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**“THE MYSTERY OF
THE GOLDEN FLOWER”
AND THE
JUNG’S ANALYTIC PSYCHOLOGY**

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INTRODUCTION

A previous explanation is required for dealing with analysis and commentaries on an ancient Chinese book whose “character” is deemed to be “esoteric”.

At first sight –and Jung has been criticized in the same sense– seemingly we are keeping away from psychological science and entering labyrinths of philosophy and religious mysticism. And when the said subjects are approached by a metapsychist, his criticism can wrongly interpret things and say: or it is invading jurisdictions that are irrelevant to science, or since he takes the side of certain philosophical doctrines, he wants to adjust metapsychics to them. It is neither one thing nor the other. Simply, it occurs that a metapsychist, as a man of advanced science, starts his work by studying and interpreting, with methods offered by modern psychology, the symbolic language of certain productions of the human mind, which are incomprehensible for the rational mind, and strives to unveil its “hidden” meaning on the light of new knowledge.

For centuries, dreams had not been approached by science because it was deemed to be unworthy of a scientist to deal with matters managed by witchcraft and superstition, but through its knowledge how much light psychoanalytic interpretation has cast on the structure and dynamics of the human psyche.

Likewise it occurred in regard to hysteria; before Charcot, physicians refused to deal with and pay attention to rich descriptions made by ill personas about their symptoms, since the former thought that all this was simulation and that they could be deceived at every step. It is Charcot that breaks up this tradition of the past and a group of researchers –among them, Janet, Breuer, Bernheim and, at the end, Freud– followed

his example and paid more and more attention to study neurosis symptoms and analyze the intimate life of those ill persons, which have been so neglected until then.

It is with the psychoanalytic movement that starts a fruitful stage for psychology, with new possibilities in therapeutic field and higher knowledge of psychic phenomena.

Something like that occurs at present in the field of parapsychology, where illustrious men dedicate their best efforts to a scientific understanding of as natural and ancient psychological products as dreams and neurosis –I refer to symbols of almost all religions– which until today still have not mainly been deemed to be worthy of academic study.

Here is the great merit of psychoanalysis: it has started this important study of the symbolism widened now by parapsychology with new foundations.

As Jung approaches psychological commentaries on “The Mystery of the Golden Flower”, he poses new aspects of its complex psychology. Certain concepts become understandable to us, but as to the interpretation of others, we must admit, with Mira and López, that the Jungian psychology is too much “complex”.

On the other hand, as much Jung’s commentaries as our own commentaries should be taken as simple attempts, since they are psychic experiences whose experimental analysis still is pending.

“THE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER”

“The Mystery of the Golden Flower” is the title of an ancient Chinese book, whose original name is “T’ai I Ching hua Sung”, which for a long time has been concealed in the hands of some few persons interested in mystical and philosophical researches into the East, and that have been widely spread in the West through Richard Wilhelm’s translation into German language.

Later, it was translated into English by Cary F. Baynes (“The Secret of Golden Flower”), and into Italian by Mario Gabrieli (“Il Mistero del Fiore d’Oro”).

The commentary written by C. G. Jung, whose authority as to comparative psychology of early peoples is sufficiently known, has granted more importance now to this text that otherwise would not promote scientists’ interest in our days.

Previous to be printed, there was an oral tradition about the teachings of the book, which were conveyed by direct teaching from an adept to another; seemingly, about seventh century after Christ, there was a handwritten copy of the doctrine (a xylography in wooden tables), and later a printed edition in eighteenth century. The oral tradition goes back to the religion or elixir of life (Chin Tan Chiao) whose founder it is assumed to be the adept Lü Yen, who is mentioned in the book as the master Lü Tzu.

On the other hand, this book does not offer an original unity, but critics on comparative religions, like Wilhelm, have pointed out thought currents influencing the heart of the doctrinal body; thus, for example, influences from Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and even from Christendom by means of the Nestorian sect, are outstanding.

As the Italian translator M. Gabrieli makes notice, it is not a specific philosophical work, but a book of meditation and religious experience, and should be interpreted in that sense.

As you read the original text for the first time, one is bewildered by a lot of words with no understandable meaning and logical connection with our knowledge regarding our modern mentality: these words are, for example, “flower of gold”, “light of heaven”, “heavenly heart”, “circulation of light”, et cetera. Today, ideas and concepts evoked in us by such words do not permit –with an accurate knowledge, therefore, we are unable to– penetrate the very nucleus of the doctrine expressed by the book. In other words, a communication between the author (or authors) of the book (who use a Chinese language from several centuries ago) and us (men of twentieth century) cannot be established at first intention because words used for state the thought do not facilitate common links between both minds. This is why books of this kind are not more widely spread among cultivated people, and for years remain among a small group of “initiates” that are able to penetrate what is “hidden” to the rest of the community.

Fortunately, in “The Mystery of the Golden Flower”, efforts made by two outstanding Orientalists –Wilhelm and Jung– join together to make the ancient Eastern thought understandable to Western mentality.

By dint of being honest, I would be unable to say if the said translation of concepts has been total or if –as it seems more likely–is only an attempt to approach a conceptual reality that remains unattainable. To this purpose, I’d like to remember what Gustave Le Bon says in his “Psychology of Multitudes” while studying the value of words and their meaning among different peoples. He says:

“Words have only contingent and transient meanings that are changing age by age and people by people. In numerous words their meaning has changed, and we do not succeed in understanding that earlier meaning, except with enormous efforts. It has been told, and quite rightly, that one needs long perusals only to be able to realize what our grandparents meant with words as, for instance: “the king and the royal family”.

What should we need to know in depth terms that are even more complex? And finally one comes to the conclusion that the whole translation of a language, particularly in case of extinct peoples, is entirely impossible.

Before these previously known difficulties and limitations, we'll try to analyze and comment the work.

First, this book gives the notion of Tao.

“It is the entity that per se is called spirit (Tao). The spirit has neither name nor form. It is the only being, the only primordial spirit, the Great One: nothing is over Him. It is the spirit of the world previous to any achievement”.

It is light of heaven, heavenly consciousness, heavenly heart, golden flower.

As the very book reads, this golden flower “is a symbol meaning the true power of the Great Transcendent One”.

The revelation of the mystery of the golden flower means to know and realize that higher inborn principle in man, which main religions tend to realize, although through different ways and methods. This higher realization can be attained by following certain way; thence, some people translated Tao as Way, with this sense: way of knowledge or conscious way.

Let us see in the following paragraphs of the “Upanishads” what is the similarity between concepts of the Chinese text and teaching of these ancient books, and how one needs to discover a conceptual identity between different words:

“So, by knowing Brahma by dint of meditation and by grace of God, and by realizing the higher form of life, the highest and entirely full truth is shown to us. This highest secret contained in the final science of wisdom and taught in past centuries should not be taught to him who does not possess perfect peace, or despises the filial duty, or breaks the law of discipline”.

On the other hand, methods of Yoga tend to join together the personal being and the Great NonManifest Principle (Impersonal Being).

I feel that by means of this example you can have a clear idea about the meaning of “The Mystery of the Golden Flower”.

The Golden Flower is light –the text reads– but here light should be interpreted as a new symbol representing the consciousness (Jung); it is a higher consciousness that, from the parapsychological point of view, could be called supra-consciousness, which constitutes the focus of a higher ego called “Impersonal Ego” that transcends the personal ego. Later we’ll see how these concepts –emerged not only from these ancient books but even acquired by metapsychical observation– permit us to have a new approach to personality and psychic system.

Next, our book reads: “The Golden Flower is elixir of life” (Chin Tan); therefore, we would come to the conclusion that the revelation of the mystery of the Golden Flower would be equal to obtain the secret of the elixir of life, that is, the philosopher stone of ancient alchemists. But what is the result of a shallow analysis stands in contradiction to facts observed from other point of view, or this acquires significance while studying the history of alchemy.

It is a special characteristic of medieval alchemy that a body of doctrine tends to transform vile metals into gold by obtaining a special substance called elixir of life or philosopher stone. Apart from this that we could call chemical aspect of alchemy, there were deep relations with medicine; so, it was stated that the same elixir of life, or potable gold ingested, would produce eternal bodily youth.

As one enquires about the inception of alchemy, we find some authors coming to the conclusion that its sources go back to the Ancient Egypt, where priests of the temples would convey their teachings to a chosen group of “initiates”. Hermes

Trismegistus becomes its founder. It is this priestly inception that makes alchemists usually name it with the name of “holy art”.

In fact, quite few original writings are preserved; they have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs, and main works belong to Greek authors; among the latter we can quote Democritus of Abdera (460 before Christ), who according to tradition, was initiated in Mysteries at the sanctuary of Memphis, and Olimpiodorus (fifth century after Christ). Despite the distortion of all these writings by legends and personal opinions of their authors, they unveil quite clearly that the original alchemy was not reduced to those above-mentioned chemical and therapeutic aspects; also it was something like a “Science of Nature” trying to reach “Wisdom”, and most outstanding alchemists would deal with relations between metals and planets, cosmogonic systems, natural sciences and intimate structure of elements.

In Middle Ages, gradually this natural alchemy approach was missing, and became chemical and magical manipulations that as a whole and in the hands of charlatans quite soon produced the end of alchemy. All this makes one feel that between the art of the last alchemists in Middle Ages and wisdom of Egyptian and Greek philosophers there is a long distance that is difficult to travel through; unfortunately, historic documents are not available to reconstruct the ancient origin of alchemy, and later they have been distorted by other authors.

But this Chinese text that is so interesting to Western scientists, as well as other holy Hindu books, allow us to approach the “theory on the elixir of life” from new points of view that perhaps are the same of ancient hermetic priests.

The text reads: “The Golden Flower is elixir of life” (Chin Tan) and all efforts of the disciple must tend to reach this higher state of consciousness by means of meditation and purification. It is made through this way an “alchemistic” process of spiritual improvement whose ruling and generating center is the “light that is between

the eyes” (Golden Flower) and later penetrates every lower structure, instinct and impulse.

Seemingly, according to our last sayings, there are two great currents of alchemistic doctrine on elixir of life that would correspond to two directions of human thought, which diverge more and more one from the other: the first (outer way) would be represented by both medieval and Greek alchemy whose purpose is to obtain the transformation of metals into gold and the eternal youth by means of the magical elixir, and the other (inner way) would be represented by certain mysticism and knowledge disciplines tending to acquire a higher consciousness whose powers are infinite and can act on the body by producing more vitality (Yoga). Can there be a relation between both modalities? From the psychological point of view, the above-referred alchemical sublimation is an evolutionary improvement process of unconscious tendencies toward a wider and wider consciousness. Even not glimpsing these new interpretations of Jung, and not knowing new orientations given by parapsychology to general psychology, psychoanalysts have ever deemed the human psychism to be a tree whose roots (instincts and deep tendencies) sink deep down in the personal and collective unconscious, and whose flowers go up to the top; there is a big structural difference between a magnificent flower and a dark root, despite the fact that also the former nurtures the instinctive sap emerged from the depths: in other words: the flower is a sublimated product of the subconscious. The symbolism of the Golden Flower and the following statements of the text have the same meaning: “the dark generates light” or “noble gold is generated from lead”. Did Greek and medieval alchemists take the symbolic and allegoric meaning for the true meaning hidden in ancient Mysteries behind symbols and allegories?

Later, the book deals with the “original spirit” and “conscious spirit”. “The original spirit is the true being and goes beyond time and space; it is beyond opposites of polarity.” First, the spirit stays in the head, between the eyes; it is the “heavenly

heart”; on the other hand, the “carnal heart” is subordinated to the outer world and represents the personal consciousness.

Here is a very important differentiation between two centers of consciousness that so far the classic psychology has not taken into account and it is Jung’s merit to have thrown it into relieve and to state with clear psychological words what is seemingly obscure in the terminology of ancient texts.

“Heavenly heart” corresponds to a focus of higher consciousness stated by these terms: “Imperial Ego” and “Higher Ego”; on the other hand, “carnal heart” is the conscious spirit or “personal ego”.

The state of ordinary alertness is centered by this “personal ego”, but the individual is able to improve and update consciously the higher ego. We’ll not describe in detail both psychic categories and its special characteristics. We want to make notice only that this contribution of parapsychology is one of the most important to knowing the human psychism and permits to pose unequivocally what had been established before only by means of speculations.

It is the text that expresses graphically the realization of the higher ego as follows: “It is as if a powerful and great lord were seated on the throne. Once the central power is settled, every subject comes and receives orders from his lord”. This points out in a symbolic way the purifying action of the “heavenly light” on every lower structure and the subordination of the latter to the focus of higher consciousness.

In short: one reaches the “vision of light”, that is, a new state of consciousness that is very common among mystics, by means of “meditation” (a psychological process); and Jung typifies this state as “an acute state of intense consciousness and abstract consciousness as well, which leads to the light of wisdom that sphere of the psychic becoming that is usually covered by darkness”.

This realization of new psychic states in man has been commonly stated in a graphic and symbolic way by means of the so-called “mandalas”, whose character is of true “psycho-cosmic systems”.

The mandala of the Golden Flower is a beautiful ornamental artistic representation with a flower in the center and a circle (a magical circle) around; its translation into psychological terms is as follows: The center of the mandala –the Golden Flower– is Tao, the light that stays between the eyes and that, as we said, symbolizes the higher focus of consciousness.

The circular chamber around the central light –which also is in other mandalas– takes the character of “magical circle” around the “sacred chamber”: this corresponds to the idea of “meditation or concentration around oneself and that constitutes also a protection barrier to defend the consciousness against the dissolving action of the unconscious.

This unconscious exerts on the organized consciousness an action that, at certain circumstances, can become dangerous and even have it entirely under control.

Jung speaks of autonomous contents of the unconscious, and classifies them as real, relatively real and unreal. The former are those that the consciousness does not recognize as such and projects them outward (projection mechanism). They are relatively real when are related to the consciousness and in the position of being assimilated: it is the universal notion of worshipping divine spiritual beings. And they are unreal when the consciousness tends to withdraw from its contents.

The latter would be a higher state that is hard to reach and only achievable through personal perfection; one reaches a state of consciousness in which any mistake (Maya) is not possible. Here is what Jung says:

“The veil of Maya cannot be lifted by a simple logical resolution; one needs the most radical and constant preparation consisting of a conscientious fulfillment of all duties to life. In fact, during that unconditioned bondage whose cause is ‘cupiditas’, this veil cannot be removed and it is impossible to reach the top of that consciousness free of contents and deprived of illusions, which no artificial game or deceit can make achieve by dint of enchantment. Because it is a feasible ideal only at the end, at death, and until the arrival of the latter, only representations of consciousness that are ‘real and relatively real’ survive”.

Let us see how Jung interprets meditation from the psychological point of view:

“Meditation –he says– is a psychic process through which the retreat of consciousness from external objects takes place along with an elimination of the “mystical participation” that, while not existing, does not differentiate between objective and subjective”.

Thus, the personality gravitation center of the personal conscious ego moves to other higher center called Self and a new personality emerges that realizes the “sacred fruit”, or “adamantine body”, or “Golden Flower”.

“What a rescued consciousness becomes once and for all –he says– should not be asked of a psychologist because in that way he would barrenly surpass limits of his scientific jurisdiction.”

In short, and by way of a synthesis, obtaining a higher consciousness is equal to birth of a new man” with powers unknown to the personal being centered in the ordinary consciousness.

The non-dualistic One gives rise to two principles called yang and yin: the first becomes manifest as active conditioning principle and the second as passive, derivative or conditioned principle.

According to Wilhelm, the meaning of these two concepts has been reduced to the sexual aspect in European circles, by taking yang as male principle and yin as female principle. This is a partial truth, as we'll see later, since in fact it extends to every antithesis or polarity of the personality, among which, as it is logical, we find the sexual ones. On the other hand, it is not a metaphysical duality.

Among representations of the unconscious, two of them are particularly important and named Anima and Animus. The first is of female character, belongs to the principle yin and to the “carnal heart”, and is seat of passions, excitations and wrath (lower pole; Animus, belongs to the principle yang and is seat of light and reasoning in man –higher pole).

Jung says:

“The deep introspection or ecstasy experience reveals the existence of a female figure whose definition can be Anima as imago, archetype or basis of every experience of a man regarding a woman. This is why the image of Anima is regularly projected onto a woman”.

Anima is a partial psychic system of the unconscious; therefore, it is personal. Its antithesis is Animus, a higher principle representing clarity of consciousness, and differentiated by Jung in man and in woman. For man he prefers to use, instead of Animus, the word Logos that, according to him, is a better expression of the spirit of man, and reserves Animus for the case of woman, whose character is that of a logos, but of lower kind.

CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion, the book “The Mystery of the Golden Flower” and Wilhelm’s and Jung’s commentaries should be read, but its study and comprehension are only within the reach of specialists.

Doubtless, as you could see through precedent brief descriptions, Jung’s psychology is extremely complex, full of terms and hard to understand as a whole, but it contributes with facts of unquestionable value.

Among those facts, the structure of the unconscious and different autonomous contents stand out and explain many psychical dysfunctions and certain parapsychological or metapsychical phenomena.

Also it is worth to take into account the existence of at least two focuses of consciousness, one personal and the other impersonal, the first ordinary and the second higher or transcendent. This knowledge has practical applications in psychotherapy (individual improvement and psycho-synthesis at a higher plane of consciousness). It is a fact the existence of an archetypal female image, Anima, in the unconscious of man, and this image projected outward is a fact to consider when one tries to explain certain both normal and pathological phenomena.