

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 jüngerer 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 jüngerer
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 religionsgeschichtlich-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

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

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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." 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.