der #ltere Physiologus may be responsible for its complete omission in this text. Wilhelm has numbered this section 7a.

The monkey symbolizes the devil because of its evil appearance and its lack of a tail. The rather pleasing turn of phrase achieved in der jüngerere Physiologus is worth repeating: "doch si uorne ubile getan si. siu ist hinden michilis wirs getan." When the devil was a heavenly archangel he had a head, but lost his head (sic) when he fell and could not even console himself with the possession of a tail. This passage can be explained in the following manner: the word "head" is used figuratively to mean God (cf. Cor. 11:3, ". . . the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"). The tail refers to "the subordinate sphere of animal instinct." But the devil did not have "zagiles trost." Had he fallen to the level of an animal he would have been unconscious of his guilt. But he remained aware of his loss. His suffering was not bathed in the oblivion of moral unconsciousness. Although this cuts across the undoubted animality of the monkey, it is to be remembered that the Physiologus is referring to the anthropoid species of apes. As a tailless creature this type of ape can be regarded as the least "beastial" and most human of animals. Thus the devil is

below even the lowest level of human nature but is not a full-fledged member of the animal kingdom. He never loses his link with the Divine Nature and this is the essence of his eternal damnation, -- "so wirdit er ouch ziiungist uerdamnot." It is again the polarity of the God-archetype.

The devil's loss of his head becomes crassly humorous in the rhymed Physiologus where it is understood literally and applied to the unfortunate monkey. "Si hat houbet unde zegeles niht. vorne si schamlichen siht. si ist hinden vil wirs getan."

Section 8 concerns the elephant. Its main features are as follows: The male and female elephant have no sexual desire. When it is time for them to procreate they go into the Garden of Eden and eat of the mandragora (mandrake) - first the female, then the male. This produces the required result. When it is time for the female to give birth she wades into a lake and the birth takes place under the water so that the dragon, a great enemy of the elephant, may not threaten or rob her of her offspring. The two elephants represent Adam and Eve, the mandragora refers to the fatal apple, and the lake to the sea of trouble which deluged mankind after the fall.

The key to the interpretation of this section is found in Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse. The latter shows that the "child" which is about to be born is the hero who will save mankind. Just as in the Physiologus there is a dragon who stalks the travailing mother and seeks to devour her offspring. There is likewise a flood which the dragon "cast out of his mouth . . . that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." It was mentioned in the discussion of the hydra that the sea is a natural symbol of the unconscious mind, as well as of the maternal womb.⁴⁹ We are thus confronted with the drama of the conflict between the negative and positive forces of the unconscious. The Apocalypse shows that the dragon and the flood are in a sense identical. But the mother also is knee-deep in the flood and her offspring will be a child of the flood. In both myth and religion the archetype of the hero presents the motif of death and rebirth. The goal of rebirth first leads the hero down a regressive path until he arrives at some symbolical version of the maternal womb. The incest taboo turns this experience into one of aversion and dread (Cf. the discussion of the viper) so that the symbol of the womb is fittingly some kind of monster.

⁴⁹ Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.198 and p.389.

The regenerated hero is, in a sense, a product of the unconscious mind, for psychologically he is reborn through having experienced and overcome the dark forces of the lower psyche.

Taken purely as a psychologem the hero represents the positive, favourable action of the unconscious, while the dragon is its negative and unfavourable action - not birth but a devouring;⁵⁰

Der Altere Physiologus ends on an extremely faltering note. The author's desire to contract the material has gotten the better of him. After explaining the parallels between the elephants' procreation and Adam's fall the text concludes: "Tiu gruba uolliu uuazzeres bezeichnenet dazer chat. Saluum me fac deus." This refers to Psalm 68:2: "Saluum me fac deus, quoniam intraverunt aquae usque ad animam meam." Only the fuller passage just quoted reveals the relevance of these words to the present section.

Section 9 concerns the autula. This corruption of the word "antelope" appears in the Dicta Chrysostomi and in all the Old High German versions. The antelope is described as an animal so swift that no hunter is able to capture it. It has two sharp horns with which it saws off any boughs or branches

⁵⁰ ibid., p.374.

impeding its movement in the forest. When thirsty it goes to the river Euphrates and drinks. There it discovers the vine and begins to play with it. Its horns become so entangled that it is unable to free itself and the approaching hunter kills it. This "story" contains a moral: do not "play" with wine for "dar ana ist huorlust Der wise man enthabet sich uone wine. unt uon wibe." This is strongly reminiscent of the old German proverb, "Wein und Weiber machen alle Welt zu narren." The widely felt significance of this idea is demonstrated. There are a number of sections such as this, whose "good advice" gives them the pronounced character of a fable.⁵¹ As for the interpretationes of these sections, it would be an exaggeration to claim any close relationship to psychic phenomena. The natural material, however, is not without significance.

The motif of embracing and entwining is often found in the sun myths and rebirth myths, as in the story of Sleeping Beauty, or the legend of the girl who was imprisoned between the bark and the wood of a tree. A primitive myth tells of a sun-hero who has to be freed from a creeping plant.⁵²

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⁵¹ Cf. Karl Meuli, "Herkunft und Wesen der Fabel," Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde, 50. Jahrgang, 1954, Heft 2, passim.

⁵² Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.242.

The motif of devouring which Frobenius has shown to be one of the commonest components of the sun myth, is closely connected with embracing and entwining.⁵³

In the Physiologus the "seelischer Vorgang" (career of the hero) is interrupted and the "hero", though "giwarnot . . . mit allen dugeden", perishes, presumably because of his intemperance. Thus far the archetype is still in evidence. The author of the Physiologus now makes the "story" relevant to his audience by the ingenious device of turning it into a fable.

It is noteworthy that at the end of this section in the Dicta Chrysostomi there is a fragment of the older Latin Physiologus. The latter dealt with stones and plants as well as animals. The fragment begins: "Sunt autem duo lapides ignari masculus et femina." Der jüngere Physiologus turns this into: "Wib unt guot man. si sint als ein winchelstein in der heiligen Christenheit. manige liute durch wib unte durch win. werdent uerlorn." Wilhelm says of this version:

Der deutsche Uebersetzer suchte einen Sinn in das Sinnlose hineinzulegen und mag sich da dunkel an Stellen wie Js. 9, 14; 28, 16f; Ps. 118, 22; Röm. 9, 33; Eph. 2, 20; 1. Petr. 2, 6 erinnern haben. Ich zweifle aber, dass in seinem lat. Physiologus Text "angulares" oder "angularii," wie Lauchert S. 288 Anm. vermutet, gestanden hat. Die Ueberlieferung ignari ist zu einstimmig.⁵⁴

⁵³ ibid., p.245

⁵⁴ Wilhelm, op. cit., pp.49-50.

Der #ltere Physiologus omits this incongruous passage.

Section 10 deals with the fish called serra. It is related that the serra has long spines (dorne #. Phys., spinas, D.C.) which is apparently meant to indicate that its fins are large. When it sees a ship upon the sea it spreads its fins and sails after the ship. Der #ltere Physiologus contains a unique observation to the effect that it actually imitates the sails of the ship (vnde uuil die segela antderon.) After a time, however, the serra tires and giving up the "contest" returns to its former place. The sea signifies the world and the ship is the prophets and apostles who journeyed through the world and conquered it. The serra represents those who are unsteady of purpose (unstades muodes #. Phys.) and who fail to reach the heavenly goal because of their lassitude.

It is possible to connect this section with archetypal ideas only in a loose way and there remains a certain element of doubt as to whether this is at all justified. In archetypal constellations the sea is universally equated with the unconscious mind and the maternal womb.⁵⁵ It is the source of renewal and rebirth. The archetype of rebirth is intimately associated with the daily sun-cycle which begins when the sun rises out of the sea

⁵⁵ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.198-200.

and ends with its return there. However, in the present section, the journey of the ship across the sea also represents a cycle -- the human life-cycle. Moreover, it would not be amiss to associate the career of Christ and his disciples, in an archetypal context, with the sun-cycle. (Cf. lion, onager, hydra). The ship and the journey across the sea therefore coincide in a loose sense with the archetypal motif of death and rebirth -- the conquest of the lower psyche, and in religious terms, the ultimate attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven. When the symbolism of the ship is understood in this way, the Physiologus' interpretatio of the serra's behaviour is perfectly logical and coherent. Those who do not keep pace and do not proceed towards their goal flounder about behind and become the prey of their lower nature.

Should this interpretation of the serra seem extravagant, the section can be related to the mediaeval nautical topos⁵⁶ which has survived to modern times.⁵⁷ But again the question arises: whence did this topos originate? Curtius himself has related a number of mediaeval literary topoi to Jung's conception of unconscious archetypes.⁵⁸ If in many cases the nautical topos

⁵⁶ Cf. E. R. Curtius, European Literature and The Latin Middle Ages, pp.128-130.

⁵⁷ Cf. Tennyson's poem, Crossing the Bar.

⁵⁸ Curtius, op. cit., p.101 and p.105.

had its prototype in classical literature, it is nevertheless impossible to account for the beautiful closing lines of Ezzo's Cantilena as a bequest of ancient literature:

O crux salvatoris, du unser segelgerte bist.
 disiu werlt elliu ist daz meri, min trehtin ruoder unte vere
 diu rehten werch unser segelseil, diu rihtent uns di vart heim.
 der segel de ist der ware geloube, der hilfet uns der zuo wole.
 der heilige atem ist der wint, der vuoret unsih an den rehten sint
 himelriche ist unser heimuot, da sculen wir lenten, gote lob.⁵⁹

Section 11 of the Physiologus brings us to the viper and it is in many ways unique. It is binary in form consisting of two diametrically opposite parts. In view of the importance which has been given to the concepts of "conflicting opposites" and "uniting symbols", this feature is of great significance. The snake is, as we know, one of the most widely recognized uniting symbols. It symbolizes the archetypal opposites of libido and generation on the one hand, and destructiveness and death on the other. Indeed, the mythical and religious hero has manifold characteristics which link him with his opposite, the snake, and even Jesus compared himself to Moses' healing snake. (John 3:14).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Rupp, op. cit., p.55

⁶⁰ A full treatment of this idea is found in Jung's Symbols of Transformation, pp.367-368, p.374, and p.382.

Section 11 opens surprisingly with a biblical quotation. The verse "O generation of vipers . . ." (Math. 3:7) indicates the evil nature of the snake and its antipodal relationship to Christ. It is followed by the extraordinary story of the vipers' copulation which results in the death of both partners. Inserting his head into the female's mouth, for she conceives in this manner, the unfortunate male is decapitated (emasculated according to D.C. and #. Phys.) due to his mate's concupiscence. "So stirbet er." When the young have grown in the mother's womb they find their way into the world by biting through her flank. "So irstirbet ouch siu." This pertains to the parricidal Jews who killed their father, Christ, and their mother, the Holy Church. The rhymed Physiologus jumbles this story making the female lose her head and omitting to dispose of the male. Apart from this it coincides exactly with the summary just given.

The similarity of this story to that of the hydra and crocodile is obvious and there are strong reasons for associating it with the same archetypal motif. There is a universal feeling that parents are reborn in their children. The present story looks a great deal like the death of the father and his rebirth in his offspring. The unusual conception and delivery of the young

vipers, and the death of their mother support this idea. The archetypal nature of the hero's struggle with the "Terrible Mother", the "whale-dragon" which has devoured him, has been explained in previous sections. It has been seen that this struggle leads either to the death of the monster, as in universal myth, or to the death of the hero himself as in the section on the antelope.⁶¹ The conflict and danger which fill the drama of the hero's struggle are a result of the "incest-taboo", a theme of great urgency in Greek tragedy. The dread attaching to this idea turns the loving mother of the child's world into a "Terrible Mother" for the hero seeking rebirth.⁶² On the most banal and obvious level the hero's rebirth signifies the transition from the childhood to the adult psyche.

One would expect the birth of the vipers to be related to Christ's resurrection. That this is not the case can only be explained by the fact that the section was preconceived, on the basis of the biblical quotation, as a demonstration of the serpent's evil nature.

⁶¹ Cf. also Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.349.

⁶² Cf. ibid., p.62.



Fig. 3. The crucified serpent, illustrating Moses' brazen serpent as a prefiguration of Christ
From a manuscript of the 16th century

Part Two of Section 11 similarly begins with an introductory Bible verse. The second part is actually set off in der jüngere Physiologus by the beginning of a new line, just as if it were a separate section. Now the "impossible" happens and the snake becomes an undisguised symbol of the hero. Faintly, man's pristine image of the God-archetype emerges with its paradoxical oneness. The Bible verse gives us once more the key for what follows: "ir sult wesen fruoet. so die natrun." (Math.10:16 . . . be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves). As in several earlier sections there is number symbolism here corresponding to the archetype of the Trinity; the snake is now said to have three characteristics. The overall structure of the section now becomes evident. If it is not possible to speak of a "stroke of genius" in connection with the Physiologus, this part is a stroke of "unconscious inspiration". By dividing his presentation of the snake into a formal "three and one" (the threefold entity of the divine snake and the single entity of the evil snake), the author has perfectly adapted the symbol to the Christian differentiation of the God-archetype.

Now the theme of rebirth comes forth more clearly. When the snake ages, its sight diminishes; but observe what it does! (sed vide quid faciat). It fasts for forty days, then crawls through a hole in a rock. The old skin is sloughed off and the

snake emerges rejuvenated. This is not an isolated expression of the rebirth motif as the casting of skin, for it occurs elsewhere in myth.⁶³ The archetype is even clearer in the twin ideas of fasting and crawling through a narrow hole. The latter can be regarded as a reference to the maternal womb and the former is a purposeful fortification against the threat of the "Terrible Mother".⁶⁴ The Physiologus shows the significance of this "story" simply by citing the Bible verse, ". . . straight is the gate [angusta porta Vulg.] and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life . . ." In the context of archetypal ideas nothing could be more logical and coherent.

The second and third characteristics of the snake are not quite so highly charged. The second is that the snake spews forth its venom before drinking. This is in harmony with the conception of the snake as a "uniting symbol". It is said that we should imitate this characteristic and rid ourselves of our vices before entering the Church to drink "daz geistliche uuazzar." The third characteristic is as follows: the snake is afraid of a naked person but when it meets a clothed person it attacks him.

⁶³ ibid., p.269, p.348 and p.364.

⁶⁴ Jung shows a clear relationship between fasting and the idea of rebirth in Symbols of Transformation, p.335.

This signifies that the devil had no power over our first parents when they went about innocently unclad in the Garden of Eden. This can be thought of as a reference to the lack of moral consciousness in man's primitive state. The dark forces personified by the snake remained devoid of any moral significance until the conflict of opposites arose. Psychologically this development is very aptly portrayed in Genesis by the idea that the forbidden apple was from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the latter characteristic the snake reverts to the opposite function of the archetype so that it is not consistent with the context in which it occurs. If the above interpretation is valid this must be considered a defect.

Section 11 is of singular quality in yet another way. The second part employs a novel form of expression. It has the attitude and expression of a sermon. The First Person of the verb is used (wirsculn die natrun sus piledon) and the Latin text employs the Hortative Subjunctive (imitemur et nos huiuscemodi draconem). Thus the fable-form observed in the section on the antelope is here excelled in directness and urgency of presentation.

This section of der jüngere Physiologus closes with a passage which exists neither in der Ältere Physiologus nor in the

Dicta Chrysostomi. Were it not for this isolation and the fact that it is an addition (the snake was said to have three characteristics, not four), the above interpretation of Section 11, at least insofar as its structural significance is concerned, would collapse. Under the circumstances, it is possible to refer to der Ältere Physiologus as the superior text. It is said that when the snake is in danger it shields its head with its tail. We should do the same. When the devil threatens us we should offer him our body but should save our head which is Christ. The latter phrase is a "corporal metaphor" such as is common in mediaeval literature.⁶⁵ The picture emerging is that of a serpent forming a circle with its body, somewhat like the Midgard Serpent of Norse mythology. This picture was widely used in alchemy as a symbol of wholeness.⁶⁶ It seems highly likely that the appearance of the identical symbol in the Physiologus is connected with the same unconscious archetype.

Wilhelm⁶⁷ has linked this passage of der jüngere Physiologus with the Latin metrical Physiologus known as the Physiologus Theobaldi. He assumes that the author of der jüngere Physiologus may have supplemented his text of the Dicta Chrysostomi with the latter text.

⁶⁵ Cf. Curtius, op. cit., p.136.

⁶⁶ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, plates on pp.45, 53 & 99

⁶⁷ Cf. Wilhelm, op. cit., p.50.

Section 12 has the rejuvenation of the lizard (lacerta) as its theme. The motif of rebirth is now more clearly related to the sun-cycle. When the lizard ages it loses its sight so that it can no longer see the sun. To remedy this condition it seeks a wall which faces the east, crawls into a hole in the wall, and peeps out towards the rising sun. This heals its eyes. The Latin text states that its eyes are reopened and it is renewed: "apertis oculis renovatur sic." Employing the Second Person of the verb, in the style of a sermon, the Dicta Chrysostomi and der Altere Physiologus proceed somewhat as follows: "You likewise, O Christian man, when the eyes of your heart are darkened, - seek out a place and turn towards the East, to the Sun of Righteousness your Creator, that his spirit may shine in your heart." The archetype of the hero with its universal theme of regression and rebirth has been discussed in numerous previous chapters (cf. esp. lion, hydra and viper) so that it need not be repeated here. It is sufficient to add that a noteworthy feature of the present story is the relation of the rebirth motif to an inner process. The healing of the lizard -- the idea of rebirth -- pertains to the heart of man. "cuius nomen oriens dicitur quatinus oriatur in corde tuo."

A strange departure occurs at this point in der jüngere Physiologus. Instead of the phrase quoted above, which expresses a wish or an exhortation, der jüngere Physiologus says: "unte scol . . . bitten in daz er unseriu herce erluhte." One wonders if it is conceivable that the author has mistaken "oriatur" for "oretur". On the other hand, his Latin text may have contained this variation. Another remarkable feature of this passage is the fact that a phrase appears twice which interrupts the presentation and has the effect of a refrain. It reminds us of a hymn or liturgical chant:

. . . . so scol er suochen eine vernunftige stat.
 unte scol sich zuo christe becheren. der sunno unde
licht ist alles rehtes, des name heizit oriens. unt
 bitten in daz er unseriu herce erluhte. der sunne
ist alles rehtes. daz ouch uns der sine gnade irouge.
 der alle die irluhtet die zuo dirre werlt geborn werdent.

This section stresses how important sun-metaphors were to the early Christians, and has a strong bearing upon the relation of the Christ-archetype to the sun-cycle. It is reported by Eusabius of Alexandria that some Christians actually worshipped the rising sun until well into the Fifth Century, while St. Augustine found it necessary to remonstrate against the habit of identifying Christ with the sun.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.106-107.

The Latin text and der #ltere Physiologus carry the sermon-like expression of the previous section into the form of direct address. They have the admonishing tone which is to be associated with the Busspredigt,

Der #ltere Physiologus breaks off here in the middle of a sentence. The Dicta Chrysostomi, der j#ngere Physiologus, and the metrical version of the latter will henceforth provide our source material.

Section 13 concerns the stag. This animal has two characteristics which are very similar. When it finds a hole in which a snake lies concealed it blows in its breath and forces the creature out. It then tramples the snake to death and swallows it. Spitting out the snake's venom it becomes very thirsty and seeks pure water. As a result of this experience it loses its hair and horns. This symbolizes the penitent who seeks the pure water of Holy Doctrine and does penance to atone for his sins.

The second characteristic is as follows: the stag kills the serpent wherever it finds it and immediately after doing so goes to the mountains to graze. We should do likewise. When we perceive that the devil is trying to corrupt us we should

"kill him" and seek Christ, the pasture of our souls (die fuore unser sele).

This section can be understood as follows: psychologically, the snake symbolizes the unconscious. To Jung the theme of snake-eating often indicates the unwelcome or suppressed unconscious mind which thus insinuates its way into consciousness.⁶⁹ The integration of unconscious contents is a desirable development with a healing effect, but this presupposes that the animal forces of the lower psyche have been sublimated. The vomiting of the snake's poison provides a parallel to the process of sublimation. The deer's loss of hair and horns is the sacrifice which one must make in order to grow beyond oneself. The integration of unconscious contents often requires a painful facing of unwelcome facts. In myth this is frequently represented by the symbolism of fire-making and a fierce heat which causes the hero to be reborn with the loss of his hair.⁷⁰ The same idea of scorching heat is present in the Christian concept of Purgatory.

Having experienced and come to terms with the unconscious, and having left the animal instincts behind, the "regenerated"

⁶⁹ ibid., p.379.

⁷⁰ Cf. ibid., p.210, p.245, and p.347.

man is indeed one who can ascend the heights and "graze upon the pasture of the soul."

Section 14 deals with the caprea or roe. It is related that the caprea lives and grazes in mountain valleys. It has very keen sight and looking down from the heights it is able to distinguish at a great distance between hunters and travellers. Our Lord too loves high mountains, i.e. the patriarchs, prophets and apostles. He grazes in Christianity on the works of holy people (cf. Math. 25:35). Our Lord also has keen sight and perceives things both high and low (cf. I Samuel 2:3 and Ps.138:6). He told us to seek the mountains, i.e. the Holy Scripture that we might see what pleases our Creator in us. Like the caprea's ability to see the hunters, our Lord saw from afar that Judas would betray him (Math. 26:21 and Luke 22:48).

There is little in this section which can be related specifically to archetypal ideas. However, the distinction between "high" and "low" is of interest. This relation, which is constantly encountered in religious ideas, is applicable as well to the human psyche. The lowest stratum is the collective

unconscious which contains the instinctuality of animal life. The conscious mind is the uppermost storey and the integration of unconscious contents is often symbolically represented as a raising of something from the depths.⁷¹ It is a universal religious concept that God is the High One. In his study of religious symbolism Edwyn Bevan says:

If there are two characteristics upon which men all over the world from the earliest stages of human thought traceable, have agreed in attributing to the Chief Being of the Universe, they are height and length of life.⁷²

So much did the attribute of height lend itself to man's conception of God, that the relationship of high and low became inextricably involved linguistically in the expression of value. For example, the word "superior" is derived from the Latin word meaning "higher". To "excel" comes from the Latin "celsus" meaning "high". Further examples are given by Bevan.⁷³

This section of der jüngere Physiologus contains a somewhat surprising misunderstanding. The Latin text states that the mountain valleys signify the church "because of various passages such as in the Song of Solomon" (cf. 2:8), (per diversa loca . . . ut in canticis canticorum). Der jüngere Physiologus

⁷¹ Cf. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p.148, and Symbols of Transformation, p.255.

⁷² Edwyn Bevan, Symbolism and Belief, p.28.

⁷³ ibid., pp.28-29.

renders the phrase per diversa loca as follows: "Diu telir die inden bergen sint. die bezechenent die christenheit. diu in mislichen stetin ist."

Section 15 recounts the diabolical trickery of the fox. When it is hungry and cannot find food it rolls about in the clay, prostrates itself, ceases breathing, and is to all appearances dead. Perceiving the fox dead, some incautious birds alight upon its carcass, and of course meet their unhappy end between its jaws. As might be expected, the fox's cunning trickery represents the devil's game. Those who live for worldly things will enter the devil's gullet. It is interesting that the motif of being devoured, which was encountered in earlier sections, is here related directly to the descent into hell: "si sculen uaren in die erde." The meaning of this is quite explicit and needs no explanation. Because of the development which the figure of the fox received in later literature, it is impossible for the modern person to read this section without experiencing the personality of the waggish rogue, Reynard. This development is itself instructive of the elastic personality of the devil. In the transition from the diabolical fox of the Physiologus to the arch-trickster of later tradition, one sees the emergence of a

figure whose utterly paradoxical nature, a combination of malevolent rogery and triumphant human wit, has fascinated mankind until the present day.

Section 16 tells the story of the beaver's self-mutilation. This is an interesting mixture of fact and myth which illustrates in an apt way the medial position and mediating function of the Physiologus between the external world of natural fact and the inner world of the psyche. The beaver is a source of the glandular secretion known as castor which is found in "zwei kleine(n) Beutel(n) am After dieses Tieres."⁷⁴ This fluid is employed in medicine and perfumery. The Physiologus relates that when the beaver sees the hunter pursuing it for this medicinal fluid, "so bizzit er die gemahte abe", and leaves these objects behind for the hunter. Through this sacrifice the beaver saves its life. This example should be followed by those who would live purely with God. They should cut all uncleanness from their hearts and bodies and leave it to the devil, which is his due. This act of self-mutilation is of considerable significance when considered as a sacrifice.

⁷⁴ Kolloff, op. cit., p.233.

The annual sacrifice of a maiden to the dragon is perhaps the ideal sacrifice on a mythological level. In order to mollify the wrath of the Terrible Mother the most beautiful girl was sacrificed as a symbol of man's concupiscence. Milder forms were the sacrifice of the first-born and of various domestic animals. The alternative ideal is self-castration, of which a milder form is circumcision. Here, at least only a modicum is sacrificed, which amounts to replacing the sacrifice by a symbolical act. By sacrificing these valued objects of desire and possession, the instinctive desire, or libido, is given up in order that it may be regained in new form. Through sacrifice man ransoms himself from the fear of death and is reconciled to the demands of Hades.⁷⁵

Jung, moreover, refers to the Attis myth in which the hero, driven mad by the incest-taboo, mutilated himself in this manner. Hence a ritual act of self-castration was practised in the Attis-Cybele cult.⁷⁶

"Phisiologus zellit daz diu ameize driu geslahte habe."
The ant is treated in Section 17 and again the central number symbolism of Christian doctrine is seen in the ant's three characteristics.

⁷⁵ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.430-431.

⁷⁶ ibid., p.204 and pp.423-426.

natural	spiritual
<p>1. The ants carry corn to their "nest" in single file. As the "empty" ants go out they meet the carriers coming in. They do not rob them of their corn but go forth to gather their own.</p>	<p>The parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins (Math. 25:1 seq.) -- an allegory of the Kingdom of Heaven.</p>
<p>2. After gathering their corn, the ants cut each corn in two so that it will not germinate and spoil during the winter.</p>	<p>One must divide the literal from the allegorical in Holy Scripture. (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6 . . . for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life). Those who do not accept the figurative meaning of the Scripture cannot understand the story of Jacob and his use of the rods to increase his sheep. (Gen. 30:37) To those who understand the spirit this refers to "geistlich wuocher". The Jews accepted only the literal meaning. They chose the chaff and lost the corn.</p>
<p>3. The ant has a keen sense of smell and by this means can distinguish between the barley and the wheat. Since barley is but food for beasts the ant carries away the wheat.</p>	<p>The man of God also avoids barley because this refers to the doctrines of the heretics. Well-known hereitics named.</p>

The second characteristic with its interpretatio is of special interest in that it states the nature and theme of the Physiologus itself. One notes also the well-known metaphor

involving the chaff and the corn which is met in the Bible itself. It is particularly apt in the present story. This metaphor occurs elsewhere in mediaeval German literature and to give one example, the following verses occur in a poem by the Middle High German poet, der Kanzler:

swer helwen gar uz swunge,
 der same wurde guot,
 doch waere hufe kleine:
 der helwen ist ze vil.⁷⁷

It is, of course, a criticism of the poet's age. The few very good people whom der Kanzler knows are contrasted with the great number of evil people.

Wilhelm postulates a lacuna in this section of der jüngere Physiologus. However, the omission is not sufficiently serious to interfere with the meaning.

Section 18 relates that the hedgehog is accustomed to go into the vineyard at vintage time. There it ~~climbs~~ on to a vine, shakes off a number of grapes, rolls about in the grapes so that they cling to its quills, and thus carries them away for its young. The hedgehog is the devil and the vineyard is man's

⁷⁷ Carl von Kraus, ed., Deutsche Liederdichter des 13. Jahrhunderts, vol. I, p.186.

"geistlich wuoher". A man should guard well his vineyard lest the devil make off with the harvest leaving the garden "uppich unt itel . . . guoter dinge."

Of interest is the appearance of the vine as a symbol of the spiritual life. Example could be heaped upon example to illustrate the conception of the tree or vine, or both together, as symbols of life and generative power.⁷⁸ In St. John's Gospel Christ himself is said to have state: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." (John 15:1). Moreover wine, because of its contrast with water, is a very suitable symbol of the higher life. Jung brings out the widely felt significance of this symbol:

There is a popular saying that wine "fortifies", though not in the same sense as food "sustains." It stimulates and "makes glad the heart of man" by virtue of a certain volatile substance which has always been called "spirit." It is thus, unlike the innocuous water, an "inspiring" drink, for a spirit or god dwells within it and produces the ecstasy of intoxication. The wine miracle at Cana was the same as the miracle in the temple of Dionysus, and it is profoundly significant that, on the Damascus Chalice, Christ is enthroned among vine tendrils like Dionysus himself.⁷⁹

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Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.233.

79 Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.253. Cf. also E. M. Howse, A Link with Early Christians, Winnipeg Free Press, March 27, 1959, p.17.

Section 19 brings us to the eagle. In Psalm 102 [Vulg.], says the Physiologus, David asserts that a man's "youth" is renewed like that of the eagle. Der jüngere Physiologus erroneously refers to Psalm 101. When the eagle ages its wings become heavy and its sight dim. It renews itself by flying to such a height that its wings are singed by the sun, whereupon it plunges into a fountain of pure water below. It repeats this action three times and is then immediately rejuvenated. A man should do likewise if he has not purified himself of his sins, for "except a man be born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5). Through the sacrament of baptism man can be rejuvenated like the eagle. For the significance of this quotation in relation to archetypal ideas reference should be made to Jung's discussion of the same passage in Symbols of Transformation.⁸⁰

The Physiologus takes the second characteristic of the eagle from St. Augustine's commentary on Psalm 102, acknowledging its source. When the eagle ages its upper bill grows so large that it is unable to eat. It then goes to a rock and breaks off its beak, whereupon it is rejuvenated. The overgrown bill

⁸⁰ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.224-226.

is man's compounded sins and he should rid himself of them on the rock which is Christ.

The Physiologus accredits Jerome (commentary on Isaiah 40:27) for the third characteristic of the eagle. It is merely a variation of the first characteristic. After burning its wings in the sun the eagle falls into its nest and is cared for by its young until its feathers grow once more, whereupon it is renewed.

The dominant features of this section, according to the criteria of the present study, are the recurrence of the number three, the burning motif which was alluded to in the section on the stag, and the symbolical sacrifice. The eagle's loss of feathers and bill are a parallel to the stag's loss of hair and antlers. It can be regarded as the sacrifice through which one "is reconciled to the demands of Hades" (cf. section on beaver). It may also be considered highly significant that the eagle burns its wings in the heat of the sun rather than in the fires of Hell. Hence the sun, in accordance with the archetypal God-image, is here a uniting symbol, a combination of opposites which were polarized in Christian thought.

Section 20 deals with the pelican and its great love for its offspring. When the young birds are growing in the nest they bite their father and mother. The parents become angry and

retaliate, biting the young birds so fiercely that they die. After three days the mother relents and cutting open her breast sprinkles her blood over the lifeless brood. This revives them. This story refers to the relationship between God and man. The children of God rebelled against their Creator (Isaiah 1:2) and "sluogen . . . in unter siniu ougen." But God deigned to sacrifice himself on the cross and thereby gave man life and wholeness (so wurtin wir erchukchet unte geheilet).

This section contains the core of Christian symbolism. The symbolism of the sacrifice was alluded to in the sections on the stag and eagle. The sacrifice which took place in Christianity transcended earlier forms of sacrifice in that the hero voluntarily sacrificed his own life in order to give eternal life (rebirth) to mankind.⁸¹ The great importance attaching to the Christian Sacrament of the Eucharist is derived from the idea that Christ left behind his blood for mankind -- a symbol of the new life and of his eternal presence among men.⁸² Blood serves as a symbol of life. In the Siegfried legend the hero understands the language of the birds after drinking the blood of the dragon and thus learns of the design against his life. The

⁸¹ Cf. ibid., p.431.

⁸² Cf. Jung, Psychology and Religion, pp.414-415.



Fig. 4. Ewald Mataré, Pelican, Detail on a door
of the Cologne Cathedral

partaking of the dragon's blood endows him with "a peculiar relationship to nature, which he now dominates by knowledge."⁸³

Section 21 is concerned with the owl, a creature which symbolizes the Jews because it is unclean and loves darkness more than light. Thus the Jews rejected the light which was Christ and chose the darkness of error. One notes the recurrence of the contrast of light and darkness which has been encountered above as an archetypal motif. Eduard Kolloff has given an interesting historical summary of the varying concepts surrounding this bird. Although it has been regarded for the most part as an evil creature, it was nonetheless a symbol of wisdom and science in ancient Greece, and was dedicated to Athene, the goddess of art and culture (cf. Fig.2).⁸⁴

Section 22, one of the shortest sections of the texts, deals with the fulica. It is not possible to identify this bird with certainty. Although the name suggests the coot or Wasserhuhn, the Physiologus presumably refers to the heron.⁸⁵ In contrast to the spurious presentation of the fulica in Section 6, the bird is here a model of intelligence, stability and abstinence. It

⁸⁴

Cf. Kolloff, op. cit., pp.250-252.

⁸⁵

Cf. Kolloff, op. cit., p.245.

eats no flesh meat and never roams away from its fixed abode. This is an example for man who should never stray from the true belief and should nourish himself only on the sustenance of eternal life.

It is not profitable to seek deeper layers of meaning in this section. As in the section on the owl there is a lack of imaginative material and "dramatic development." One need only think of the sections on the elephant and hydra, with their movement, conflict, and depth of meaning, to perceive the contrast.

Section 23 begins, "Ein uogil ist unde heizit perdix rephuon." The partridge is an example of fraudulent cunning. It is in the habit of stealing the eggs of other partridges (sic) and hatching them in its own nest (cf. Jer. 17:11). However, when the chicks hear their true mother's voice they return to her immediately leaving their false mother with an empty nest for her trouble. Naturally the partridge is the devil who leads away God's children "unte bruote sie mit manigen achusten." However, when these children hear the Holy Word they return to their true parents -- to God and the Holy Church.

This section has a decidedly archetypal character in the conception of the Holy Church as the true mother of man. The

hero of myth is always one who has been reborn. This idea was conveyed in primitive myth by attributing two mothers to the hero. The dual mother motif, which is perhaps still visible in archaic form in the story of the partridge was developed by Christianity into the idea of dual birth.⁸⁷ This dual birth pertained not only to the hero himself but to all mankind. But rebirth always requires a return to the mother, at least in symbolical form, and in psychological terms this is regression. The ideal process which may now take place is described by Jung:

Because the incest taboo opposes the libido and blocks the path to regression, it is possible for the libido to be canalized into the mother analogies thrown up by the unconscious. In that way the libido becomes progressive again, and even attains a level of consciousness higher than before.⁸⁸

The conception of the Christian Church as a mother is therefore in keeping with one of the central archetypes of the collective unconscious -- the longing for regeneration and a transcendent "self."

The object of interest in Section 24 is the ostrich. A survey will be facilitated by the tabular method of presentation:

87 ibid., p.322.

88 ibid., p.213.

natural	symbolical
1. Recognizes from the stars when it should lay its eggs. It is in the time of the high summer heat.	We men should recognize our time and turn the eyes of our hearts to God.
2. Digs a hole in the sand and leaves its eggs there. Does not return to its eggs because of its forgetfulness.	We should forget and leave behind us the evil which we have done. Our Lord said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
3. The eggs are hatched by the warmth of the sun.	

To recognize an archetypal content in this section it is necessary to look more closely into the biblical quotation above. The implication is that a man must forsake family and friends in order to be "reborn." In myth and religion the idea of rebirth is commonly accompanied by a motif of wandering and suffering. The hero has "nowhere to lay his head."⁸⁹ Both Christ and Buddha cut themselves off from family and friends and went into the world in order to seek their own destiny. The significance of this motif and its relation to the idea of rebirth is made evident by Jung in his analysis of the dreams of a subject in the grip of childhood and its complex relationships. The necessity of overcoming the infantile relationship to the parents,

⁸⁹ Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.157.

as a prerequisite to any higher development, was manifested symbolically in a series of dreams about a "mythical" hero who left the ancestral hearth to wander about the world in search of himself.⁹⁰

Section 25 is the most straightforward section in the texts. The bird dealt with is the hoopoe (Germ. Wiedehopf, Lat. upupa). When the hoopoe ages its sight is diminished but its offspring take it beneath their wings and salve its eyes until its sight is restored. This story recommends the precept of honouring one's father and mother.

The subject of Section 26 is the bird caradrius (Lat. caladrius). The original identity of this bird is not certain and it is known only that it was an unclean bird in the Old Testament. Kolloff⁹¹ believed that the German authors of the Middle Ages associated it with the crested lark. The following table provides a survey:

90

Cf. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp.310-312.

91

Cf. Kolloff, op. cit., p.250.

natural	symbolical
1. It is an unclean bird.	
2. Its offal is good for healing defects of the eyes.	
3. It is pure white in color and has no blackness anywhere	Christ had no sin and the devil "nevant in Christo nieht."
4. With this bird one can tell whether a sick man will die or recover. In the former case the bird turns its face away from the man. In the latter, it places its bill on the man's mouth, takes his sickness on itself, then flies up to the sun and purifies itself. The man immediately recovers.	Christ came to the sick nation of the Jews. They rejected him and he turned away and healed the Gentiles by taking their sins on himself.

A recurrence of archetypal motifs mentioned in earlier sections is noted in the sun-symbolism which is here connected with the idea of purification, and in the light-darkness contrast evidenced in the whiteness of the bird and of Christ as compared to the blackness of the devil. The most significant passage is that comprising the last sentence of the texts. For this reason the versions of both the Dicta Chrysostomi and der jüngere Physiologus are given. The latter text says:

Den daz umpillich dunche. daz man chriſten zuo den
 tieren zelle. zuo lewen. unt ze trakchin. unte ze
 aran. unt zuo anderen tieren. die wizen daz. so

man guotiu dinch meinet. so bezeichenent si christ.
so siu ubeliu dinch unt starchiu meinent so bezeich-
enent siden tiufal.

The latin text is more explicit and to the point:

Nam si est aliquis dubitans cur immunda animalia ad
Christi significationem referantur ut serpens. draco.
leo. et aquila et his similia. sciat quod quando
fortitudinem et regnum Christum. quando vero
rapacitatem diabolum significant.

This one sentence provides considerable insight into
the mind of the author. On the one hand he discerns the one-
ness of nature and on the other he is ready to interpret its
dual aspect. Even the unclean animals, the snake and lion
et al., have "guotiu dinch", described by the Latin text as
fortitudo et regnum, which give them something in common with
Christ. At the same time they have "ubeliu dinch" (rapacitas)
which make them devilish. The paradox of nature presents
itself to the author's mind as a possible stumbling block, and
he must apologize and explain to his audience. Nature, and
therefore the symbols borrowed from nature, are paradoxical
but their meaning to a Christian is clear. With the sure
knowledge of the conflict of opposites, in religious terms the
conflict of Christ and Antichrist, and in psychological terms,
of conscious and unconscious experience, the Christian rises

above the oneness of nature. Like the hero Siegfried he "dominates nature by knowledge." This represents a monumental development in the history of man, a development which was, of course, not necessarily bestowed by Christianity, but rather is expressed with exceptional clearness in Christian dogma. It is this thought for which the author of the Physiologus seems to be paving the way, although his level of perception is naturally somewhat different from that of the modern view. His perception is intuitive rather than scientific. This passage does more than all else to establish the Physiologus firmly within the frame of reference set forth in Chapter II. Furthermore, it fully justifies the procedure which has been used in interpreting the individual animals in the present chapter.

Section 27, the last section of the texts, reaches a climax in its treatment of one of the best-known of all rebirth symbols, the phoenix. The section opens with the Bible verse (John 10:13) in which Christ speaks thus of his life: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The phoenix, says the Physiologus, is a bird which lives in India. When it is five hundred years old it flies into the forests of Lebanon, fills its wings with spices which grow there, and makes a nest

from the fragrant herbs. It then gathers a quantity of dry wood and places it beneath the nest. Flying up to the sun it takes some fire and puts it into the dry wood. Then slipping into the nest it is burned to ashes. On the first day thereafter a worm emerges from the ashes, on the second day the worm becomes a bird, and on the third day the bird becomes a new phoenix. This bird signifies Christ whose wings are full of the sweet odor of the Old and New Testaments. The Dicta Chrysostomi closes with an allusion to the parable of the Kingdom of Heaven related in the Gospel of St. John (13:52): "Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The Latin text gives an elliptical version of this passage which the Old High German author apparently failed to associate with its source. He translate: "er (Christus) ist wol gelerit. unt ist meister in himilriche. want er wol bewarit unt uobit niuwe unt alt ewa."

This section is closely related to the archetypal motif of rebirth and the means of attaining rebirth is very similar to that in the section on the eagle. The sun is the source, not only of new life, but also of the "fatal" combustion which precedes rebirth. This recalls the lion, lizard, and eagle, and the

antithesis inherent in sun-symbolism. The archetypal relationship between the idea of rebirth and the sun-cycle was indicated in connection with the hydra and wild ass. It has been shown that sub-symbolism conforms to man's primordial God-image with its paradoxical union of opposites. In the section on the lizard we have seen that the importance attaching to sun and light metaphors in the language of early Christianity was sometimes not distinguishable from actual solar-worship, a survival of the archaic God-archetype. Jung refers to the hidden paradox in man's ideas of God, and the aptness of fire as an expression of this paradox:

The unquenchable fire . . . is a well-known attribute of the Deity, not only in the Old Testament, but also as an allegoria Christi in an uncanonical logion cited in Origen's Homilies: . . . (the Saviour himself says: Whoever is near to me is near to the fire; whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom). Since the time of Heraclitus life has been conceived as . . . an ever-living life; and as Christ calls himself "The Life," the uncanonical saying is quite understandable.⁹²

One notes a recurrence of the number symbolism discussed in earlier sections and also of the fragrance-motif in the panther. This combination of characteristics which express the central archetypal idea of rebirth and the inherent paradox

⁹² Jung, Psychology and Religion, p.36. Jung accredits the uncanonical saying to Origen, In Jeremiam homilias, XX, 3, Migne, P.G. vol. XIII, col.532.

of its religious formulation, to say nothing of the spiritual condition which it reflects, makes the phoenix a climax and fitting conclusion for the texts.

Conclusion

In the first section of the Physiologus it was observed that the lion was a "uniting symbol." It expressed not only the fortitudinem et regnum of Christ, but also the rapacitatem of the devil. The same union of opposites was found in many other symbols. This is in harmony with the original oneness of the God-archetype, as discussed in Chapter II. In the Physiologus, however, these symbols had to become Christian symbols. To accomplish this transformation the following procedures were noted. Either the incongruous aspect of the animal's nature was left as a mystery for the reader to contemplate, as in the case of the lion and panther, or the animal underwent a transformation from fierce to gentle, as did the unicorn, or, most surprising, the interpretation of both the paradoxical "natures" was undertaken in the same section. The latter occurred only in the section on the snake.

Although the symbols of the Physiologus appear arbitrary and fanciful as naturalistic material, it has been seen that they conform closely to the central archetypes of the unconscious mind.

Moreover, they are symbols which operate on two distinct levels. They present the mystery of original archetypal oneness, while above and beyond that they express the higher development and differentiation found in Christian thought. It was particularly in the presentation of the most ferocious animals as symbols of Christ that archetypal polarity was evident. Such symbols are "in keeping with the violence of all unconscious dynamism," to which Jung adds:

The onslaught of instinct then becomes an experience of divinity, provided that man does not succumb to it and follow it blindly, but defends his humanity against the animal nature of the divine power. It is a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and "whoso is near unto me, is near unto the fire, and whoso is far from me, is far from the kingdom"; for "the Lord is a consuming fire," the Messiah is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."⁹³

This leads the discussion back to the theme which formed the starting point of the present chapter. It is an appropriate note on which to end.

⁹³ Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.338.

CHAPTER IV

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE PHYSIOLOGUS

The Physiologus in Ecclesiastical Architecture

This chapter can only briefly sketch the repercussions of the Physiologus. A detailed treatment would require a separate study. Lauchert, Kolloff, and Evans are some of those who have given attention to this problem and much is owed in the present chapter to their research.

Neither in literature nor in architecture is it possible to isolate the repercussions of any one Physiologus text or group of texts. It is the echo of The Physiologus which we hear and any one text, Latin or vernacular, makes only its own contribution to the total effect. Individual texts are tributaries to the broad stream of European literature as Curtius has characterized it in his European Literature and The Latin Middle Ages.

The symbols of the Physiologus began to make their appearance outside the text itself in the course of the Twelfth Century. This development went hand in hand with its translation into the vernacular languages. As soon as texts were made accessible to laymen who had no Latin training, their stimulating effect

became manifest in vernacular literature and architecture. This was a development which tended to remove the symbols of the Physiologus from their former strictly religious context.

The familiarity of the monastic orders with the Physiologus is witnessed at an early date by the appearance of animal carvings in the cloisters. We can gain some idea of the prominence of these figures when we hear the grave and uncompromising tones in which Bernard of Clairvaux complains of them:

Was sollen im Klosterhofe vor den Augen der lesenden oder nachdenkenden Brüder jene lächerlichen Ungeheuerlichkeiten, jene erstaunlich misgestalteten Schönheiten und verwunderlich schönen Misgestalten? Zu was die unflätigen Affen, zu was die wütigen Löwen, zu was die greulichen Centauren, zu was die wilden Männer, zu was die fleckigen Tiger, zu was die fechtenden Streiter, zu was die blasenden Jäger? . . . Grosser Gott, wenn man sich der Possen nicht schämt, warum scheut man wenigstens nicht die Unkosten?¹

In the churches of the Middle Ages the Physiologus first appeared in the peculiar animal shapes of various ritual implements and accessories, such as candle-sticks, ciboria, and the rest. Kolloff² considered this usage to be decorative rather than symbolical but it is difficult to accept this distinction. In the late Romanesque period animal images took full possession of

¹ Letter to William of St. Thierry, cited by Kolloff, op. cit., p.200.

² Kolloff, op. cit., p.192.

the whole church edifice, moving from their first foothold on the capitals of the inner pillars, to the outside facade, the chancels, ledges, cornices, and eaves. It was not long before the moral gravity of these figures was supplanted by a lighter, satirical spirit. This was especially the case when church-building passed into the hands of lay-architects in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. Now the symbols went their own way, often devoid of any moral precept. Sometimes utterly grotesque and monstrous forms appeared, at other times the Beast Epic governed the scene. ". . . trotz der betrübten, jammervollen Zeit, scheinen Spottsucht und Faschingslaune alle Gemüther ergriffen zu haben . . ." ³ In summing up the appearance of animal symbolism in Gothic architecture Kolloff says:

Die gotischen Steinmetzen ergingen sich dagegen in den freiesten, mutwilligsten Schöpfungen . . . Die Mannigfaltigkeit der verarbeiteten Motive ist beinahe ungläublich, und beim Anblicke einer so erstaunlichen Fruchtbarkeit sollte man meinen, dass die Künstler sich vorgesetzt, all möglichen Verbindungen tierischer und menschlicher Formen zu erschöpfen. ⁴

E. P. Evans argues that the imagery of the Beast Epic owed its entry into church buildings to the precedent sent by the Physiologus:

³ Kolloff, op. cit., pp.203f.

⁴ ibid., p.204.

These cynical, satirical, moral, and sometimes perhaps purely fanciful delineations . . . were derived almost exclusively from the cycle of Reynard's adventures . . . But it is not probable that they would have ever found admission to church edifices . . . if the Physiologus had not furnished a precedent and thus justified the intrusion. In the footsteps . . . of the Physiologus and the bestiaries . . . followed the whole lively and noisy pack of Reynard and his companions, who soon took possession of the chancel, the chapels, and the pulpit, and finally overran the entire building, nestling in capitals, creeping along cornices, squatting on balustrades, peeping out of illuminated windows, peering over portals, and grimacing as gargoyles from the roof.⁵

Evans produces interesting examples of the appearance of these animals in ecclesiastical architecture. The Church of St. Martin in Leicester has a scene showing a fox in the pulpit, preaching to a flock of geese. A subscription reads, "Testis est mihi Deus quam cupiam vos omnes visceribus meis" (God is my witness how I long for you all in my bowels). Similar scenes from the Beast Epic are found in Ely Cathedral, Bristol Cathedral, Strassburg Cathedral, and the Cathedral of Amiens. The Cathedral of Alne in Yorkshire has a representation of the panther as it appears in the Physiologus. The most interesting example is that of the Cathedral of Freising. It is particularly significant in the context of the present study:

In the crypt of the cathedral at Freising, near Munich in Bavaria, is a column adorned on all sides with

⁵ E. P. Evans, op. cit., p.229.

sculptures of the eleventh century . . . In the first group two persons -- one in armour, and wearing spurs (Sigurd), and the other in a kirtle (Regino) --are slaying the dragon. Next we see a naked man letting himself down into the jaws of the dead dragon; it is Sigurd bathing himself in the dragon's blood, which would render him invulnerable. A branch of leaves hanging down covers a part of his shoulder, and indicates the fatal spot which remained unwashed by the monster's blood, and therefore capable of being wounded . . . An animal, probably an ichneumon [hydra]. . . is rushing into the jaws of another dragon resembling an alligator . . . The legend of Sigurd symbolized the vernal freshness and vigour of the sun slaying the demon of winter, and freeing earth's treasures from its icy grasp . . .⁶

The affinities between Physiologus, Beast Epic, and myth are convincingly demonstrated by these examples.

The Physiologus in Vernacular Literature

In vernacular literature the first uses of symbols from the Physiologus were made during the Twelfth Century, but these instances remained isolated. Lauchert found images from the Physiologus in the Vorauer Bücher Mosis, the allegorical poem die Hochzeit, Heinrichs Litanei, Wernhers Maria, and Williram's periphraze of the Song of Solomon. He also found traces in several sermons of Bertold of Regensburg.

The Blütezeit of Physiologus symbols was the Thirteenth Century, when they played a prominent part in both Minnesang and

⁶ ibid., p.321.

Courtly Epic. It has been noted that symbolism from the Physiologus also appears in the Nibelungenlied. Wolfram von Eschenbach makes considerable use of the Physiologus and Book IX of Parzival is particularly rich in these symbols. The phoenix is mentioned in verses 1088ff., when the hermit Trevrezent tells Parzival of the magic stone, lapis exilis:

von des steines kraft der fēnīs
 verbrinnet, daz er zaschen wirt:
 diu asche im aber leben birt.
 sus rērt der fēnīs mūze sīn
 unt gīt darnāch vil lichten schīn,
 daz er schoene wirt als ē.⁷

In verses 1482ff. Trevrezent tells Parzival of the attempts to heal the wounded grail-king, Anfortas:

ein vogel heizt pellicānus,
 swenne der fruht gewinnet,
 alze sēre er die minnet;
 in twinget sīner triuwe gelust,
 daz er bīzet durch sīn selbes Brust,
 unt lätz bluot den iungen in den munt;
 er stirbet an der selben stunt.
 do gewonnen wir des vogels bluot,
 ob uns sīn triuwe waere guot,
 unt strichens an die wunden,
 sō wir beste kunden.
 daz mohte uns niht gehelfen sus.
 ein tier heizt monīcirus,
 daz erkennt der megede reine so grōz,
 daz ez slaefet ūf der megede schōz.
 wir gewonnen des tieres herzen
 ūber des kīneges smerzen.
⁸
 diu wunde was et lūppec var.⁸

⁷ Paul Piper, ed., Parzival, II.2, p.62.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.73.

Wolfram was the only Middle High German poet who applied these symbols directly to the code and ideals of chivalry. Book XII of Parzival furnishes an example of this. Here Orgeluse compares the Minnedienst of her slain husband Cidegast to the ways of the unicorn. In Book XV Parzival and Feirefiz are compared to young lions because of their warlike virtues. As lion cubs are enlivened by their father's roar, so these two knights are uplifted in spirit by the din of their weapons as they fight:

Den lewen sīn muoter tōt gebirt,
 von sīns vater galme er lebendic wirt.
 dise zwēne wārn ūz krache erborn,⁹
 von maneger tjost ūz prīse erkorn:

In the same scene the heroes are said to have the antithetical qualities of the lamb and the lion:

hie wellnt ein ander wāren,
 di mit kiusche lemer wāren
 und lewen an der vrechheit.¹⁰

Hartmann von Ouwe does not use Physiologus symbols prolifically but we see the diamond as a symbol of knightly virtue at the beginning of Der Arme Heinrich:

er was ein bluome der jugent
 der werlte frōude ein spiegelglas.
 staeter triuwe ein adamas,
 ein ganziu krōne der zuht.¹¹

⁹ Paul Piper, op. cit., p.198.

¹⁰ ibid., p.197.

¹¹ Cited from Joseph Wright, A Middle High German Primer, pp.88f.

This did not derive from the Old High German Physiologus since it and its prototype have deleted the sections of the older Physiologus which deal with plants and stones. The problematical nature of the origin of Physiologus symbols appearing in vernacular literature is thus demonstrated. No attempt can be made here to deal with this problem or to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. We may be inclined to regard the French prototypes of German Minnesang and courtly epic, the Provencal canzone and roman chevaleresque, as the origin of many Physiologus symbols in German literature. On the other hand, a total dependence on French literature for such images is out of the question. In this context we have to consider not only the artistic originality of German Minnesang, but also the appearance of the symbols in Courtly Epic which was not dependent on French sources. An example of the latter case has already been cited. It is the comparison of Parzival and Feirefiz to young lions in Book XV of Wolfram's Parzival.¹²

Symbols from the Physiologus appear frequently in Minnesang. It is odd, however, that not a single image from the Physiologus is to be found in the poems of Walter von der Vogelweide, and only a very few in those of Reinmar von Zweter. A poem by Burkart von Hohenvels provides a good example of the use of these symbols in a

¹² Books XV and XVI are considered completely original with Wolfram, Cf. M. F. Richey, Studies of Wolfram von Eschenbach, p.104.

courtly, chivalric context. The following verses also demonstrate a particular development of the late Thirteenth Century -- the piling up of images into a gallery of pictures which presents an ever varying expression of the poet's feelings. The creatures which we see here are the eagle, caradrius, fish, monkey, bee, and unicorn. Not all are found in the Old High German Physiologus:

Nāch des aren site ir ēre
 hōhe sweimet unde ir muot.
 schande wenket von ir sēre,
 sam vor valken lerche tuot.
 swer ir gruoꝝ nimt, derst vor schanden
 banden frī, sist saelden wer.

Der wilde visch in dem bāre
 nie genam so mangan wanc
 als mīn herze in jamers lēre
 nāch ir; dest mīn frōide kranc.
 wan min frīheit sich für eigen
 neigen der vil lieben kan.

Swie der affe sī gar wilde,
 doch sō vāhet in sīn schīn,
 so'r im spiegel siht sīn bilde.
 sus nimt mir diu frouwe mīn
 sin līp herze muot und ougen
 tougen, dest mīn ungewin.

Einen fürsten hānt die bīen,
 swar der vert, di volgent nāch.
 mīnen gedenken den frīen
 ist sus nāch der lieben gāch.
 ir vil frōidenfrūhtic lachen
 machen kan wol frōide mir.

Der einhūrne in megede schōze
 gīt durch kiusche sinen līp.
 dem wild ich mich wol genōze,
 sīt ein reine saelic wīp
 mich verderbet: an den triuwen,
 riuwen mac si der gerich.¹³

¹³ Carl von Kraus, ed., Deutsche Liederdichter des 13.

Another telling example in which the eagle is used as a symbol of rejuvenation, is provided by Wahsmuot von Mülnhusen. He says that if his lady will favour him he will be rejuvenated:

wilt du mich bewarn
vor sorgen, sost mir wol gelungen.
rehte alsam die arn
wil ich mich doch widerjungen,
unde uf gen den lüften varn.¹⁴

The popularity of the phoenix is widely attested in Middle High German literature and its significance as a symbol is seen in the fact that it is known and used even today.¹⁵

Reinmar von Brennenburg says that the lady of his heart has a ruby mouth which shines as though it had been rejuvenated like the phoenix. It is also bright and fiery like the dragon's mouth, but beautiful withal:

Ir munt der liuhtet als der rubin tuot,
sam er sich het gejunget alsoder fēnix in dem viure.
er ist noch heizer danne ein sinder von der gluot
und eitet also eins traken giel, sīn lachen ist
gehiure;¹⁶

Der Kanzler uses the story of the phoenix in a poem which is highly characteristic of his art:

¹⁴ ibid., p.562.

¹⁵ The most recent use of the phoenix to be noted is its mock-serious appearance in John Steinbeck's farcical novel, The Short Reign of Pipin IV, 1957, pp.35f., "He suggested, even commanded, that the monarchy be restored so that France might rise again like the phoenix out of the ashes of the Republic to cast her light over the world.

¹⁶ Carl von Kraus, op. cit., p.327.

Fenix ein vogel ist genant
 der wunderlicher art enpfligt.
 er lebt alleine sunderbār,
 dekeine fruht er birt.
 swen sīn natūre im tuot bekant
 daz im daz alter an gesigt,
 diu schrift betiutet uns vūr wār
 wie er gejunget wirt.
 in viure er sich verbrinnen lāt;
 ze selker nōt in sīn natūre twinget.
 der sunnen kraft, der viuhte rāt
 den fēnix ūz dem pulver wider bringet.
 sus genatūret daz wolt ich
 die biderben edeln und die boesen waeren:
 die biderben daz si jungeten sich,
 die boesen daz si niemer fruht gebaeren.¹⁷

Der Kanzler uses a considerable number of symbols from the Physiologus, as well as ideas which seem to have been suggested by the Physiologus. His poem quoted above shows a development characteristic of the Thirteenth Century. The story of the phoenix has lost its mystical meaning but retains a moral significance for Thirteenth Century society. A more worldly age was able to grasp the meaning of the symbols in a worldly, critical context. This was in harmony with the new satire of the Beast Epic and the caricatures which were now appearing in ecclesiastical architecture. Another poem of der Kanzler makes use of the fox as a foil for the raven and clearly demonstrates the development which this character was undergoing in the interest of satire. The story is a fable, a form of which traces were noted in the Physiologus itself:

¹⁷ ibid., p.207.

Ein vuhs zuo einem rappen sprach
 der hōch ūf einem boume saz
 und truoc ein kaese in sīnem snabel
 'her rappe, ir sint gar kluoc;
 sō schoenen vogel ich nie gesach.
 nie lerche noch galander baz
 gesanz dan ir. sus ich niht zabel,
 ich hōrte es gerne gnuoc'.
 der rappe dur den valschen prīs
 mit lüter stimme im sīnen sanc erbōrte
 des viel der kaese im underz rīs.
 in krift der vuhs, den sanc er gerne hōrte.
 sus gent guot toerscher herren vil
 dur valschez lop, dur smeichen liegen triegen.
 wol fuogt den affen tōren spil
 ez gent die narren gerne ir guot den giegen.¹⁸

Although the fable of the fox has little similarity to the stories of the Physiologus, and is likely derived from a different source, it is interesting to see that der Kanzler uses it beside the symbols of the Physiologus. We note that it performs the same function in his poetry as Physiologus symbolism. This gives us some idea of the way in which common interests were affecting the development and use of Physiologus symbolism, animal fables, and the Beast Epic in the Thirteenth Century.

Besides the authors already named, the symbols of the Physiologus appear in the works of Konrad von Würzburg, Hugo von Langenstein, Heinrich von Veldeke, Hugo von Trimberg, der Marnier, Der Meissner, der Rumelant, Reinbot, Frauenlob, Freidank, and Rudolf von Ems.

¹⁸ ibid., pp.211f.

The symbolism of the Physiologus was not restricted to one or two national literatures but was the bequest of Latin Christian culture to vernacular literatures throughout Europe. Besides France and Germany, Lauchert has found Physiologus symbols in the literatures of England, Spain, and Italy. Dante uses the figures of the eagle and the pelican in the Divine Comedy. An example is found in verses 112ff., Canto XXV, of Paradiso, where he says without explanation:

"Questi e colui che giacque sopra 'l petto
del nostro pellicano; e questi fue
d'in su la croce al grande ufficio eletto."

("Der ists, der unserm Pelikan gelegen
An seiner Brust. Der ists, den man ernannte
Vom Kreuz hernieder, grossen Amts zu pflegen.")¹⁹

Chaucer furnishes excellent evidence for the familiarity of the Physiologus in England. In the Nun's Priest's Tale he says:

. and Chauntecler so free
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
For Phisiologus seith sikerly
How that they syngen wel and myrily.²⁰

Individual symbols from the Physiologus survived beyond the Middle Ages. The fox took on a new personality in the Beast Epic and his adventures in this role reached their literary high point in the Eighteenth Century. In Germany, Gottsched transcribed

¹⁹ Erwin Laaths, ed., Dantes Werke, p.428.

²⁰ F. N. Robinson, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 1933, p.243.

the Beast Epic into modern prose and Goethe used the same material in 1794 for his Reineke Fuchs. Goethe characterized the Beast Epic as an "unheilige Weltbibel",²¹ and showed his high regard for its qualities when he said, "Vor Jahrhunderten hätte ein Dichter dieses gesungen? Wie ist das möglich? Der Stoff ist ja von gestern und heut'."²² Today, in American cartoon-literature, the fox is as alive as he ever was and his entertaining tricks have not changed a whit.

A use of Physiologus symbolism in later literature is found in Shakespeare's poem, The Phoenix and The Turtle. Here a more critical spirit shows itself and the myth of the phoenix gives the lie to an exaggerated and sterile form of love. The oneness of the turtle-doves is too complete; the conflict of opposites, if utterly effaced, means barrenness and death:

So they lov'd, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one;
Two distincts, division none:
Number there in love was slain.²³

Eternal life is not to be found in the superior and mystical love of the turtle-doves. This love perishes as the phoenix must perish. Our illusions are shattered. The death of the phoenix

²¹ Willi A. Koch, ed., Musisches Lexikon, p.755, "Reineke-Fuchs-Dichtungen."

²² Loc. cit.

²³ W. G. Craig, ed., The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, p.1135.

and of the qualities which it here symbolizes is lamented in the

Threnos with which the poem ends:

Beauty, truth, and rarity
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclos'd in cinders lie.

Death is now the phoenix' nest;
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,
Leaving no posterity:
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
That are either true or fair;
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.²⁴

It is a mysterious paradox which Shakespeare expresses and we recall C. G. Jung's phrase "paradoxical truth", so prominent in all his studies of mental processes. We realize from the above lines the danger of over-emphasizing certain bodiless and abstract virtues at the expense of their opposites. Corporality is the basis of existence.

The death of the phoenix and the radically different emphasis of its symbolism are a landmark, perhaps the last one,

²⁴ Loc. cit.

in the natural development of the Physiologus. Shakespeare found a new and personal meaning in the Physiologus, a meaning which might ring more clearly in the modern age than the mediaeval Jenseitsstimmung of the old text. Many of the old symbols are now forgotten and certainly the old interpretations have been outgrown. However, in its own way, the Physiologus gives us an answer to the problems of human life which do not change.

Conclusion

The Physiologus was written in Greek in the last quarter of the Fourth Century. Its home was presumably the city of Caesarea in Asia Minor. The success of the document was immediate and it was translated into Syrian, Arabic, Ethiopian, Armenian, and Latin. Many of the Church Fathers were familiar with its Latin or Greek versions and it became popular throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. In the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries the Physiologus was translated into most of the European vernacular languages, the earliest of the vernacular versions being der #ltere Physiologus in Old High German. In the Thirteenth Century the Physiologus was a storehouse of images for Minnesang, Courtly Epic, and Heroic Epic. It was also prominent in ecclesiastical architecture. When used in this manner the symbols soon forfeited their theological meanings, but retained in many cases a moral significance. Several images from the Physiologus have lingered in the memory till the present day. Merging with the "hero" of the Beast Epic the fox has lost none of its appeal. The phoenix received meaningful literary treatment as late as Shakespeare's time and remains today a somewhat veiled image of the motif of rebirth.

The success of the Physiologus was due, not to its formal literary qualities, but to the dynamic force of its images. The energy and fascination of these images have been explained by Jung's delineation of the unconscious mind. They are "agents" through which the patterns of the unconscious mind are symbolically manifested. The archetypal patterns of the unconscious mind are responsible for the identical mythical motifs which have appeared independently in many different parts of the world. On a higher level the same motifs are present in religion. The most common of these motifs is the "life of the hero" with its goal of rebirth. This motif was an important formative principle in the naturalistic reports of the Physiologus. The interpretationes of the Physiologus have usually succeeded in bringing the "raw material" provided by the animals into harmony with the typically Christian differentiation of archetypal motifs. One of the cornerstones of this accomplishment was the infusion of Trinity-symbolism into the material.

The principal reason for the efficacy of Physiologus symbolism and its related entities, myth and alchemy, is the fact that it employs "uniting symbols". These "uniting symbols," themselves a paradox, bring into harmony the divided and antithetical components of the human mind. They are "agents" with which

man can "ransom himself from the feath of death", and "reconcile himself to the demands of Hades". By "coming to terms" with the symbolism of the unconscious mind, man is able to widen the horizons of his knowledge and experience, and to find in himself the mythical hero who is reborn to a greater and more meaningful life.

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