

**DEATH AND GNOSIS:
ARCHETYPAL DREAM IMAGERY IN
TERMINAL ILLNESS**

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by

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No, my lord, in the skies our death is inscribed,
Man cannot cross that limit ordained,
And measures only plunge him down
Into the very misfortune he tries to avoid.
Thus does the sovereign grandeur of the gods
Choose to play with our human weaknesses.

From L. Ferrier, Adraste.

Between the sleeping mind and the waking mind,
the dreaming mind enjoys an experience which
borrows from nowhere its light and its genius.
From M. Foucault, Dream, Imagination and Existence

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ABSTRACT

The central aim of this study was to explore the meaning of death as both a literal and an imaginative reality, and to elucidate the fundamental tensions between these meanings of death in modern existence. Recognition was given to the need for a poetic rather than a scientific approach to thanatology, and an epistemological foundation for a poetics of death was sought in the tradition of gnosis.

Theoretically, the study was grounded in the analytical psychology of C.G. Jung. It was argued that despite Jung's erratic allegiance to a Cartesian ontology and epistemology, his approach to death was nevertheless fundamentally poetic. The poetic parameters of death and dying were explored in the context of Jung's understanding of the dialectical tension between the ego and the self, and it was concluded that while death represents an opening to the imaginative possibilities of existence, these potentialities can come to the fore only when there is a corresponding willingness to die. In these terms, it was concluded that the tension between life and death forms a pivotal dynamic of human existence.

These considerations led to the question of whether the poetic parameters of death and dying are applicable to the encounter with death as a concrete actuality. It was hypothesised that the approach of death would be met at two levels of reality, that of the ego and that of the self. The expectation was that while death would be seen as a literal ending from the perspective of the former, it may represent the fulfilment of Being from the viewpoint of the self. It was also assumed that the tension between these images of death would be mediated by way of archetypal symbols, which represent the bearers of gnosis in modern culture.

To address these issues at an empirical level, a hermeneutically grounded thematic analysis of 108 dreams reported by dying persons was undertaken. Twenty initial themes emerged from the data. Each of these themes was in turn elucidated by way of Jung's method of amplification. This exercise yielded five concise themes, these being (a) death, (b) transformation, (c) the self (d) the Feminine, and (e) the Masculine.

It was concluded that dreams manifesting during the dying process reveal a fundamental tension between literal and metaphoric possibilities of death. Dream symbols were also found to mediate

between this tension, and to orchestrate the individuation process. It was concluded that in the context of dying, dreams may reflect and facilitate the emergence of a meaningful gnosis of death. The clinical implications of these findings were considered, and indications for further research were provided.

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PREFACE

The past few decades have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of interest in the topic of death and dying, but relatively little attention has been afforded to the meaning and significance of death as a psychological presence and reality throughout the course of life. The reasons for this neglect may be located firstly in the ethic of modernism, and secondly in the dominance of Cartesian science in contemporary thanatology. On the one hand, the ethos of modernism has treated death as little more than an intrusion upon a socially sanctioned quest for the magnification of the humanistic subject. On the other hand, Cartesian science has promoted a view of death as a literal and objective event, about which nothing can be known apart from its manifestations as a collective phenomenon. Taken together, these factors have resulted in a thanatophobic and rationalistic culture, in which concern for death as a meaningful possibility of existence has essentially been relegated to the dustbin of history.

Nevertheless, a poetic tradition has attempted to nurture an image of death as a meaningful possibility of personal existence. At the forefront of this tradition are existentialist and phenomenological writers, who share a recognition that the key task facing a postmodern culture is that of a meaningful recollection of death. For them, the recovery of death as an authentic dimension of existence is a necessity in the endeavour towards the emergence and consolidation of Being, an endeavour which persuasively challenges the ontological indifference of Western rationalism.

Even a cursory consideration of Jung's writings would suggest that his psychology has a meaningful contribution to make to the poetic tradition. Emerging in a context of personal and historical crisis, his thinking was centrally oriented towards the recovery of meaning in an age of nihilistic despair, and his work sought to give expression to those conditions necessary for such a recovery. However, it is a little recognised fact that Jung himself saw death as the ontological and existential pivot in this process, for the paradoxical reality is that his works have, ostensibly, relatively little to say about the problem of human finitude - at least when compared to the existential-phenomenological tradition. Accordingly, both scientific and poetic thanatologists have given scant attention to the role of analytical psychology in theory building and in empirical research. While Jung is widely recognised as having been a leading thinker of the twentieth century, and while the central themes and precepts of his psychology have been articulated with diverse clinical, philosophical, theological, and social issues, very few attempts have been made to apply his thinking to the question of death.

From these considerations emerge the central aims and concerns of this dissertation:

First, an attempt will be made to promote a poetic interpretation of Jung's treatment of death. Often, this will be done by elucidating the parallels between Jung's thinking and that of other poetic writers of the modern era. This means that the work will occasionally transgress the boundaries between different scholastic traditions, but this is necessary because, as Jung readily conceded, his thinking about death was seldom precise. It is particularly necessary owing to the fact that the poetic sensibility to Jung's thanatology tends to be clouded by his inconsistent reliance upon a Cartesian model of the mind. Ultimately, a route of challenging the scientific basis to Jung's thinking about death must therefore be followed. This is not to dispute the valid claims of scientific rigour and thinking in certain areas of analytical psychology; but death, if it is to be recovered in a meaningful way, is not one of these areas. If we wish to understand what it means to die, then our inquiry must be directed not towards death as an objective reality, but towards death as an imaginative possibility.

A second major aim of this thesis follows from these reflections. For while it is necessary to challenge a scientific ontology of finitude, it is equally important to avoid ungrounded and quixotic conjectures as to the ultimate value and purpose of death. This problem tends to occur when the imaginative meaning of death is artificially separated from its grounding as a concrete actuality, leading on the one hand to Romantic visions of eternal fulfilment, and on the other hand to overly abstract models which have little relevance to the ontic contingencies of existence. Consequently, the present thesis sets out to highlight the tensions and the points of connection between the metaphoric and the literal parameters of death and dying. For ultimately, the one dimension imparts meaning to the other; a death that is only intellectual lacks affective potency and thus fails to move one towards reflective awakening, while a death that is only literal is bereft of meaning and purpose. On the other hand, awareness of the vital intersection of these dimensions, i.e. an experience of death that encompasses both the literal and the figurative, leads on the other hand to a subjective knowledge of death that is immediate, convictional and transformative. The term gnosis, which reflects an ancient tradition of poetic or imaginative knowledge, is adopted to refer to this mode of encountering the reality of death.

In previous ages, gnosis of death was an integral part of the customs, beliefs and rituals of society. In the modern age, the erosion of traditional belief systems has resulted in a dearth of symbolic models that have the capacity to mediate the experience of death in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental precept of analytical psychology that human experience is still grounded in these mythic, or archetypal, patterns. It may therefore be assumed that the encounter with death will be shaped by archetypal images, and, by bringing an imaginative response to bear

on the literal ending of life, these images may be seen as a valuable source of gnosis to the dying person. The present thesis addresses these possibilities empirically, by way of a hermeneutic analysis of the dreams of a number of dying subjects. The purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the basic metaphors that structure and shape the experience of dying.

The question of death is so nebulous that, in the scheme of things, this contribution is inevitably modest. Notwithstanding this limitation, it is hoped that this dissertation will offer a meaningful challenge not only to the way in which we as modern Westerners think about death and dying, but to our tendency to take for granted the gift of existence itself.

CHAPTER ONE

GNOSIS AND THE RECOLLECTION OF DEATH

1.1. Introduction: Death and the Modern Situation

Throughout the course of human history, no phenomenon has so inspired and so threatened the imagination as that of death. Thus we find that the need to make sense of this enigmatic and paradoxical reality, and to discover beyond its horrendous implications an intrinsic purpose and meaning, has formed a persistent theme in the myths, religious beliefs, and social rituals of humanity (cf. Aries, 1974; Bauman, 1992; Bloch & Parry, 1982; Burland, 1974; Choron, 1963; Gordon, 1978; Grof & Halifax, 1977; Henderson & Oakes, 1990; Herzog, 1983). As Koestler (quoted by Gordon, 1978, p. 3) writes:

Take the word 'death' out of your vocabulary and the great works of literature become meaningless; take that awareness away and the cathedrals collapse, the pyramids vanish into the sand, the great organs become silent.

For our purposes, it is neither desirable nor necessary to provide a long account of the evolution of social attitudes and responses towards death¹. Nor does it need to be restated in any detail that twentieth century Western civilisation has been characterised, for the most part, by an unprecedented absence or denial of death in social consciousness (Becker, 1973; Feifel, 1990; Gordon, 1978; Gorer, 1980; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Searles, 1961; Weisman, 1980). The central concern of this thesis is rather the question of how death may be reclaimed in more than a merely abstract, intellectual manner, so that its reality is brought into a meaningful relationship with the conduct of life. Attention to this issue is directed primarily by the conviction that, faced with the growing threat of nihilism in contemporary Western culture (cf. Capra, 1982; Demske, 1970; Levin,

¹ This topic has been more than adequately covered by other authors (e.g. Bauman, 1992; Becker, 1973; Choron, 1963; Herzog, 1983). In particular, mention must be made of the work of the French historian Phillip Aries (1974; 1980; 1981), who offers an extensive analysis of the image of death in pre-modern and post-Enlightenment Western culture.

1988; Roszak, 1972), a decisive challenge of the modern (or perhaps more correctly, postmodern) epoch is to bring about a recovery of those ontological dimensions which throw the meaning of existence into sharp relief; and in this regard, generations of poets and philosophers attest that death appears to be unsurpassed in its evocative capacities. In particular, we need to recover an ancient acknowledgement that it is the reality of finitude that makes existence an issue for us. For it is ultimately the sheer 'absurdity' of death - the realisation that all things live only to die - that incites meaningful awareness of oneself as an existent being (Cooper, 1990; Demske, 1970; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987; Yalom, 1980). As Fulton (1964) comments, "death asks us for our identity. Confronted by death, man is compelled to provide in some form a response to the question: Who am I?" (p. 3). Koestenbaum (1976) promotes a similar appreciation of the ontological significance of death:

"... death is an influential self-concept. And it is this certainty about our eventual death and that of all other human beings that is the key to understanding our human nature ... Death - our own and that of others - explains what it means to be human (searching for meaning, immortality, freedom, love, and individuality) far better than psychological principles of sex and aggression, the biological instincts of survival and procreation, the utilitarian theories of happiness and approbation, or the religious ukase of God's will. The anticipation of death reveals to us who we are" (p. 7, original emphasis).

Taking this a step further, it is then equally true that, as Gordon (1978) contends, "man's greatest achievements, as well as his worst crimes, seem to be, at least in part, an expression of the way he handles his knowledge of the existence of death" (p. 3). Thus the search for a better future, particularly as regards the need to bring to bear a more benevolent and hospitable way of being in the world, is intimately bound up with our shared response to the reality of death. It is in this spirit that the present work is undertaken. In this chapter, attention is paid to the idea that the ethical and intellectual parameters of modernism have mitigated against a meaningful response to death in Western culture. Following this debate, the extent to which the contemporary thanatology movement has actually managed to bring about a creative response to the problem of death is evaluated, and the need for a poetic approach to death and dying is emphasised.

1.1.1. The 'rediscovery' of death: a critical evaluation

Before proceeding to consider the implications of the denial of death in Western culture and the possible routes to a recovery of death, it is germane to appraise the extent to which it is still valid to speak of ours as a 'death-denying' civilisation. For it is incontestable that the closing decades of this century have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of interest in death and dying, to the extent that we seem to be faced with an almost obsessive preoccupation with death, particularly in the media (de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Lifton, 1979). This has led to numerous claims that the denial of death has, to all intents and purposes, given way to a cultural climate of acceptance. For example, Becker (1973) has asserted that death ranks as "one of the great rediscoveries of modern thought" (p. 11), and this sentiment is shared by Feifel (1990). Chaney (1988) goes so far as to suggest that nowadays those who do not concern themselves with the mystery of death "are the erratic ones" (p. x). Other writers, too, hold that a new *genre*, with the theme of death as its central focus, has taken root in Western culture (cf. da Free John, 1983; Fulton & Owen, 1987/8; Levine, 1982; Lifton, 1979).

As is witnessed in the prolific growth of the so-called thanatology movement (see below), the claim that there has been a significant rediscovery of death in contemporary Western culture is not entirely without merit. An important point of departure for this thesis is, however, to seriously question the extent to which this 'rediscovery' constitutes a move towards a genuine acceptance of death and an authentic awakening to its ontological significance in Western consciousness. For the image that has evolved in contemporary Western culture is not one of death as a personally meaningful possibility of existence, but one of death as an essentially anonymous (and typically violent) event (de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Lifton, 1979). A useful means of conceptualising this issue has been advanced by Koestenbaum (1971a & b), who distinguishes between the 'death of another' and the 'death of myself'. Essentially, the 'death of myself' entails an authentic and meaningful acknowledgement of death as a defining dimension of one's personal existence (cf. Todres, 1978). In contrast, the 'death of another' refers essentially to a detached interest in death as a generalised, anonymous event. This means that while death is accepted as an empirical reality of collective existence, one does not feel personally involved in its drama nor moved by its presence. As Koestenbaum (1971a) sees it, the 'death of another' is the dominant perspective through which the apparent 'rediscovery' of death has been effected in Western culture, and he discerns in this a defensive compromise which ultimately camouflages the

'true' reality of death by keeping its presence at a dispassionate distance:

"By means of the semantic and linguistic confusion between the *death of myself* and the *death of another*, we protect ourselves from the tremendous and dangerous amount of anxiety that is released when we are confronted with the phenomenologically accurate recognition of the meaning of our own death ... We hopefully maintain that the *death of another* is the only kind of death there is. In fact, we think of the *death of myself* as nothing worse than the *death of another* ... We believe that the *death of another* is characteristic of all forms of death, even our own. Through this device, we hide from ourselves the true and demolishing nature of our own anxiety about and tragedy of our own death" (p. 118, original italics).

It must be acknowledged that the evolution of human civilisation has always implied a certain defiance of the obvious limits of bodily existence. In The Denial of Death, Becker (1973) describes society as a "defiant creation of meaning" in the face of the irrevocable threat of death (p. 37), and Bauman (1992) similarly comments that "notoriously, societies are arrangements that permit humans to live with weaknesses that would otherwise render life impossible. Perhaps the most crucial of such arrangements is one that conceals the ultimate absurdity of the conscious existence of mortal beings; failing the concealment, one that defuses the potentially poisonous effects of its unconcealed, known presence" (pp. 17-18, original emphasis). The point however is that whereas in previous ages an important compromise between the need for life and the threat of death was attained primarily through the means of symbolic activity - such as in the form of religious and mythical models which made death both tolerable and meaningful - modern Western culture has been characterised by a socially orchestrated denial of death. In terms of Koestenbaum's understanding of the 'death of another', this state of denial appears to have given way in recent years simply to a tendency to situate the meaning of death in non-personal contexts so that its personal implications recede into the background. Thus the modern person still lives as if there were no personal death that has to be faced; a strategy of "belief in non-death" has replaced blatant denial (Bauman, 1992, p. 17). As Koestenbaum (1977) writes:

"I wonder occasionally whether the trend toward open discussion of death might also have its self-protective component. Perhaps there is a tacit compromise involved: 'All right, now, let us agree to be big, brave grown-ups and talk seriously about death, just as we learned to do about sex. But, you know, let's not get

carried away either. Let's keep this discussion within certain categories and compartments. Death is a fascinating topic to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there" (p. 310).

Demske (1970) adds that when death is unreflectingly accepted as a generalised, everyday event, it "sinks to the status of a completely normal occurrence, something that crosses the ken of one's existence fleetingly, without leaving any traces, without exciting any special notice or raising any special questions; it is reduced to a condition of bland inconspicuousness" (pp. 29-30). Hence the meaning of death is:

" ... beclouded by a falsely pacifying equivocation, which reveals itself in the thought: 'One must die someday, but not just yet.' More accurately this means: 'But I am not going to die just yet.' The anonymous 'one', which initially includes the speaker, is unthinkingly turned into a completely non-personal 'one', who is really 'no one.' This 'no one' dies, but certainly not I" (*ibid.*, p. 27, original emphasis).

1.1.2. Death and the ethic of modernism

Notwithstanding the apparent proliferation of interest in death and dying, the modern Westerner therefore remains a detached spectator to the drama of human mortality; Weisman (1977) fittingly compares this stance to that of "a dreamer who wants to talk about an intriguing dream, but is reluctant to analyze the elements that go into the dream" (p. 109). A range of factors - such as the move from the extended to the nuclear family, rapid urbanisation, the eradication of most serious illnesses, and the dramatic advance of medical technology - have undoubtedly contributed to the growing depersonalisation of death in Western society (Aries, 1980; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88; Gordon, 1978). As Romanyshyn (1982) points out, however, we must note that social transitions such as these are not simply superficial changes woven around an unchanging psychological life, but serve as indicators of historical shifts in the nature and experience of human existence. Thus the denial or concealment of death in modern culture is ultimately symptomatic of a more profound shift in the psychological life of humanity (cf. Bauman, 1991; Borkenau, 1965). In Western tradition, this shift may be located in the epochal transition from classicism to modernism.

Conventionally, the 'modern person' refers to one who is orientated in a post-Renaissance ethic of progress and development (cf. Brooke, 1991; Lasch, 1984; Levin, 1988)². For modernists, the Enlightenment vision of liberation from the repressive superstition of the past has translated into a captivating promise of a world ruled by objective reason (cf. Adler, 1945; Barrett, 1987; Clarke, 1992; Homans, 1979; Levin, 1988; Tarnas, 1990). Witnessed sharply in Descartes's (1647) elevation of the Cogito as the supreme path to truth, this ethic finds perhaps its most developed and blatant expression in the discourse of positivism³, which provides the ideological grounding for modern science. The sway of positivism has in turn impacted decisively on the image of death in the Western tradition.

In the first instance, the entrenchment of a positivist world-view has entailed a key shift from mythos to logos as the bearer of reality. The traditional authority of 'faith' has been usurped by the power of reason, with the result that fundamental questions and issues of existence, once the realm of myth and religion, have entered the domain of scientific suspicion. As Wahl (1965) states, however, the mystery of death "does not yield to science and to rationality" (p. 57), a point echoed by Bauman (1991):

" ... death blatantly defies the power of reason: reason's power is to be a guide to good choice, but death is not a matter of choice. Death is the scandal, the ultimate humiliation of reason. It saps the trust in reason and the security that reason promises. It loudly declares reason's lie. It inspires fear that undermines and ultimately defeats reason's offer of confidence. Reason cannot exculpate itself of this ignominy. It can only try a cover-up" (p. 15).

The denial of death may therefore be understood as a defensive response to the emphatic challenge which the reality of finitude delivers to the modernist illusion of mastery and rationality (*ibid.*, p. 134). Hence the dominant image of death in modern existence is not that of a sacred and numinous mystery, but that of a capricious or errant element which poses the ultimate threat to the

² As Brooke (1991, p. 177) points out, 'modern' cannot simply be equated with 'contemporary', for the past decades have also witnessed an erosion of the fundamental dictates of modernist ideologies. The contentious issue of whether this challenge has been sufficiently consolidated to speak of the beginnings of a 'postmodern' era is however beyond the scope of this thesis.

³ The term 'positivism' derives from the work of Comte, who identified three evolutionary stages in human thinking: theological, in which events are attributed to divine intervention; metaphysical, in which events are attributed to speculative causes; and 'positive', in which reasoning remains within the realm of observable and measurable phenomena (Macquarrie, 1963, p. 95f.).

self-validating rationality of the Cartesian ego. As Garfield (1975) comments, we have tended to see death as being nothing more than "an intrusion upon the scientific quest for immortality" (p. 148). Nowhere is this more evident than in the stance of the modern technocrat, for whom the miraculous gift of technology offers the spurious but seductive promise that death itself will ultimately be eradicated (cf. Kastenbaum, 1972; Romanyshyn, 1989).

Clearly, the possibility that death is a necessary and even vitalising dimension of existence does not accord with the imperial and progressive vision of modernism. On the contrary, it stands as the nemesis of the Promethean quest that is at the heart of the post-Enlightenment ethic, and thus emerges as an unwelcome reminder of the very real limits of human freedom. If the "triumph of 'Man'" necessitated the death of God as foreseen by Nietzsche (Levin, 1988, p. 4), it has therefore also necessitated the concealment of death. As Simone de Bouvier has stated, "our death is inside us, but not like the stone in the fruit, like the meaning of our life; inside us, but a stranger to us, an enemy, a thing of fear" (quoted by Leman-Stefanovic, 1987, p. 176).

1.1.3. The scientific objectification of death

A particular way in which the paradigm of positivism has impacted on the prevailing image of death in contemporary Western culture is through the objectification of death as a literal, biological event. By the objectification of death, we are referring to a particular tendency, grounded in the Cartesian vision of positivist science, to translate the phenomenon of death into a precise scientific construction which can be situated within a universe of predictable laws. In terms of this vision, we are encouraged to think of death as nothing other than the cessation of bodily functioning, with the result that the predicament of human mortality is ultimately reduced to a series of specific cases revolving around the 'death of another'. By this strategy, Bauman (1992) points out, we expediently convert the insoluble problem of death into various soluble (or at least potentially soluble) issues of health and disease - one does not die, one is killed by, or succumbs to, some particular physical threat which can, in an ideal world, be avoided:

"All deaths have causes, each death has a cause, each particular death has its particular cause. Corpses are cut open, explored, scanned, tested, until the cause is found: a blood clot, kidney failure, haemorrhage, heart arrest, lung collapse. We do not hear of people dying of mortality. They die only of individual causes ... One

does not just die, one dies of a disease or of murder" (p. 138, original emphasis).

We must discern in this objectification of death an attempt to conceal the shattering reality of finitude in daily existence. Quoting Bauman again:

"The truth that death cannot be escaped 'in the end' is not denied, of course. It cannot be denied; but it could be held off the agenda, elbowed out by another truth: that each particular case of death ... can be resisted, postponed, or avoided altogether. Death as such is inevitable; but each concrete instance of death is contingent ... I can do nothing to defy mortality. But I can do quite a lot to avoid a blood clot or a lung cancer. I can stop eating eggs, refrain from smoking, do physical exercises, keep my weight down ... And while doing all these right things and forcing myself to abstain from the wrong ones, I have no time left to ruminate over the ultimate futility of each thing I am doing ... Thus the cause of instrumental rationality celebrates ever new triumphant battles - and in the din of festivities the news of the lost war are inaudible" (*ibid.*, pp. 137-8, original emphasis)⁴.

A further consequence of the scientific objectification of death takes the form of a devitalising epistemological dualism. Typically, positivist science treats death as a literal ending only, i.e. as a concrete actuality. This severely limits the range of possible meanings attached to the image of death, for by treating life and death as mutually exclusive states, modernist thinking refutes the possibility that there can be knowledge of death that is more than merely speculative. Hunter (1967) reflects the essential thrust of this position in writing that "it is an epistemological fact that death is unknowable, inexperiencable, since for one to experience the state we call death, one would have to be alive" (p. 86). Weisman and Hackett (1965) similarly ask:

"What can any man imagine of his own death? Is it possible to conceive of his own utter extinction? ... A fantasy of absolute subjective death is impossible to imagine. If there is some meaning or emotion in the phrase, 'When I am dead,' there is also

⁴ Of course, this does not mean that an authentic awareness of personal mortality is incompatible with a concern for healthy living; the concern here is rather with the need to articulate a conscious awareness of the omnipresent possibility of death with a genuine interest in physical well-being, i.e. one that emerges from an authentic appreciation of the value of life. In the absence of this, Gorer (1965, p. 114) comments, we find in Western thinking an "excessive preoccupation with the risk of death" as opposed to an emphasis on health for its own sake.

a trace of psychological survival in which 'I' continue to exercise an influence in some form or other ... The notion of 'I am dead' is a paradox" (pp. 316-7).

The epistemological implications of this argument will be returned to in a later discussion. For the present, it must be noted that the only meaning of death that stands up to the rigours of scientific scepticism is therefore that pertaining to death as a generalised, collective event, i.e. the 'death of another'. In this way, positivist science perpetuates and reinforces the concealment of death as a personally meaningful dimension of existence; by assuming that death can be known only from the 'outside', the possibility of authentic experience of the 'death of myself' is essentially disavowed. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceptualise of death as a possibility of personal existence. This is alluded to in Freud's famous statement that "no one really believes in his own death" (Freud, 1957, p. 289), and in one of Sarte's works a fictional character awaiting execution gives voice to a similar dilemma:

"I see my corpse; that's not hard but I'm the one who sees it, with my eyes. I've got to think ... think that I won't see anything more and the world will go on for others. We aren't made to think that, Pablo"⁵.

It may be seen that modernist thinking not only invites a fundamental polarisation of life and death, and of living and dying, but also loses sight of the vital phenomenological possibilities which underpin the ontological connections between life and death. The nature of these possibilities will be elucidated elsewhere, but the point for now is that the existential import of death is veiled in modern life at least partly because the scientific bent to our thinking confines its meaning to a literal event only, and thus to something outside of the boundaries of human experience.

1.1.4. The need for a recollection of death

Events of the twentieth century, especially the massive destruction of two world wars and the advent of the nuclear bomb, appear to have forced an ambivalent awareness of death upon a reticent civilisation (cf. de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Feifel, 1990; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88; Gordon, 1978). But while the denial of death in Western culture may be less obvious now than it

⁵ From The Wall. Quoted by Leman-Stefanovic (1987, p. 145, original emphasis).

was in the recent past, it is evident from the foregoing considerations that modernists have nonetheless been unable to fully accept death as the ultimate limitation to, and even less so the quintessence of, human existence. In this light, we may concur with Gordon (1978), who writes:

"The fact that the awareness of our own mortality can render - and does in fact render - our lives more valuable, more precious and more worthwhile, is something that technological man had almost forgotten. Only a few poets, artists and philosophers have kept alive for us the knowledge that death is in fact indispensable in order to give life both zest and meaning" (p. 22).

In an age dominated by a culture of nihilism and ontological indifference, these comments assume heightened significance. Indeed, many social commentators interpret the spiritual and ethical crisis of modernity as a pathological response to the denial of death, claiming that the concealment of death as a meaningful presence inevitably effects a closure of Being and a sense of existential despair (e.g. Bauman, 1992; Borkenau, 1965; Cooper, 1990; Demske, 1970; Frankl, 1967; 1971; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88 Koestenbaum, 1971a & b). This line of thinking finds succinct expression in Heidegger's work:

"Our age is destitute not only because God is dead, but because the mortals can scarcely recognize and cope with their own mortality ... Death withdraws and becomes an enigma ... The age is destitute because the unconcealment of the essence of pain, death, and love is absent" (translated and quoted from Holzwege by Demske, 1970, p.138).

Taking these considerations further, it may be argued that in forgetting the inherent vulnerability and ephemerality of existence, we have lost sight too of our responsibility as guardians of Being and as agents of historical change (cf. Levin, 1988, pp. 16f.). Instead, the modern person is essentially suspended in time, lacking both a connection to the past and an orientation towards the future; and in such a context, we inevitably will be confronted with the destructive consequences of a despairing failure of reason. In this light, what is required is clearly more than the 'rediscovery' of death as a generalised, collective phenomenon. The historical task that confronts us is rather that of reclaiming death as a meaningful possibility of existence and bringing this possibility into a conscious dialectic with the pursuit of life itself. The term 'recollection' seems to be most suitable for defining the parameters of this task.

Emerging from the ontology of Heidegger, 'recollection' refers, as Levin (1985) describes it, to "a retracing of steps in order to retrieve an understanding which will prepare us for new steps forward" (p. 72). Recollection is thus not a passive form of enquiry, but a commitment to a body of understanding that makes contact with our history, interacts with present reality, and facilitates a different - and hopefully better - response to the future. In this regard, Levin explains that:

"There is a deepening crisis in our Western tradition. On the one hand, it seems clear that we must break free of a dominant tradition which is taking us ever closer to the time of annihilation through nihilism. On the other hand, it also seems clear that we cannot hope to escape the danger of nihilism without drawing strength from resources of spiritual wisdom which also belong to our tradition, but which the prevailing 'world picture' continues to conceal and suppress and exclude. Thus, if we cling to the dominant tradition, we are lost; but if we break away, we are in danger of losing touch with ancient traditions whose wisdom, long suppressed, might nevertheless now - even now - help to save us. A tradition can certainly be oppressive; it can stand in the way of growth, of life. But a retrieval of the 'origins' of that tradition ... can be emancipatory, a source of strength" (*ibid.*, p. 3).

Thus the work of recollection is simultaneously a process of transformation involving the retrieval and renewal of those ontological potentialities, including death, that have been concealed or forgotten in the rationalistic climate of modern existence. So far as thanatology is concerned, recollection thus implies a pivotal deliteralisation of the meaning of death, a meaning that is given imaginally and hence metaphorically (see below). What this demands is nothing short of a radical departure from the nullifying and objectifying stance of modern science, in favour of an approach which promotes an essentially imaginative vision of death and dying. From what has already been said, it may be stated with some justification that this process of recollection constitutes our historical calling in the liminal years of the modern era, when we stand suspended between the threat of nihilism on the one hand and the possibility for the emergence of authentic Being on the other hand. Reflecting again on the catastrophic events of this century, it may be agreed that this calling assumes a compelling quality.

1.2. The Thanatology Movement

Given the foregoing considerations, it is now necessary to turn attention to the so-called 'thanatology movement', referring to the multi-disciplinary approach to death and dying which emerged in the late 1950's with the work of Feifel and his colleagues⁶ (cf. Feifel, 1990; Feifel *et.al.*, 1959; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). The question with which we are essentially concerned in this section is the extent to which this movement has taken up the challenge outlined above, namely that of a meaningful recollection of death.

It is pertinent to note that the actual history of thanatology predates the modern movement, for prior to this there was already a strong philosophical tradition (extending through, *inter alia*, Socrates, Plato, Hegel and Nietzsche) which had situated death at the forefront of the analysis of existence. In the climate of post-Enlightenment rationalism, however, it was essentially only existentialist writers who consistently afforded prominence to the problematic of death (cf. Choron, 1963; Feifel, 1990); for the most part, modern science, medicine and psychology were conspicuously silent with regard to the question of death and dying (Feifel, 1990; Gordon, 1978; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). Again, this neglect betrays both the conspiracy of silence that surrounded the topic and reflects the fact that under the influence of positivist science fundamental questions of meaning had given way to dispassionate, rational analysis. For the science of psychology, death represented little more than an intellectual knot which smacked of obscurity and thus did not warrant serious academic attention (cf. Feifel, 1990; Munitz, 1974).

As a nascent discipline, the modern thanatology movement was thus confronted with deeply entrenched taboos which impeded research and development, and pioneers of the movement have commonly professed to having almost abandoned their interest in death in the face of both subtle and blatant disapproval of their work by medical colleagues (Feifel, 1990; Kubler-Ross, 1969; LeShan, 1977). Not surprisingly, the early years of the movement were consequently characterised by a lack of conceptual models, rudimentary clinical guidelines, and minimal empirical data (Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Kubler-Ross, 1969; LeShan, 1977; Magni, 1972). Nonetheless, thanatologists rallied around a shared vision that their approach to death "must be rooted in human beings, not in a mathematical physics model" (Feifel, 1990, p. 538) and, with the added impetus

⁶ The emergence of the contemporary thanatology movement is usually traced to a 1956 symposium entitled The Concept of Death and its Relation to Behaviour, which formed part of that year's APA (American Psychological Association) congress in Chicago. The symposium was chaired by Feifel (cf. Feifel, 1959).

of the celebrated work of Kubler-Ross (1969), the movement displayed prolific growth⁷. It is not necessary to trace these developments in any detail, for there is little doubt that the thanatology movement has made a significant contribution both to the acceptance of death as a serious academic concern, and, as will be seen in a later discussion, to the implementation of a more humane approach to the care of the dying. Yet there are presently grounds for asserting that the pioneering vision which characterised the early years of the discipline has given way on the one hand to a reductionistic emphasis on statistical data and, on the other hand, to an anti-rationalistic but naive Romanticism⁸. As it is at least partly within the context of these developments that the rationale for the present study is located, it is pertinent to pursue this tension in greater detail. In this section, a brief overview is given of scientific and Romantic approaches to thanatology, and an alternative approach, the poetic tradition, is introduced.

1.2.1. Scientific thanatology

While an almost revolutionary climate characterised the early years of the thanatology movement (cf. Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kubler-Ross, 1969), the need for academic respectability and research funding has seen an increasing emphasis afforded to positivist methodologies in thanatological research (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). This has in turn resulted in a proliferation of studies that have, in the words of one critic, borne "few really usable results" (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88, p. 258). In recent years, many thanatologists have in fact identified a far-reaching crisis in the field, centering primarily around the perception that the sheer volume of research has not been matched in terms of quality (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Schulz & Schlarb, 1987/88).

As previously noted, modern science promotes the objectification of death through an epistemological premise that death can be known only from the perspective of the objective

⁷ For example, the Psychological Abstracts of 1948 contained only five entries under the heading of 'death', in 1960 there were 17, and in 1965 only 34; by 1970 there were 147 (Godin, 1972). The number of contributions has continued to grow exponentially. Apart from the abundance of literature pertaining to death and dying, the consolidation of the thanatology movement is also evident in the emergence of numerous professional and lay organisations dealing with practical issues surrounding death, dying and bereavement (Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977).

⁸ The convention is followed in this thesis of capitalising the term 'Romantic' to indicate a specific philosophical tradition, as outlined in a later section of this chapter.

spectator. The scientific thanatologist is thus typically concerned with the identification and measurement of specific variables pertaining to death and dying, and with the generalisation of these findings from limited samples to broader populations. While this approach has yielded substantial information regarding the demographic aspects of death - such as age, sex, and causes (Schulz & Schlarb, 1987/88) - it has discouraged a systematic understanding of the phenomenological dimensions of human finitude. As an example of this tendency, Kastenbaum & Costa (1977) point to the concept of 'death anxiety', which has attracted considerable attention from scientific thanatologists in recent years. For the most part, research has focused on attempts to delineate and quantify this variable, resulting in a bewildering and often contradictory array of scales, techniques and statistical correlations which offer at best only a superficial understanding of our innate fear of death.

It is important to note that the objection here is not with scientific empiricism per se, for, as Kastenbaum and Costa point out, the conversion of long-held assumptions into clearly formulated questions that can be answered through empirical observation is an important factor in the ongoing development of thanatology (*ibid.*). The issue is rather that when this approach is applied in a narrow and reductionistic way, the inevitable result is, as Bluebond-Langner (1987/88) puts it, "a thicket of detail that prevents the advance of our work" (p. 258). Moreover, the purely empirical emphasis of scientific thanatology has tended to impede the development of theoretical models, with the result that theory and observation are seldom articulated (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977).

1.2.2. Western Romanticism

Challenging the dominance of scientific thanatology is a school of thought which, in radical contrast to the former's emphasis on the concrete and observable, embraces the transcendent and the metaphysical. The term 'Romantic' seems appropriate to describe this approach, for its epistemological and ontological premises essentially owe ideological allegiance to the work of the nineteenth-century Romantic poet-philosophers such as Novalis and Schelling (cf. Avens, 1982; Choron, 1963; Jaffe, 1989).

The history of Romantic thanatology encompasses relatively diverse sources. It includes the Christian martyrs for whom death (especially death through sacrifice) offered a doorway to eternal

union with the Saviour, as well as the early mystics who desired not physical annihilation but an ego-less condition of fusion with an Absolute Whole (Avens, 1980; Choron, 1963; Jaffe, 1989). The common theme is the fact that for the Romantic, death is ultimately glorified as a solution to the problem of existence. Not only does it promise a 'higher' form of existence and an ultimate reality which lies beyond the world of the senses, but it is seen as a path to the realisation of an ideal state which is inaccessible during the course of life itself (Choron, 1963, pp. 156f.). Death is thus regarded as the 'romanticising principle' of existence (Jaffe, 1989, p. 33), so that it is typically exalted above the mundanities of everyday life. This theme was expressed blatantly and dramatically by Schelling, for whom "those who are liberated from earthly existence ought to be congratulated" (quoted by Choron, 1963, p. 160).

The essential vision outlined above is equally evident in the work of contemporary Romantics (e.g. Chaney, 1988; da Free John, 1983; Levine, 1982). Disillusioned with the reductionistic and dualistic foundations of positivist science, they purport to offer an approach that is suitably 'New Age', emphasising a meaning of death as the complete manifestation of innate potentials through transcendence of the personal self and union with a reality deemed to be Absolute. As Levine (1982) describes it, death is to be "honoured and respected as a wonderful opportunity" for ultimate 'liberation' from the confines of the body" (p. 252). Ultimately, this approach thus revolves around instilling in both the living and the dying an attitude of "loving surrender" towards death (*ibid.*).

Given the confines of the present study, it is neither possible nor necessary to consider Romantic literature in any detail. The point must however be made that while the sincerity and enthusiasm of Romantic thinkers is not disputed, the approach itself tends to mitigate against a meaningful recollection of death. For essentially, Romanticism offers a "kind of imagination [that] leaves us half estranged from the earth and renders our understanding of death weak and without root" (Sardello, 1974, p. 61). Or as Avens (1982) comments with reference to Romantic sentiment, "an other-worldly soul is a soul without a world, a lonely soul adrift in a cosmos that knows it not ... [A] purely spiritual soul, even though it may have all the appurtenances of an abstractly conceived immortality ... is mortal from a surfeit of spirituality, as it were, from lack of breath" (pp. 36-7). Because of this, the gift of embodiment is ultimately negated, resulting in a 'death-oriented' existence which is unwittingly bound to a similar form of nihilistic despair as is experienced by the modern technocrat who would deny death entirely, or at least subdue it. Both the Romantic and the modernist seek immortality, the one at the level of an other-worldly plane of existence and the other through the beguiling promise of technological miracles; and in doing so, both tend to renounce the possibilities of the present in favour of an unrequited longing for the future. Jaffe

(1989) points out that Romantics are therefore drawn away from life itself:

"The Romantics typically find in life itself no meaning; they strive to understand all things in transcendental terms, and hope to fulfil their longing in death ... Everything which, in life, reminds one of death: the night, dreams, the uncanny, sickness and solitude, the supernatural and the trance, attracts them with irresistible power. Beyond the limits of life they seek its origin and its worth, and this gives life its only meaning ... A peaceful and firm rooting in this world is to the Romantic as strange an idea as the thought of living life for its own sake" (pp. 33-4).

It may be seen that Romantic paradigms thus not only reduce everything short of death to the status of mere appearance (cf. Macquarrie, 1963, p. 29), but ultimately lose sight too of what is perhaps the central value of death itself - namely that it imparts meaning and purpose to the finite present.

1.2.3. The poetic tradition

At this juncture, it is pertinent to recall that the central question informing the present discussion concerns the need for a recollection of death in modern existence, and the extent to which contemporary approaches in thanatology address this need. From what has been said thus far, it is evident that neither scientific thinking, which treats death as an impersonal and generalised event, nor Romantic thinking, which purports to offer metaphysical schemes about the ultimate value of death, succeed in cultivating a climate conducive to the work of recollection. As Avens comments:

"To most people and philosophers death means either demise, a wasting away or transportation to some other-worldly sphere where death shall be no more. It is seldom realised, however, that both of these hypotheses lead to the cessation of human personality as we claim to know it. For to become food for worms or to be transmogrified into a spiritual being enjoying supernatural bliss must be profoundly irrelevant to what I am here and now. There is no continuity in either case ... Adopting a lofty tone, we often speak of death as the fulfilment of life, i.e., as 'actualisation' of our 'potential' for dying. Yet how often do we realise that behind such sublime language there is still lurking the old Aristotelian substance which is

essentially indifferent to its potential manifestation and that, consequently, death is still something which may or may not happen?" (1982, pp. 144-6).

It is in this context that the present thesis seeks to lend support to an alternative intellectual tradition which seeks to avoid both the raw and simplistic empiricism of positivist science and the metaphysical and absolutist emphasis of Romantic philosophy. The term 'poetic', as it appears in hermeneutical discourse (cf. Avens, 1984; Brooke, 1991; Levin, 1988; Segal, 1989), seems particularly suitable to describe the fundamental parameters of this approach. Historically, a poetic vision of death has been most fervently advanced in existential-phenomenological literature, but poetic thinking also forms the basis for many writers from the tradition of depth psychology, and their contributions will be returned to throughout the course of this thesis. It must therefore be noted that, as with our description of scientific and Romantic schools of thanatology, the term 'poetic' essentially refers to a particular way of thinking about the meaning of death, rather than to a particular theoretical school.

The form and scope of poetic thinking is perhaps best introduced by comparing it to the dictates of modern science. For poetic discourse, a narrow focus on reductive explanation and logical deduction simply amounts to the negation of meaning (Levin, 1988, p. 435). In contrast to the scientists's concern with control and prediction, the poet is thus fundamentally attentive to the emergence and elucidation of Being through a process of hermeneutic understanding. In the inimitable style of Heidegger (1936), to be a poet means "to attend ... to the trace of the fugitive gods" (p. 94). In this sense, poesis (from the Greek, 'to make') involves, as Brooke (1991) explains, an "intrinsic, irreducible and mutually transformative relationship" between the poet and his or her subject matter (p. 7). If scientific truth emerges from strict regimentation and univocity of meaning, then poetic truth is, in contradistinction, grounded in plurivocal complexity and ambiguity (Levin, 1988, pp. 435f.). As Levin describes it, the style of vision associated with scientific thinking is exemplified by the fixed gaze of a dispassionate spectator examining an object presumed to be independent and neutral; the view of the poet, on the other hand, "is exemplified by the playful gaze ... centred by virtue of its openness to experience, its delight in being surprised, decentred, drawn into the invisible" (*ibid.*, p. 438). Underlying this vision is the fact that the poet typically embraces a mode of understanding that seeks to reclaim the inherently metaphoric character of psychological life, in contradistinction to the facile literalisms of modernist being (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 143ff.; see below). Thus if poesis emerges from a hermeneutic search for meaning, then this search begins not with denotative simplicity and exactness, but with the inherent ambiguity of psychological life.

**DEATH AND GNOSIS:
ARCHETYPAL DREAM IMAGERY IN
TERMINAL ILLNESS**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Psychology

by

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**RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown, South Africa**

December 1995

No, my lord, in the skies our death is inscribed,
Man cannot cross that limit ordained,
And measures only plunge him down
Into the very misfortune he tries to avoid.
Thus does the sovereign grandeur of the gods
Choose to play with our human weaknesses.

From L. Ferrier, Adraste.

Between the sleeping mind and the waking mind,
the dreaming mind enjoys an experience which
borrows from nowhere its light and its genius.
From M. Foucault, Dream, Imagination and Existence

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Most of all, however, I must acknowledge my subjects for the gift that they gave so willingly - the gift of their dreams, and the opportunity to share in the triumphs and hope, defeats and despair, of their living and dying. These are moments that I carry with me always, and they shall never cease to inspire me. May you have found the promise of your dreams.

ABSTRACT

The central aim of this study was to explore the meaning of death as both a literal and an imaginative reality, and to elucidate the fundamental tensions between these meanings of death in modern existence. Recognition was given to the need for a poetic rather than a scientific approach to thanatology, and an epistemological foundation for a poetics of death was sought in the tradition of gnosis.

Theoretically, the study was grounded in the analytical psychology of C.G. Jung. It was argued that despite Jung's erratic allegiance to a Cartesian ontology and epistemology, his approach to death was nevertheless fundamentally poetic. The poetic parameters of death and dying were explored in the context of Jung's understanding of the dialectical tension between the ego and the self, and it was concluded that while death represents an opening to the imaginative possibilities of existence, these potentialities can come to the fore only when there is a corresponding willingness to die. In these terms, it was concluded that the tension between life and death forms a pivotal dynamic of human existence.

These considerations led to the question of whether the poetic parameters of death and dying are applicable to the encounter with death as a concrete actuality. It was hypothesised that the approach of death would be met at two levels of reality, that of the ego and that of the self. The expectation was that while death would be seen as a literal ending from the perspective of the former, it may represent the fulfilment of Being from the viewpoint of the self. It was also assumed that the tension between these images of death would be mediated by way of archetypal symbols, which represent the bearers of gnosis in modern culture.

To address these issues at an empirical level, a hermeneutically grounded thematic analysis of 108 dreams reported by dying persons was undertaken. Twenty initial themes emerged from the data. Each of these themes was in turn elucidated by way of Jung's method of amplification. This exercise yielded five concise themes, these being (a) death, (b) transformation, (c) the self (d) the Feminine, and (e) the Masculine.

It was concluded that dreams manifesting during the dying process reveal a fundamental tension between literal and metaphoric possibilities of death. Dream symbols were also found to mediate

between this tension, and to orchestrate the individuation process. It was concluded that in the context of dying, dreams may reflect and facilitate the emergence of a meaningful gnosis of death. The clinical implications of these findings were considered, and indications for further research were provided.

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PREFACE

The past few decades have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of interest in the topic of death and dying, but relatively little attention has been afforded to the meaning and significance of death as a psychological presence and reality throughout the course of life. The reasons for this neglect may be located firstly in the ethic of modernism, and secondly in the dominance of Cartesian science in contemporary thanatology. On the one hand, the ethos of modernism has treated death as little more than an intrusion upon a socially sanctioned quest for the magnification of the humanistic subject. On the other hand, Cartesian science has promoted a view of death as a literal and objective event, about which nothing can be known apart from its manifestations as a collective phenomenon. Taken together, these factors have resulted in a thanatophobic and rationalistic culture, in which concern for death as a meaningful possibility of existence has essentially been relegated to the dustbin of history.

Nevertheless, a poetic tradition has attempted to nurture an image of death as a meaningful possibility of personal existence. At the forefront of this tradition are existentialist and phenomenological writers, who share a recognition that the key task facing a postmodern culture is that of a meaningful recollection of death. For them, the recovery of death as an authentic dimension of existence is a necessity in the endeavour towards the emergence and consolidation of Being, an endeavour which persuasively challenges the ontological indifference of Western rationalism.

Even a cursory consideration of Jung's writings would suggest that his psychology has a meaningful contribution to make to the poetic tradition. Emerging in a context of personal and historical crisis, his thinking was centrally oriented towards the recovery of meaning in an age of nihilistic despair, and his work sought to give expression to those conditions necessary for such a recovery. However, it is a little recognised fact that Jung himself saw death as the ontological and existential pivot in this process, for the paradoxical reality is that his works have, ostensibly, relatively little to say about the problem of human finitude - at least when compared to the existential-phenomenological tradition. Accordingly, both scientific and poetic thanatologists have given scant attention to the role of analytical psychology in theory building and in empirical research. While Jung is widely recognised as having been a leading thinker of the twentieth century, and while the central themes and precepts of his psychology have been articulated with diverse clinical, philosophical, theological, and social issues, very few attempts have been made to apply his thinking to the question of death.

From these considerations emerge the central aims and concerns of this dissertation:

First, an attempt will be made to promote a poetic interpretation of Jung's treatment of death. Often, this will be done by elucidating the parallels between Jung's thinking and that of other poetic writers of the modern era. This means that the work will occasionally transgress the boundaries between different scholastic traditions, but this is necessary because, as Jung readily conceded, his thinking about death was seldom precise. It is particularly necessary owing to the fact that the poetic sensibility to Jung's thanatology tends to be clouded by his inconsistent reliance upon a Cartesian model of the mind. Ultimately, a route of challenging the scientific basis to Jung's thinking about death must therefore be followed. This is not to dispute the valid claims of scientific rigour and thinking in certain areas of analytical psychology; but death, if it is to be recovered in a meaningful way, is not one of these areas. If we wish to understand what it means to die, then our inquiry must be directed not towards death as an objective reality, but towards death as an imaginative possibility.

A second major aim of this thesis follows from these reflections. For while it is necessary to challenge a scientific ontology of finitude, it is equally important to avoid ungrounded and quixotic conjectures as to the ultimate value and purpose of death. This problem tends to occur when the imaginative meaning of death is artificially separated from its grounding as a concrete actuality, leading on the one hand to Romantic visions of eternal fulfilment, and on the other hand to overly abstract models which have little relevance to the ontic contingencies of existence. Consequently, the present thesis sets out to highlight the tensions and the points of connection between the metaphoric and the literal parameters of death and dying. For ultimately, the one dimension imparts meaning to the other; a death that is only intellectual lacks affective potency and thus fails to move one towards reflective awakening, while a death that is only literal is bereft of meaning and purpose. On the other hand, awareness of the vital intersection of these dimensions, i.e. an experience of death that encompasses both the literal and the figurative, leads on the other hand to a subjective knowledge of death that is immediate, convictional and transformative. The term gnosis, which reflects an ancient tradition of poetic or imaginative knowledge, is adopted to refer to this mode of encountering the reality of death.

In previous ages, gnosis of death was an integral part of the customs, beliefs and rituals of society. In the modern age, the erosion of traditional belief systems has resulted in a dearth of symbolic models that have the capacity to mediate the experience of death in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental precept of analytical psychology that human experience is still grounded in these mythic, or archetypal, patterns. It may therefore be assumed that the encounter with death will be shaped by archetypal images, and, by bringing an imaginative response to bear

on the literal ending of life, these images may be seen as a valuable source of gnosis to the dying person. The present thesis addresses these possibilities empirically, by way of a hermeneutic analysis of the dreams of a number of dying subjects. The purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the basic metaphors that structure and shape the experience of dying.

The question of death is so nebulous that, in the scheme of things, this contribution is inevitably modest. Notwithstanding this limitation, it is hoped that this dissertation will offer a meaningful challenge not only to the way in which we as modern Westerners think about death and dying, but to our tendency to take for granted the gift of existence itself.

CHAPTER ONE

GNOSIS AND THE RECOLLECTION OF DEATH

1.1. Introduction: Death and the Modern Situation

Throughout the course of human history, no phenomenon has so inspired and so threatened the imagination as that of death. Thus we find that the need to make sense of this enigmatic and paradoxical reality, and to discover beyond its horrendous implications an intrinsic purpose and meaning, has formed a persistent theme in the myths, religious beliefs, and social rituals of humanity (cf. Aries, 1974; Bauman, 1992; Bloch & Parry, 1982; Burland, 1974; Choron, 1963; Gordon, 1978; Grof & Halifax, 1977; Henderson & Oakes, 1990; Herzog, 1983). As Koestler (quoted by Gordon, 1978, p. 3) writes:

Take the word 'death' out of your vocabulary and the great works of literature become meaningless; take that awareness away and the cathedrals collapse, the pyramids vanish into the sand, the great organs become silent.

For our purposes, it is neither desirable nor necessary to provide a long account of the evolution of social attitudes and responses towards death¹. Nor does it need to be restated in any detail that twentieth century Western civilisation has been characterised, for the most part, by an unprecedented absence or denial of death in social consciousness (Becker, 1973; Feifel, 1990; Gordon, 1978; Gorer, 1980; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Searles, 1961; Weisman, 1980). The central concern of this thesis is rather the question of how death may be reclaimed in more than a merely abstract, intellectual manner, so that its reality is brought into a meaningful relationship with the conduct of life. Attention to this issue is directed primarily by the conviction that, faced with the growing threat of nihilism in contemporary Western culture (cf. Capra, 1982; Demske, 1970; Levin,

¹ This topic has been more than adequately covered by other authors (e.g. Bauman, 1992; Becker, 1973; Choron, 1963; Herzog, 1983). In particular, mention must be made of the work of the French historian Phillip Aries (1974; 1980; 1981), who offers an extensive analysis of the image of death in pre-modern and post-Enlightenment Western culture.

1988; Roszak, 1972), a decisive challenge of the modern (or perhaps more correctly, postmodern) epoch is to bring about a recovery of those ontological dimensions which throw the meaning of existence into sharp relief; and in this regard, generations of poets and philosophers attest that death appears to be unsurpassed in its evocative capacities. In particular, we need to recover an ancient acknowledgement that it is the reality of finitude that makes existence an issue for us. For it is ultimately the sheer 'absurdity' of death - the realisation that all things live only to die - that incites meaningful awareness of oneself as an existent being (Cooper, 1990; Demske, 1970; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987; Yalom, 1980). As Fulton (1964) comments, "death asks us for our identity. Confronted by death, man is compelled to provide in some form a response to the question: Who am I?" (p. 3). Koestenbaum (1976) promotes a similar appreciation of the ontological significance of death:

"... death is an influential self-concept. And it is this certainty about our eventual death and that of all other human beings that is the key to understanding our human nature ... Death - our own and that of others - explains what it means to be human (searching for meaning, immortality, freedom, love, and individuality) far better than psychological principles of sex and aggression, the biological instincts of survival and procreation, the utilitarian theories of happiness and approbation, or the religious ukase of God's will. The anticipation of death reveals to us who we are" (p. 7, original emphasis).

Taking this a step further, it is then equally true that, as Gordon (1978) contends, "man's greatest achievements, as well as his worst crimes, seem to be, at least in part, an expression of the way he handles his knowledge of the existence of death" (p. 3). Thus the search for a better future, particularly as regards the need to bring to bear a more benevolent and hospitable way of being in the world, is intimately bound up with our shared response to the reality of death. It is in this spirit that the present work is undertaken. In this chapter, attention is paid to the idea that the ethical and intellectual parameters of modernism have mitigated against a meaningful response to death in Western culture. Following this debate, the extent to which the contemporary thanatology movement has actually managed to bring about a creative response to the problem of death is evaluated, and the need for a poetic approach to death and dying is emphasised.

1.1.1. The 'rediscovery' of death: a critical evaluation

Before proceeding to consider the implications of the denial of death in Western culture and the possible routes to a recovery of death, it is germane to appraise the extent to which it is still valid to speak of ours as a 'death-denying' civilisation. For it is incontestable that the closing decades of this century have witnessed a dramatic resurgence of interest in death and dying, to the extent that we seem to be faced with an almost obsessive preoccupation with death, particularly in the media (de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Lifton, 1979). This has led to numerous claims that the denial of death has, to all intents and purposes, given way to a cultural climate of acceptance. For example, Becker (1973) has asserted that death ranks as "one of the great rediscoveries of modern thought" (p. 11), and this sentiment is shared by Feifel (1990). Chaney (1988) goes so far as to suggest that nowadays those who do not concern themselves with the mystery of death "are the erratic ones" (p. x). Other writers, too, hold that a new *genre*, with the theme of death as its central focus, has taken root in Western culture (cf. da Free John, 1983; Fulton & Owen, 1987/8; Levine, 1982; Lifton, 1979).

As is witnessed in the prolific growth of the so-called thanatology movement (see below), the claim that there has been a significant rediscovery of death in contemporary Western culture is not entirely without merit. An important point of departure for this thesis is, however, to seriously question the extent to which this 'rediscovery' constitutes a move towards a genuine acceptance of death and an authentic awakening to its ontological significance in Western consciousness. For the image that has evolved in contemporary Western culture is not one of death as a personally meaningful possibility of existence, but one of death as an essentially anonymous (and typically violent) event (de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Lifton, 1979). A useful means of conceptualising this issue has been advanced by Koestenbaum (1971a & b), who distinguishes between the 'death of another' and the 'death of myself'. Essentially, the 'death of myself' entails an authentic and meaningful acknowledgement of death as a defining dimension of one's personal existence (cf. Todres, 1978). In contrast, the 'death of another' refers essentially to a detached interest in death as a generalised, anonymous event. This means that while death is accepted as an empirical reality of collective existence, one does not feel personally involved in its drama nor moved by its presence. As Koestenbaum (1971a) sees it, the 'death of another' is the dominant perspective through which the apparent 'rediscovery' of death has been effected in Western culture, and he discerns in this a defensive compromise which ultimately camouflages the

'true' reality of death by keeping its presence at a dispassionate distance:

"By means of the semantic and linguistic confusion between the *death of myself* and the *death of another*, we protect ourselves from the tremendous and dangerous amount of anxiety that is released when we are confronted with the phenomenologically accurate recognition of the meaning of our own death ... We hopefully maintain that the *death of another* is the only kind of death there is. In fact, we think of the *death of myself* as nothing worse than the *death of another* ... We believe that the *death of another* is characteristic of all forms of death, even our own. Through this device, we hide from ourselves the true and demolishing nature of our own anxiety about and tragedy of our own death" (p. 118, original italics).

It must be acknowledged that the evolution of human civilisation has always implied a certain defiance of the obvious limits of bodily existence. In The Denial of Death, Becker (1973) describes society as a "defiant creation of meaning" in the face of the irrevocable threat of death (p. 37), and Bauman (1992) similarly comments that "notoriously, societies are arrangements that permit humans to live with weaknesses that would otherwise render life impossible. Perhaps the most crucial of such arrangements is one that conceals the ultimate absurdity of the conscious existence of mortal beings; failing the concealment, one that defuses the potentially poisonous effects of its unconcealed, known presence" (pp. 17-18, original emphasis). The point however is that whereas in previous ages an important compromise between the need for life and the threat of death was attained primarily through the means of symbolic activity - such as in the form of religious and mythical models which made death both tolerable and meaningful - modern Western culture has been characterised by a socially orchestrated denial of death. In terms of Koestenbaum's understanding of the 'death of another', this state of denial appears to have given way in recent years simply to a tendency to situate the meaning of death in non-personal contexts so that its personal implications recede into the background. Thus the modern person still lives as if there were no personal death that has to be faced; a strategy of "belief in non-death" has replaced blatant denial (Bauman, 1992, p. 17). As Kastenbaum (1977) writes:

"I wonder occasionally whether the trend toward open discussion of death might also have its self-protective component. Perhaps there is a tacit compromise involved: 'All right, now, let us agree to be big, brave grown-ups and talk seriously about death, just as we learned to do about sex. But, you know, let's not get

carried away either. Let's keep this discussion within certain categories and compartments. Death is a fascinating topic to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there" (p. 310).

Demske (1970) adds that when death is unreflectingly accepted as a generalised, everyday event, it "sinks to the status of a completely normal occurrence, something that crosses the ken of one's existence fleetingly, without leaving any traces, without exciting any special notice or raising any special questions; it is reduced to a condition of bland inconspicuousness" (pp. 29-30). Hence the meaning of death is:

" ... beclouded by a falsely pacifying equivocation, which reveals itself in the thought: 'One must die someday, but not just yet.' More accurately this means: 'But I am not going to die just yet.' The anonymous 'one', which initially includes the speaker, is unthinkingly turned into a completely non-personal 'one', who is really 'no one.' This 'no one' dies, but certainly not I" (*ibid.*, p. 27, original emphasis).

1.1.2. Death and the ethic of modernism

Notwithstanding the apparent proliferation of interest in death and dying, the modern Westerner therefore remains a detached spectator to the drama of human mortality; Weisman (1977) fittingly compares this stance to that of "a dreamer who wants to talk about an intriguing dream, but is reluctant to analyze the elements that go into the dream" (p. 109). A range of factors - such as the move from the extended to the nuclear family, rapid urbanisation, the eradication of most serious illnesses, and the dramatic advance of medical technology - have undoubtedly contributed to the growing depersonalisation of death in Western society (Aries, 1980; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88; Gordon, 1978). As Romanyshyn (1982) points out, however, we must note that social transitions such as these are not simply superficial changes woven around an unchanging psychological life, but serve as indicators of historical shifts in the nature and experience of human existence. Thus the denial or concealment of death in modern culture is ultimately symptomatic of a more profound shift in the psychological life of humanity (cf. Bauman, 1991; Borkenau, 1965). In Western tradition, this shift may be located in the epochal transition from classicism to modernism.

Conventionally, the 'modern person' refers to one who is orientated in a post-Renaissance ethic of progress and development (cf. Brooke, 1991; Lasch, 1984; Levin, 1988)². For modernists, the Enlightenment vision of liberation from the repressive superstition of the past has translated into a captivating promise of a world ruled by objective reason (cf. Adler, 1945; Barrett, 1987; Clarke, 1992; Homans, 1979; Levin, 1988; Tarnas, 1990). Witnessed sharply in Descartes's (1647) elevation of the Cogito as the supreme path to truth, this ethic finds perhaps its most developed and blatant expression in the discourse of positivism³, which provides the ideological grounding for modern science. The sway of positivism has in turn impacted decisively on the image of death in the Western tradition.

In the first instance, the entrenchment of a positivist world-view has entailed a key shift from mythos to logos as the bearer of reality. The traditional authority of 'faith' has been usurped by the power of reason, with the result that fundamental questions and issues of existence, once the realm of myth and religion, have entered the domain of scientific suspicion. As Wahl (1965) states, however, the mystery of death "does not yield to science and to rationality" (p. 57), a point echoed by Bauman (1991):

" ... death blatantly defies the power of reason: reason's power is to be a guide to good choice, but death is not a matter of choice. Death is the scandal, the ultimate humiliation of reason. It saps the trust in reason and the security that reason promises. It loudly declares reason's lie. It inspires fear that undermines and ultimately defeats reason's offer of confidence. Reason cannot exculpate itself of this ignominy. It can only try a cover-up" (p. 15).

The denial of death may therefore be understood as a defensive response to the emphatic challenge which the reality of finitude delivers to the modernist illusion of mastery and rationality (*ibid.*, p. 134). Hence the dominant image of death in modern existence is not that of a sacred and numinous mystery, but that of a capricious or errant element which poses the ultimate threat to the

² As Brooke (1991, p. 177) points out, 'modern' cannot simply be equated with 'contemporary', for the past decades have also witnessed an erosion of the fundamental dictates of modernist ideologies. The contentious issue of whether this challenge has been sufficiently consolidated to speak of the beginnings of a 'postmodern' era is however beyond the scope of this thesis.

³ The term 'positivism' derives from the work of Comte, who identified three evolutionary stages in human thinking: theological, in which events are attributed to divine intervention; metaphysical, in which events are attributed to speculative causes; and 'positive', in which reasoning remains within the realm of observable and measurable phenomena (Macquarrie, 1963, p. 95f.).

self-validating rationality of the Cartesian ego. As Garfield (1975) comments, we have tended to see death as being nothing more than "an intrusion upon the scientific quest for immortality" (p. 148). Nowhere is this more evident than in the stance of the modern technocrat, for whom the miraculous gift of technology offers the spurious but seductive promise that death itself will ultimately be eradicated (cf. Kastenbaum, 1972; Romanyshyn, 1989).

Clearly, the possibility that death is a necessary and even vitalising dimension of existence does not accord with the imperial and progressive vision of modernism. On the contrary, it stands as the nemesis of the Promethean quest that is at the heart of the post-Enlightenment ethic, and thus emerges as an unwelcome reminder of the very real limits of human freedom. If the "triumph of 'Man'" necessitated the death of God as foreseen by Nietzsche (Levin, 1988, p. 4), it has therefore also necessitated the concealment of death. As Simone de Bouvier has stated, "our death is inside us, but not like the stone in the fruit, like the meaning of our life; inside us, but a stranger to us, an enemy, a thing of fear" (quoted by Leman-Stefanovic, 1987, p. 176).

1.1.3. The scientific objectification of death

A particular way in which the paradigm of positivism has impacted on the prevailing image of death in contemporary Western culture is through the objectification of death as a literal, biological event. By the objectification of death, we are referring to a particular tendency, grounded in the Cartesian vision of positivist science, to translate the phenomenon of death into a precise scientific construction which can be situated within a universe of predictable laws. In terms of this vision, we are encouraged to think of death as nothing other than the cessation of bodily functioning, with the result that the predicament of human mortality is ultimately reduced to a series of specific cases revolving around the 'death of another'. By this strategy, Bauman (1992) points out, we expediently convert the insoluble problem of death into various soluble (or at least potentially soluble) issues of health and disease - one does not die, one is killed by, or succumbs to, some particular physical threat which can, in an ideal world, be avoided:

"All deaths have causes, each death has a cause, each particular death has its particular cause. Corpses are cut open, explored, scanned, tested, until the cause is found: a blood clot, kidney failure, haemorrhage, heart arrest, lung collapse. We do not hear of people dying of mortality. They die only of individual causes ... One

does not just die, one dies of a disease or of murder" (p. 138, original emphasis).

We must discern in this objectification of death an attempt to conceal the shattering reality of finitude in daily existence. Quoting Bauman again:

"The truth that death cannot be escaped 'in the end' is not denied, of course. It cannot be denied; but it could be held off the agenda, elbowed out by another truth: that each particular case of death ... can be resisted, postponed, or avoided altogether. Death as such is inevitable; but each concrete instance of death is contingent ... I can do nothing to defy mortality. But I can do quite a lot to avoid a blood clot or a lung cancer. I can stop eating eggs, refrain from smoking, do physical exercises, keep my weight down ... And while doing all these right things and forcing myself to abstain from the wrong ones, I have no time left to ruminate over the ultimate futility of each thing I am doing ... Thus the cause of instrumental rationality celebrates ever new triumphant battles - and in the din of festivities the news of the lost war are inaudible" (*ibid.*, pp. 137-8, original emphasis)⁴.

A further consequence of the scientific objectification of death takes the form of a devitalising epistemological dualism. Typically, positivist science treats death as a literal ending only, i.e. as a concrete actuality. This severely limits the range of possible meanings attached to the image of death, for by treating life and death as mutually exclusive states, modernist thinking refutes the possibility that there can be knowledge of death that is more than merely speculative. Hunter (1967) reflects the essential thrust of this position in writing that "it is an epistemological fact that death is unknowable, inexperiencable, since for one to experience the state we call death, one would have to be alive" (p. 86). Weisman and Hackett (1965) similarly ask:

"What can any man imagine of his own death? Is it possible to conceive of his own utter extinction? ... A fantasy of absolute subjective death is impossible to imagine. If there is some meaning or emotion in the phrase, 'When I am dead,' there is also

⁴ Of course, this does not mean that an authentic awareness of personal mortality is incompatible with a concern for healthy living; the concern here is rather with the need to articulate a conscious awareness of the omnipresent possibility of death with a genuine interest in physical well-being, i.e. one that emerges from an authentic appreciation of the value of life. In the absence of this, Gorer (1965, p. 114) comments, we find in Western thinking an "excessive preoccupation with the risk of death" as opposed to an emphasis on health for its own sake.

a trace of psychological survival in which 'I' continue to exercise an influence in some form or other ... The notion of 'I am dead' is a paradox" (pp. 316-7).

The epistemological implications of this argument will be returned to in a later discussion. For the present, it must be noted that the only meaning of death that stands up to the rigours of scientific scepticism is therefore that pertaining to death as a generalised, collective event, i.e. the 'death of another'. In this way, positivist science perpetuates and reinforces the concealment of death as a personally meaningful dimension of existence; by assuming that death can be known only from the 'outside', the possibility of authentic experience of the 'death of myself' is essentially disavowed. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to conceptualise of death as a possibility of personal existence. This is alluded to in Freud's famous statement that "no one really believes in his own death" (Freud, 1957, p. 289), and in one of Sarte's works a fictional character awaiting execution gives voice to a similar dilemma:

"I see my corpse; that's not hard but I'm the one who sees it, with my eyes. I've got to think ... think that I won't see anything more and the world will go on for others. We aren't made to think that, Pablo"⁵.

It may be seen that modernist thinking not only invites a fundamental polarisation of life and death, and of living and dying, but also loses sight of the vital phenomenological possibilities which underpin the ontological connections between life and death. The nature of these possibilities will be elucidated elsewhere, but the point for now is that the existential import of death is veiled in modern life at least partly because the scientific bent to our thinking confines its meaning to a literal event only, and thus to something outside of the boundaries of human experience.

1.1.4. The need for a recollection of death

Events of the twentieth century, especially the massive destruction of two world wars and the advent of the nuclear bomb, appear to have forced an ambivalent awareness of death upon a reticent civilisation (cf. de Spelder & Strickland, 1983; Feifel, 1990; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88; Gordon, 1978). But while the denial of death in Western culture may be less obvious now than it

⁵ From The Wall. Quoted by Leman-Stefanovic (1987, p. 145, original emphasis).

was in the recent past, it is evident from the foregoing considerations that modernists have nonetheless been unable to fully accept death as the ultimate limitation to, and even less so the quintessence of, human existence. In this light, we may concur with Gordon (1978), who writes:

"The fact that the awareness of our own mortality can render - and does in fact render - our lives more valuable, more precious and more worthwhile, is something that technological man had almost forgotten. Only a few poets, artists and philosophers have kept alive for us the knowledge that death is in fact indispensable in order to give life both zest and meaning" (p. 22).

In an age dominated by a culture of nihilism and ontological indifference, these comments assume heightened significance. Indeed, many social commentators interpret the spiritual and ethical crisis of modernity as a pathological response to the denial of death, claiming that the concealment of death as a meaningful presence inevitably effects a closure of Being and a sense of existential despair (e.g. Bauman, 1992; Borkenau, 1965; Cooper, 1990; Demske, 1970; Frankl, 1967; 1971; Fulton & Owen, 1987/88 Koestenbaum, 1971a & b). This line of thinking finds succinct expression in Heidegger's work:

"Our age is destitute not only because God is dead, but because the mortals can scarcely recognize and cope with their own mortality ... Death withdraws and becomes an enigma ... The age is destitute because the unconcealment of the essence of pain, death, and love is absent" (translated and quoted from Holzwege by Demske, 1970, p.138).

Taking these considerations further, it may be argued that in forgetting the inherent vulnerability and ephemerality of existence, we have lost sight too of our responsibility as guardians of Being and as agents of historical change (cf. Levin, 1988, pp. 16f.). Instead, the modern person is essentially suspended in time, lacking both a connection to the past and an orientation towards the future; and in such a context, we inevitably will be confronted with the destructive consequences of a despairing failure of reason. In this light, what is required is clearly more than the 'rediscovery' of death as a generalised, collective phenomenon. The historical task that confronts us is rather that of reclaiming death as a meaningful possibility of existence and bringing this possibility into a conscious dialectic with the pursuit of life itself. The term 'recollection' seems to be most suitable for defining the parameters of this task.

Emerging from the ontology of Heidegger, 'recollection' refers, as Levin (1985) describes it, to "a retracing of steps in order to retrieve an understanding which will prepare us for new steps forward" (p. 72). Recollection is thus not a passive form of enquiry, but a commitment to a body of understanding that makes contact with our history, interacts with present reality, and facilitates a different - and hopefully better - response to the future. In this regard, Levin explains that:

"There is a deepening crisis in our Western tradition. On the one hand, it seems clear that we must break free of a dominant tradition which is taking us ever closer to the time of annihilation through nihilism. On the other hand, it also seems clear that we cannot hope to escape the danger of nihilism without drawing strength from resources of spiritual wisdom which also belong to our tradition, but which the prevailing 'world picture' continues to conceal and suppress and exclude. Thus, if we cling to the dominant tradition, we are lost; but if we break away, we are in danger of losing touch with ancient traditions whose wisdom, long suppressed, might nevertheless now - even now - help to save us. A tradition can certainly be oppressive; it can stand in the way of growth, of life. But a retrieval of the 'origins' of that tradition ... can be emancipatory, a source of strength" (*ibid.*, p. 3).

Thus the work of recollection is simultaneously a process of transformation involving the retrieval and renewal of those ontological potentialities, including death, that have been concealed or forgotten in the rationalistic climate of modern existence. So far as thanatology is concerned, recollection thus implies a pivotal deliteralisation of the meaning of death, a meaning that is given imaginally and hence metaphorically (see below). What this demands is nothing short of a radical departure from the nullifying and objectifying stance of modern science, in favour of an approach which promotes an essentially imaginative vision of death and dying. From what has already been said, it may be stated with some justification that this process of recollection constitutes our historical calling in the liminal years of the modern era, when we stand suspended between the threat of nihilism on the one hand and the possibility for the emergence of authentic Being on the other hand. Reflecting again on the catastrophic events of this century, it may be agreed that this calling assumes a compelling quality.

1.2. The Thanatology Movement

Given the foregoing considerations, it is now necessary to turn attention to the so-called 'thanatology movement', referring to the multi-disciplinary approach to death and dying which emerged in the late 1950's with the work of Feifel and his colleagues⁶ (cf. Feifel, 1990; Feifel *et.al.*, 1959; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). The question with which we are essentially concerned in this section is the extent to which this movement has taken up the challenge outlined above, namely that of a meaningful recollection of death.

It is pertinent to note that the actual history of thanatology predates the modern movement, for prior to this there was already a strong philosophical tradition (extending through, *inter alia*, Socrates, Plato, Hegel and Nietzsche) which had situated death at the forefront of the analysis of existence. In the climate of post-Enlightenment rationalism, however, it was essentially only existentialist writers who consistently afforded prominence to the problematic of death (cf. Choron, 1963; Feifel, 1990); for the most part, modern science, medicine and psychology were conspicuously silent with regard to the question of death and dying (Feifel, 1990; Gordon, 1978; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). Again, this neglect betrays both the conspiracy of silence that surrounded the topic and reflects the fact that under the influence of positivist science fundamental questions of meaning had given way to dispassionate, rational analysis. For the science of psychology, death represented little more than an intellectual knot which smacked of obscurity and thus did not warrant serious academic attention (cf. Feifel, 1990; Munitz, 1974).

As a nascent discipline, the modern thanatology movement was thus confronted with deeply entrenched taboos which impeded research and development, and pioneers of the movement have commonly professed to having almost abandoned their interest in death in the face of both subtle and blatant disapproval of their work by medical colleagues (Feifel, 1990; Kubler-Ross, 1969; LeShan, 1977). Not surprisingly, the early years of the movement were consequently characterised by a lack of conceptual models, rudimentary clinical guidelines, and minimal empirical data (Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Kubler-Ross, 1969; LeShan, 1977; Magni, 1972). Nonetheless, thanatologists rallied around a shared vision that their approach to death "must be rooted in human beings, not in a mathematical physics model" (Feifel, 1990, p. 538) and, with the added impetus

⁶ The emergence of the contemporary thanatology movement is usually traced to a 1956 symposium entitled The Concept of Death and its Relation to Behaviour, which formed part of that year's APA (American Psychological Association) congress in Chicago. The symposium was chaired by Feifel (cf. Feifel, 1959).

of the celebrated work of Kubler-Ross (1969), the movement displayed prolific growth⁷. It is not necessary to trace these developments in any detail, for there is little doubt that the thanatology movement has made a significant contribution both to the acceptance of death as a serious academic concern, and, as will be seen in a later discussion, to the implementation of a more humane approach to the care of the dying. Yet there are presently grounds for asserting that the pioneering vision which characterised the early years of the discipline has given way on the one hand to a reductionistic emphasis on statistical data and, on the other hand, to an anti-rationalistic but naive Romanticism⁸. As it is at least partly within the context of these developments that the rationale for the present study is located, it is pertinent to pursue this tension in greater detail. In this section, a brief overview is given of scientific and Romantic approaches to thanatology, and an alternative approach, the poetic tradition, is introduced.

1.2.1. Scientific thanatology

While an almost revolutionary climate characterised the early years of the thanatology movement (cf. Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kubler-Ross, 1969), the need for academic respectability and research funding has seen an increasing emphasis afforded to positivist methodologies in thanatological research (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977). This has in turn resulted in a proliferation of studies that have, in the words of one critic, borne "few really usable results" (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88, p. 258). In recent years, many thanatologists have in fact identified a far-reaching crisis in the field, centering primarily around the perception that the sheer volume of research has not been matched in terms of quality (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977; Schulz & Schlarb, 1987/88).

As previously noted, modern science promotes the objectification of death through an epistemological premise that death can be known only from the perspective of the objective

⁷ For example, the Psychological Abstracts of 1948 contained only five entries under the heading of 'death', in 1960 there were 17, and in 1965 only 34; by 1970 there were 147 (Godin, 1972). The number of contributions has continued to grow exponentially. Apart from the abundance of literature pertaining to death and dying, the consolidation of the thanatology movement is also evident in the emergence of numerous professional and lay organisations dealing with practical issues surrounding death, dying and bereavement (Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977).

⁸ The convention is followed in this thesis of capitalising the term 'Romantic' to indicate a specific philosophical tradition, as outlined in a later section of this chapter.

spectator. The scientific thanatologist is thus typically concerned with the identification and measurement of specific variables pertaining to death and dying, and with the generalisation of these findings from limited samples to broader populations. While this approach has yielded substantial information regarding the demographic aspects of death - such as age, sex, and causes (Schulz & Schlarb, 1987/88) - it has discouraged a systematic understanding of the phenomenological dimensions of human finitude. As an example of this tendency, Kastenbaum & Costa (1977) point to the concept of 'death anxiety', which has attracted considerable attention from scientific thanatologists in recent years. For the most part, research has focused on attempts to delineate and quantify this variable, resulting in a bewildering and often contradictory array of scales, techniques and statistical correlations which offer at best only a superficial understanding of our innate fear of death.

It is important to note that the objection here is not with scientific empiricism per se, for, as Kastenbaum and Costa point out, the conversion of long-held assumptions into clearly formulated questions that can be answered through empirical observation is an important factor in the ongoing development of thanatology (*ibid.*). The issue is rather that when this approach is applied in a narrow and reductionistic way, the inevitable result is, as Bluebond-Langner (1987/88) puts it, "a thicket of detail that prevents the advance of our work" (p. 258). Moreover, the purely empirical emphasis of scientific thanatology has tended to impede the development of theoretical models, with the result that theory and observation are seldom articulated (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Feifel, 1990; Kastenbaum & Costa, 1977).

1.2.2. Western Romanticism

Challenging the dominance of scientific thanatology is a school of thought which, in radical contrast to the former's emphasis on the concrete and observable, embraces the transcendent and the metaphysical. The term 'Romantic' seems appropriate to describe this approach, for its epistemological and ontological premises essentially owe ideological allegiance to the work of the nineteenth-century Romantic poet-philosophers such as Novalis and Schelling (cf. Avens, 1982; Choron, 1963; Jaffe, 1989).

The history of Romantic thanatology encompasses relatively diverse sources. It includes the Christian martyrs for whom death (especially death through sacrifice) offered a doorway to eternal

union with the Saviour, as well as the early mystics who desired not physical annihilation but an ego-less condition of fusion with an Absolute Whole (Avens, 1980; Choron, 1963; Jaffe, 1989). The common theme is the fact that for the Romantic, death is ultimately glorified as a solution to the problem of existence. Not only does it promise a 'higher' form of existence and an ultimate reality which lies beyond the world of the senses, but it is seen as a path to the realisation of an ideal state which is inaccessible during the course of life itself (Choron, 1963, pp. 156f.). Death is thus regarded as the 'romanticising principle' of existence (Jaffe, 1989, p. 33), so that it is typically exalted above the mundanities of everyday life. This theme was expressed blatantly and dramatically by Schelling, for whom "those who are liberated from earthly existence ought to be congratulated" (quoted by Choron, 1963, p. 160).

The essential vision outlined above is equally evident in the work of contemporary Romantics (e.g. Chaney, 1988; da Free John, 1983; Levine, 1982). Disillusioned with the reductionistic and dualistic foundations of positivist science, they purport to offer an approach that is suitably 'New Age', emphasising a meaning of death as the complete manifestation of innate potentials through transcendence of the personal self and union with a reality deemed to be Absolute. As Levine (1982) describes it, death is to be "honoured and respected as a wonderful opportunity" for ultimate 'liberation' from the confines of the body" (p. 252). Ultimately, this approach thus revolves around instilling in both the living and the dying an attitude of "loving surrender" towards death (*ibid.*).

Given the confines of the present study, it is neither possible nor necessary to consider Romantic literature in any detail. The point must however be made that while the sincerity and enthusiasm of Romantic thinkers is not disputed, the approach itself tends to mitigate against a meaningful recollection of death. For essentially, Romanticism offers a "kind of imagination [that] leaves us half estranged from the earth and renders our understanding of death weak and without root" (Sardello, 1974, p. 61). Or as Avens (1982) comments with reference to Romantic sentiment, "an other-worldly soul is a soul without a world, a lonely soul adrift in a cosmos that knows it not ... [A] purely spiritual soul, even though it may have all the appurtenances of an abstractly conceived immortality ... is mortal from a surfeit of spirituality, as it were, from lack of breath" (pp. 36-7). Because of this, the gift of embodiment is ultimately negated, resulting in a 'death-oriented' existence which is unwittingly bound to a similar form of nihilistic despair as is experienced by the modern technocrat who would deny death entirely, or at least subdue it. Both the Romantic and the modernist seek immortality, the one at the level of an other-worldly plane of existence and the other through the beguiling promise of technological miracles; and in doing so, both tend to renounce the possibilities of the present in favour of an unrequited longing for the future. Jaffe

(1989) points out that Romantics are therefore drawn away from life itself:

"The Romantics typically find in life itself no meaning; they strive to understand all things in transcendental terms, and hope to fulfil their longing in death ... Everything which, in life, reminds one of death: the night, dreams, the uncanny, sickness and solitude, the supernatural and the trance, attracts them with irresistible power. Beyond the limits of life they seek its origin and its worth, and this gives life its only meaning ... A peaceful and firm rooting in this world is to the Romantic as strange an idea as the thought of living life for its own sake" (pp. 33-4).

It may be seen that Romantic paradigms thus not only reduce everything short of death to the status of mere appearance (cf. Macquarrie, 1963, p. 29), but ultimately lose sight too of what is perhaps the central value of death itself - namely that it imparts meaning and purpose to the finite present.

1.2.3. The poetic tradition

At this juncture, it is pertinent to recall that the central question informing the present discussion concerns the need for a recollection of death in modern existence, and the extent to which contemporary approaches in thanatology address this need. From what has been said thus far, it is evident that neither scientific thinking, which treats death as an impersonal and generalised event, nor Romantic thinking, which purports to offer metaphysical schemes about the ultimate value of death, succeed in cultivating a climate conducive to the work of recollection. As Avens comments:

"To most people and philosophers death means either demise, a wasting away or transportation to some other-worldly sphere where death shall be no more. It is seldom realised, however, that both of these hypotheses lead to the cessation of human personality as we claim to know it. For to become food for worms or to be transmogrified into a spiritual being enjoying supernatural bliss must be profoundly irrelevant to what I am here and now. There is no continuity in either case ... Adopting a lofty tone, we often speak of death as the fulfilment of life, i.e., as 'actualisation' of our 'potential' for dying. Yet how often do we realise that behind such sublime language there is still lurking the old Aristotelian substance which is

essentially indifferent to its potential manifestation and that, consequently, death is still something which may or may not happen?" (1982, pp. 144-6).

It is in this context that the present thesis seeks to lend support to an alternative intellectual tradition which seeks to avoid both the raw and simplistic empiricism of positivist science and the metaphysical and absolutist emphasis of Romantic philosophy. The term 'poetic', as it appears in hermeneutical discourse (cf. Avens, 1984; Brooke, 1991; Levin, 1988; Segal, 1989), seems particularly suitable to describe the fundamental parameters of this approach. Historically, a poetic vision of death has been most fervently advanced in existential-phenomenological literature, but poetic thinking also forms the basis for many writers from the tradition of depth psychology, and their contributions will be returned to throughout the course of this thesis. It must therefore be noted that, as with our description of scientific and Romantic schools of thanatology, the term 'poetic' essentially refers to a particular way of thinking about the meaning of death, rather than to a particular theoretical school.

The form and scope of poetic thinking is perhaps best introduced by comparing it to the dictates of modern science. For poetic discourse, a narrow focus on reductive explanation and logical deduction simply amounts to the negation of meaning (Levin, 1988, p. 435). In contrast to the scientists's concern with control and prediction, the poet is thus fundamentally attentive to the emergence and elucidation of Being through a process of hermeneutic understanding. In the inimitable style of Heidegger (1936), to be a poet means "to attend ... to the trace of the fugitive gods" (p. 94). In this sense, poesis (from the Greek, 'to make') involves, as Brooke (1991) explains, an "intrinsic, irreducible and mutually transformative relationship" between the poet and his or her subject matter (p. 7). If scientific truth emerges from strict regimentation and univocity of meaning, then poetic truth is, in contradistinction, grounded in plurivocal complexity and ambiguity (Levin, 1988, pp. 435f.). As Levin describes it, the style of vision associated with scientific thinking is exemplified by the fixed gaze of a dispassionate spectator examining an object presumed to be independent and neutral; the view of the poet, on the other hand, "is exemplified by the playful gaze ... centred by virtue of its openness to experience, its delight in being surprised, decentred, drawn into the invisible" (*ibid.*, p. 438). Underlying this vision is the fact that the poet typically embraces a mode of understanding that seeks to reclaim the inherently metaphoric character of psychological life, in contradistinction to the facile literalisms of modernist being (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 143ff.; see below). Thus if poesis emerges from a hermeneutic search for meaning, then this search begins not with denotative simplicity and exactness, but with the inherent ambiguity of psychological life.

From the foregoing description, it is evident that poetic thanatology seeks to undercut Western rationalism by restoring to death something of its authentic ontological complexity. In the first instance, a poetic contemplation of Being necessitates meaningful contemplation of death because as the ultimate horizon of existence death is also a defining feature of what it means to be an existent human being (Carse, 1980; Demske, 1970; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987; Schrag, 1961; Todres, 1978). In Heidegger's philosophy, this finds expression in the recognition that the essence of Being is that it is always Being-toward-death (Heidegger, 1962; cf. Carse, 1980; Demske, 1970; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987). Hence the revelation of Being, which is the fundamental ontological project of poetic discourse, demands the revelation of death. As Koestenbaum (1976) writes:

" ... [death] is an intellectual revelation, in that death helps us define human nature. But it is also an experiential understanding, in that death puts us in touch with our deepest feelings - both anxieties and hopes, both needs and opportunities - as existent human beings" (p. 7, original emphasis).

In contrast to the objectifying stance of positivism, poetic thanatology thus adopts as its central concern the impact of death as a subjective reality of existence. Death is seen to be "the most personal of life's potentialities" (Leman-Stefanovic, 1987, p. 7, original emphasis), rather than something externally caused. Nor does the poet simply embrace death in the idealistic and metaphysical tradition of Romantic paradigms. For whereas the latter tend to see death as a splendid release from the terrible ordinariness of life, and thereby perpetuate (or even accentuate) the modernist dichotomy between life and death, poetic discourse views the unremitting possibility of death as lending vitality and meaning to each lived moment. Herzog (1983) captures the essence of this approach in asserting that:

"The question with which we are concerned is 'How does man relate to, and come to terms with death, which seems to stand in irreconcilable contrast to life and to all his experience of living things?' ... our concern is with the way in which man as a whole, in the centre of his being, feels touched by the inevitability of death. We ask whether he is able to bring this fact into harmony with his feeling for life (pp. 16-17).

In these terms, poetic thanatology avoids both the nihilistic extremes of positivist science and the simplistic glorification of death advanced in Romantic literature. Ultimately, the centrality of death

is framed as a fundamental paradox of existence. On the one hand, death imparts meaning and vitality to life, so that in its absence life is reduced to a series of meaningless 'now-moments' which lack temporal unity (cf. Demske, 1970; Gordon, 1961; Yalom, 1980). On the other hand, the perpetual threat of death calls into question the very purpose and value of existence; as Biallas (1986) comments, the reality of death violates "our sense of self, our sense of justice, and our sense of meaning" (p. 233). It may be noted that this paradox lends conceptual expression to mythical images of death as having two faces: "the first face is a glorious one: death shines out as the ideal to which the true hero devotes his existence. With its second face, death embodies the unsayable, the unbearable; it manifests itself as a terrifying horror" (Vernant, 1981, p. 285). Yalom (1980), an existentialist writer, expresses this paradox concisely in commenting that "although the physicality of death destroys man, the idea of death saves him" (p. 30, emphasis added).

In considering these statements, it is important to realise that for the poet the concern is not simply with death as a future actuality - i.e. as a 'not-yet-actual' (Avens, 1982, p. 141) - but with the way in which the possibility of death is evoked and mediated as a meaningful reality in the lived present. Poetic thanatology thus embraces 'the now', and in so doing moves from a restraining dichotomisation of life and death towards an appreciation of 'death-in-life' and 'life-in-death' (cf. Avens, 1982; Mogenson, 1991). Importantly, it may be seen that this approach therefore also embraces a pivotal shift from literalism to metaphor. Put differently, the legitimate province of poetic approaches to death is the metaphoric or imaginal, rather than the factual or the apparent (Welman, 1995; cf. Avens, 1982; Mogenson, 1991). As previously intimated, metaphor is at the core of the poetic tradition (Brooke, 1991; Murray, 1975; 1986; Romanyshyn, 1982). For the poet, the metaphor is regarded not only as the authentic grounding of existence, but as an animating principle which affords a deepening of reality by re-figuring the context in which human experience occurs. To speak of life as a play, for example, is not only to interpret life from a particular perspective, but also gives to plays a significance that they might otherwise not have had (Berggren, 1962, p. 243). Or, the meaning of old age is deepened considerably when it is contextualised through the metaphor of the waning day (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 153). Here, we may see that the metaphor is meaningful because the phenomenological convergence between the experience of old age and the experience of a waning day provides a point for reflection, thus allowing the one to be re-figured through the other. Through the reality of metaphor, therefore, the iconoclastic literalism of the Cartesian perspective gives way to a play of imaginative possibilities.

The metaphorical character of psychological life will be returned to in the following chapter, and

need not be dwelt on at this stage. The point for now is that for the poetic thinker something essential about the meaning of death is lost in a purely literal interpretation; on the other hand, the metaphoric mode is seen to offer a viable path to its meaningful recollection. In this mode, we are dealing with death as a phenomenological rather than a literal reality, and it will be seen in the following chapters that for the poet all forms of loss, sacrifice and transcendence have an affirming metaphoric connection to 'real' death. The Renaissance description of an orgasm as a 'little death' (*petite mort*) reflects for example the view that the consummation of love and the surrender to passion approximates the ultimate loss or renunciation of self at the moment of death (Mogenson, 1991, p. 42). For the modern thinker, love and death may appear to have little in common, but in the experience of the poet they represent a vitalising congruence of thematic meanings. At the same time, poetic thinking does not advocate a pre-rational identification of meanings; it is recognised that it is ultimately the element of identity-in-difference that makes the metaphor meaningful and that facilitates poetic recollection (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 153ff.). Love and death are not the same, but the metaphoric connection between the two pushes our poetic sensibility towards reflection as to how the one reality is like the other, and in this way we reclaim possibilities of meaning that are concealed when a literal or rationalistic stance is brought to bear.

1.2.4. The need for gnosis

While it is true that death per se cannot be known or experienced, the poetic tradition recognises as valid the ontological and epistemological claims of death as an imaginative or metaphoric possibility of existence that is mediated through our capacity for reflective or symbolic understanding (cf. Chapter Two). Yet as Hillman (1979) contends, it is precisely this capacity which has atrophied in the hyperrational climate of modern Western culture:

" ... death to us tends to mean exclusively gross death - physical, literal death. Our emphasis upon physical death corresponds with our emphasis upon the physical body, not the subtle one; on physical life, not psychic life; on the literal and not the metaphorical. That ... death could be metaphorical is difficult to understand - after all something must be real says the ego, the great literalist, positivist, realist. We easily lose touch with the subtle kinds of death ... We concentrate our propitiations against one kind of death only, the kind defined by the ego's sense of reality. The death we speak of in our culture is a fantasy of the ego" (p. 64).

Thus the task of recollection brings us up against the limitations of everyday understanding and, more pointedly, of Cartesian science. For this reason, poetic thinkers have sought to reclaim an epistemological tradition which, though depreciated by modern science, offers an important route to an imaginal understanding of death. The essential thrust of this tradition is captured by the term gnosis.

Essentially, gnosis refers to an approach which emphasises the non-duality of knowledge and experience⁹ (Avens, 1984; Singer, 1990). It has thus been defined as 'convictional knowledge' (Avens, 1984; Nasr, 1981; Singer, 1990), or 'knowledge of the heart' (Hoeller, 1982; Singer, 1990), but a more substantive conceptualisation is offered by Loder (1981):

"Gnosis ... suggests a coming together of things in a convincing way, so that one who has gnosis has certainty. It is not confined to any particular organ of knowledge (such as the senses or the mind) nor to any innate capacity or competence (such as language or reason). Rather, gnosis occurs as an event in one's dealing with and experience of the world ... There is always a rational element involved in gnosis, but rationality does not stand apart, policing or censoring gnosis. Rather, gnosis contains a rational quality as one of its constitutive elements" (p. 19, emphasis added).

In this sense, gnosis stands between 'belief' and 'reason' (Avens, 1984, p. 3), and corresponds to the imaginative grounding of psychological life (cf. Chapter Two); it presents a reality that is neither rational nor factual, but metaphoric. Contrary to the emphasis on distance and objectivity which the natural scientist brings to bear, gnosis is thus fundamentally poetic in its emphasis, in so far as it is centrally concerned with both the actual content of knowledge and experience as well as with the act of mediation between the interpreter and the interpreted. Impartiality does not beget gnosis, for the latter entails "a questioning that involves the questioner in the matter of thought so deeply that he becomes, in a sense, one with it" (Avens, 1984, p. 2). Thus gnosis is itself fundamentally transformative (cf. Avens, 1984; Needleman, 1975). Applied to thanatology, gnosis offers a path to a non-materialist epistemology and a poetic ontology of death; gnosis of death is located neither

⁹ This connotation must be clearly distinguished from the term 'Gnosticism' as it pertains to the heretical religious sects which emerged during the early years of Christianity. To avoid confusion between these meanings, the convention is adopted in this thesis of underlining the term gnosis as it refers to an epistemological approach.

in the realm of ideas, nor in that of biological fact, but encompasses both and so brings forth the meaning of death as a metaphoric reality. In these terms, gnosis may be said to pertain to the imaginative intersection of the literal and the figurative meanings of death (cf. Chapter Eight), and this hermeneutic tension leads to the possibility of a meaningful recollection of death.

These are important considerations not only in view of the reductionistic emphasis of modern science. For in their concern to overcome "the tyranny of objectivity" (Gill, 1971, p. 20), poetically aligned thinkers often appear to approach the problematic of death in highly abstract terms, thereby detracting from the gravity of death as a concrete reality. Typically, this occurs because the literal connotations of death are forgotten in an endeavour to elucidate the figurative dimensions; as a result, the shattering reality of death is sometimes lost in stylistic cognitive discourse. Freud (1915) alluded to this problem when he asserted that "philosophers are thinking too philosophically" about death (p. 293), and the phenomenological thanatologist Leman-Stefanovic (1987) similarly posits "the most common sin of philosophers" to be their tendency towards "over-generalizing and abstracting to the point that their grand systems become irrelevant to the concrete facts of daily existence" (p. xi). In this light, the parameters of gnosis serve to connect ontological deliberations about death to ontic concerns, so that we do not lose sight of the concrete reality of death which lends power and meaning to its manifestation as a metaphoric experience¹⁰. Taking this point further, it may be seen that the fundamental task of gnosis is to explore the hermeneutic links between the literal context of death and dying and the imaginative possibilities of psychical life. As Sardello (1974) writes:

"It is the task of each person to form images of the major points of life and death and thereby ensoul life with meaning. Usually this task is supported and furthered by the wisdom of a culture which preserves and passes on these images in the form of myths and symbols ... The situation of our culture is that the occurrence of death as a natural event of everyday life is absent ... In the absence of death the imagination is beset with a tremendous task, that of finding meaning with little concrete actuality to keep the imagination grounded in our earthly life" (p. 61).

In other words, gnosis seeks on the one hand to ground an imagination of death in the actuality of

¹⁰ To ask ontological questions about death essentially means, as we have seen, to elucidate the place of death in understanding the nature of Being. Ontic questions, on the other hand, pertain to death as a concrete event, and thus concern the actual death of beings (cf. Demske, 1970; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987).

death, and on the other hand to bring an imaginative vision to bear on the problem of literal death. "We must", Sardello urges, "plunge the depths of these images [associated with death] ... It is the only way we can attempt to break the binds of the literal, of the simply given fact of death and perhaps awaken to some meaning" (*ibid.*, p. 65).

To these considerations, it must be added that the pursuit of gnosis in thanatology is not merely an academic concern, but is intimately bound up with the problem of dying in modern society. For it is clear that we are presently in need of a clinical approach which facilitates the emergence of meaning in the dying process. As Harre (1991) relates, the emergence of modernism has been associated with a dramatic shift in the care of the dying in Western society; whereas in previous ages the value of the person was the dominant theme in the management of dying, "in the modern way the fate of ... organic machinery overarches all else" (p. 33). For the most part, dying is therefore perceived as primarily a medical concern, rather than a psychological one (Grof & Halifax, 1977; Hinton, 1967; 1968; Kubler-Ross, 1969), and this tendency has in turn translated into a predominantly pharmacological and palliative approach to terminal illness. Attempts by physicians to foster an interest in the emotional world of the dying patient, or to explore the response to death among medical practitioners themselves, have been scarce, and medical faculties seldom include thanatology in their teaching curricula (Liston, 1973; Schoenberg & Carr, 1979).

Not surprisingly, the experience of dying is thus commonly associated with a sense of frustration, isolation, and despair (Achte & Vauhkonen, 1971; Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Hinton, 1967; 1968; Hughes, 1987; Kearl, 1989; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Lasagna, 1979; Weisman, 1979). As Grof and Halifax (1977) state:

"There is little that our contemporary social structure, or our philosophy, religion, and medical science, has to offer at present to ease the psychological suffering of the dying. Many persons in this situation are thus facing a profound crisis that is basic and total, since it affects simultaneously biological, emotional, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of the human being" (p. 7).

Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that the 'medicalisation of dying' represents merely a pronounced instance of a pervasive tendency to betray our most sacred experiences to rational analysis. Nor, as we have seen, do Romantic ideologies or abstract philosophies adequately redress the situation. By facilitating a meaningful recollection of the ontological potentialities of death, on the other hand, gnosis appears to offer to the dying person more than ornamental reassurances and

formal rituals divested of their intrinsic meanings. In this way, we might hope to facilitate a more meaningful conclusion to life than is possible in the sterile environment of modern existence. And if the conclusion to life is more meaningful, it may then also be possible to embrace more fully the sanctity of all forms of life in the limited intervals that we as individual beings spend on this planet, rather than continuing to squander its natural and human resources in the course of a fearful flight from death. In this regard, Belmonte (1990) reminds us that in pre-modern cultures the task of communicating the meaning of death was traditionally the province of the trickster or sacred clown. This seems to reflect the reality that the recollection of death requires a hermeneutic transgression of boundaries - Hermes is the archetypal trickster - that is alien to modernist thinking. In this sense, the quest to understand death through the route of gnosis must inevitably challenge the customary boundaries that guide modern thinking - inner and outer, self and other, mind and body, and, ultimately, life and death.

1.3. Aims and Overview of the Thesis: Jung and Thanatology

The rationale for this thesis emerges from the need for a recollection of death in Western culture. It has been argued that this task demands an approach that is poetic rather than scientific or Romantic, and to this end gnosis has been identified as an appropriate ontological and epistemological grounding for the study. The theoretical and empirical aims of the thesis may be contextualised in this light.

Essentially, this work sets out to investigate the response of the imaginal psyche to the literal reality of death. We wish to inquire as to the imaginative implications of the dying process, and to elucidate the connections between the metaphoric and the literal dimensions of the image of death in human experience. The approach adopted is (a) to establish a poetic understanding of the meaning of death, i.e. to explore the meaning of death as an imaginative or metaphoric reality of psychological life, and (b) to investigate the extent to which this understanding applies to the actual experience of dying. It is hypothesised that the literal ending of life will be found to be thematised in terms of images and symbols that reflect the meaning of death as a metaphoric reality - i.e. that the psyche meets the approach of death imaginatively. The possibility of meaningful gnosis of death is in turn located in this connection.

The vehicle adopted for the substantiation of these hypotheses is the dream. As is argued in a later

discussion, the dream - or more broadly, dreaming as a mode of being (cf. Chapter Five) - has a natural grounding in the language of myth, and thus offers perhaps the most suitable route for exploring the meaning of death in a poetic manner. In this sense, the symbolic discourse of dreaming may also be said to yield gnosis of death that is not simply accessible through logical thinking. Accordingly, the empirical aspect of this thesis consists of a hermeneutic analysis of the dream material of dying persons, with the emphasis being on the elucidation of those metaphors that guide and impart meaning to the conclusion of life.

The aims of this dissertation, as outlined above, demand a conceptual framework which is able to support the move towards gnosis. It must advance an understanding of death that is poetic (i.e. metaphoric), but at the same time must not lose sight of the ontic contingencies that ground the meaning of death as a metaphoric presence. In this way, we avoid on the one hand formulations that are simply abstract and intellectual, and on the other hand empiricism that is facile and meaningless (cf. Bugental, 1973/4; Leman-Stefanovic, 1987). The present thesis sets out to demonstrate that Jung's analytical psychology is able to meet these rigorous demands, and that it therefore offers to thanatology a meaningful alternative to positivist and Romantic approaches. At the outset, it must be noted that this task entails more than simply offering an overview of Jung's treatment of death. For while contemporary commentators readily acknowledge that Jung was one of the most influential thinkers of the modern age, and while his contribution to diverse fields in the social sciences has been substantial (cf. Adler, 1945; Dourley, 1990; Saayman & Papadopoulos, 1984; Zabriskie, 1990), his influence on contemporary thanatology has thus far been relatively mute. While some thanatologists have drawn obliquely on certain of Jung's ideas, such as the concept of archetypes (e.g. Barrett, 1988/89; Cookson, 1990; Grof & Halifax, 1977; Grosso, 1984), a comprehensive search of available literature revealed only one attempt by a thanatologist (Carse, 1980) to apply Jung's psychology to the question of death - and that suffers from a very cursory treatment of some of the key theoretical principles of analytical psychology. At the same time, analytical psychologists have themselves been fairly reticent so far as articulating an approach to death is concerned; with the exception of some noteworthy contributions (e.g. Gordon, 1961; 1978; Henderson & Oates, 1990; Herzog, 1983; Hillman, 1964; 1979; Jaffe, 1978; Mogenson, 1991; von Franz, 1986; Williams, 1958; 1962), there have been relatively few attempts by Jungian writers to vigorously pursue a thanatological course.

The reasons for the situation outlined above are complex and multifaceted, but two considerations are worth mentioning. First, the emphasis on scientific empiricism in contemporary thanatology has been associated with a concomitant paucity of theory building, so that thanatologists have for the

most part not sought complex conceptual models with which to explain their findings (Bluebond-Langner, 1987/88; Feifel, 1990). Second, the fact that death has been a perennial theme in existentialist philosophy has meant that those thanatologists who have sought a meaningful theoretical home have generally turned towards existentialism rather than analytical psychology. Indeed, there appears to be a common misconception that Jung was relatively unconcerned with death, and that his psychology therefore has little direct relevance to the aged or the terminally ill (cf. Baker & Wheelwright, 1982; Carse, 1980).

Important as these considerations are in understanding the neglect of Jung in thanatology, one suspects that they may be subsidiary to a more subtle concern regarding the actual orientation of his approach. 'What kind of a thinker was Jung?' is a question that has great bearing on his appeal, or lack thereof, to poetic thanatologists, but it is also one that is not simply answered. To begin with, Jung repeatedly insisted that he did not have an actual theoretical system of his own, on account of the fact that his ideas were based on clinical experience and material rather than the product of philosophical abstraction (Papadopoulos, 1992, p. xiv). Coupled with this, his interests cut across neat academic lines, spanning mythology, religion, art, philosophy, and so on. This may explain the fact that his writings are regarded as demonstrating an incisive and inspiring understanding of the human psyche by some, and as uncontained and incomprehensible by others (*ibid.*). Jung himself acknowledged that clarity was often lacking in his work, and commented that "I can formulate my thoughts only as they break out of me. It is like a geyser. Those who come after me will have to put them in order" (quoted by Jaffe, 1971a, p. 8).

The issue is however more than this. As Brooke (1991) demonstrates, there is a fundamental ontological and epistemological tension in Jung's writings between a natural scientific and a poetic style, and this tension often appears to emerge as a muddled eclectism. Brooke's chief contribution to this problem is to demonstrate that despite repeated lapses into unacknowledged Cartesian thinking, Jung was nonetheless endowed with a profoundly poetic vision; but the important fact remains that in his writings this vision often tends to be obscured by an implicit Cartesian ontology and epistemology. In an important sense, it would seem that Jung himself was burdened by this tendency. In his autobiography, he reflected that although the question of death had not featured prominently in his writings, it had nonetheless shaped his thinking to a significant degree, and he

remarked that he regarded his works as:

" ... fundamentally nothing but attempts, ever renewed, to give an answer to the question of the interplay between the 'here' and the 'hereafter'" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 330).

Significantly, Jung went on to profess that despite this fact he had felt unable to clearly articulate his thoughts about death. "Even now", he commented, "I can do no more than tell stories - 'mythologise'. Perhaps one has to be close to death to acquire the necessary freedom to talk about it" (*ibid.*).

These statements are intriguing and challenging. They suggest that while Jung regarded death as a key problematic in his investigations, by his own admission he lacked the conceptual vision - or perhaps more correctly, the appropriate language - to articulate this problematic in a rigorous manner. In this light, the task is to gain a sense of Jung the poet through a critical evaluation of Jung the thinker, and this is a challenge that will need to be met throughout this thesis. Thus an additional aim of the present project is to make Jung's psychology more appealing and acceptable to poetically minded thanatologists. But we may perhaps go even further than this, and suggest that at an important level the process of recovering the poetic from the scientific in Jung's writings reflects, with particular reference to death, the work of recollection that is our historical imperative.

1.3.1. The structure of the thesis

Chapter One considers the scope and aims of the thesis, as outlined above.

Chapter Two presents a critical evaluation of Jung's approach to death, with particular emphasis on the tension between his scientific and his poetic mentalities. It is argued that although his thanatology does occasionally appear to treat death as a scientific problem, his thinking about human finitude was, nevertheless, fundamentally poetic. This claim is elaborated with regard to a consideration of the place of death in Jung's analysis of existence, his concept of psychological reality, and his appreciation of the archetypal structure of the imagination.

In Chapter Three, an attempt is made to elucidate death as a poetic concern by showing that an

evolving theme of death lent metaphoric expression to Jung's personal experience of individuation. The essential purpose here is to demonstrate that death, in its connection to the Jungian self, cannot simply be thought of as an intrapsychic reality. Also, the idea that death refers to ambivalent potentialities of psychological life - the one regressive, the other transcendent - is introduced.

Chapter Four is the theoretical pivot of the dissertation. It offers an analysis of the poetic parameters of death and dying by challenging the hidden Cartesian implications in Jung's writings. First, death is described as a state of non-being, a 'nothingness' that is also home to the imagination. In these terms, death is linked firstly to the capacity for symbolisation, and secondly to the integration of disparate parts of the psyche. Drawing on the work of Gordon (1961; 1978), the concept of the death instinct, Thanatos, is revisioned in a poetic fashion; it is described as no less than a poetic calling that is located in the functions of the self. But it is also recognised that under certain conditions the death instinct may serve as a regressive force that is ultimately inimical to the growth and development of the personality. This tension is elucidated in terms of the concept of an ego-self axis, referring to the dynamic fulcrum of psychological life. Following from these considerations, attention is given to the possible connections between the figurative and the literal manifestations of death.

Chapter Five addresses the role of dreams in the dying process. It is suggested that dreams serve as a mythopoetic grounding during the dying process and that, as outlined above, they therefore afford opportunities for gnosis of death. In that chapter, it is also explained that there is a need to move away from a Cartesian understanding of dreams as discrete units of nocturnal fantasy, so that the value and significance of dreaming, as a poetic mode of being, can be appreciated. In these terms, it is argued that it is when death is approached through the perspective of dreaming that an awakening to imaginative possibilities of existence becomes possible. A review of research literature pertaining to dreams and dying is provided, and the chapter is concluded by revisiting the empirical aims of the thesis.

The methodological parameters of the thesis are outlined in Chapter Six, firstly in terms of the need for a hermeneutic method - specifically Jung's method of amplification - and secondly in terms of the research design and procedure that was employed in the present study.

Chapter Seven involves a thematic analysis of the dreams of dying subjects. First, a number of themes are identified from the data by using Jung's method of amplification to elucidate the

meaning of recurrent images and motifs. Second, these themes are condensed to reveal five essential themes: death, transformation, the self, the Masculine and the Feminine.

The implications of the results of the study are discussed in Chapter Eight, and case material is presented in support of key considerations. Attention is also given to the clinical uses of dreams in the dying process, and a critical evaluation of the research is provided.

CHAPTER TWO

JUNG'S APPROACH TO DEATH

2.1. The Question of Jung's Approach

The closing section of Chapter One highlighted both the value and the complexity of interfacing Jung's psychology with contemporary approaches to thanatology. Particular attention was paid to the tension between science and *poesis* in his writings, and it was suggested that this tension is mirrored in the thanatology movement itself. Ironically, Jung's apparent allegiance to the paradigm of natural science on the one hand, and his penchant for poetic reflection on the other hand, appears to have resulted in adherents of both of these approaches treating his work with suspicion or disregard. In the first instance, it is fair to say that his frequent departures from mechanistic psychiatry, and even more his excursions into mythology and religion, have often been misconstrued, particularly by scientific thinkers, as constituting a 'mystical' bent to his psychology (cf. Clarke, 1992; Jaffe, 1989; Hearnshaw, 1987). Poetic writers, on the other hand, have frequently decried the Cartesian leanings in Jung's writings, and in so doing may have missed the profoundly poetic vision which he brought to bear, particularly in his later writings (cf. Boss, 1963; Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992; Downing, 1977; Herman, 1984; Steele, 1982).

Having already stated that a central purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the contribution that Jung's psychology has to offer in the project towards a meaningful gnosis of death in modern existence, it is now evident that this cannot be undertaken before the issue of his approach to death has been clarified. By 'approach' is meant the fundamental viewpoint or orientation, be it implicit or explicit, that the thinker brings to bear upon his or her work (Giorgi, 1970, p. 126). In the case of Jung's psychology, an evaluation of approach is complicated by the fact that he described his thinking as being both 'scientific' and 'phenomenological' (Jung, 1938/40, pp. 5ff.), without offering clarification of these terms. As will be seen in the following discussion, it is therefore not clear as to what extent Jung himself was aware of the ways in which the competing claims of these perspectives were played out in his writings, and this can lead to the impression that his thinking was at times erratic and self-contradictory.

Accordingly, the dominant concern of this chapter is the style of Jung's thinking about death. It is intended to show that while his poetic sensibility was occasionally obscured by an inclination towards the approach and language of natural science, it nevertheless formed a relatively consistent theme in his thanatology. Such a demonstration will involve a somewhat circuitous and cursory route through Jung's writings, but this is necessary in order to gain an appreciation of the tensions within his approach. From there, it will be possible to derive a theoretical understanding of death and dying in terms that undercut the scientific perspective in his writings. To begin with, it is pertinent to consider the extent of Jung's allegiance to scientific and poetic thinking respectively.

2.1.1. An evaluation of Jung as a scientist

Cartesian science, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is not simply a neutral and value-free ontology or epistemology. Seen in its historical context, it represents a quest to gain mastery over an essentially inanimate world through an emphasis on the literal, the rational, and the predictable. So far as Jung's personality and thinking were concerned, these attitudes and motives emerged from and gathered around a particular experiential complex which he identified as his 'Number One personality' (Jung, 1961/83, pp. 60ff.). This complex was dominant throughout his early and middle years, and it was primarily rational, logical and pragmatic in its orientation. Essentially, it corresponded to his "ordinary, everyday identity" (Papadopoulos, 1984, p. 59). In his academic life, No. 1 was associated with an affinity for the natural sciences (a competing voice, his No. 2 personality, pulled him in a different direction, but this is discussed in the following section); it was a strong factor in his choice of a medical career, and it led him to be absorbed, at least initially, in the approach of scientific materialism (*ibid.*, p. 60).

When it comes to considering Jung's writings, the influence of personality No. 1 is evident in key areas of his psychology. For instance, a scientific bent is fairly obvious in the quasi-experimental methodology of his early word-association studies (e.g. Jung, 1906), his speculations regarding a causal 'toxin' in schizophrenia (e.g. Jung, 1907; 1939a), and his occasional attempts to locate the archetypes in the structure of the brain (e.g. Jung, 1937/42). Even in his more 'psychological' works, however, the underlying influence of Cartesian philosophy is sometimes evident - as in his occasional descriptions of the psyche as an interior place distinct from the objective world, and in his 'pre-Kantian' interpretation of Kant (see below). Jung's vociferous claims that his psychology was 'scientific' (e.g. Jung, 1938/40; 1926/46) are therefore not without substance, but the extent

to which this meant a strict allegiance to the dictates of positivism must be questioned. In this regard, Jung appears to have often erroneously identified himself as a scientist, at least so far as the contemporary connotations of the term 'science' are concerned. Partly, this may reflect his enduring desire to distance his psychology from rational philosophy (Jung, 1926/46; cf. Brooke, 1991), but in many instances he simply appears to have adopted a somewhat idiosyncratic, or at least limited, meaning of 'science'. Thus even while insisting that his approach was grounded in "scientific empiricism" (Jung, 1938/40, p. 6), he was quick to link this perspective with a need to focus on lived experience. In one passage, he remarked that "I can ... produce nothing convincing, nothing that would convince the reader as it convinces the man whose deepest experience it is" (Jung, 1928a, p. 219). Elsewhere, he indicated that, owing to its emphasis on human experience, his approach was essentially phenomenological (Jung, 1938/40, pp. 5f.).

To all intents and purposes, Jung's 'scientific empiricism' thus did not imply a method resting upon detached observation, but rather the grounding of conceptual ideas in actual experience. For instance, he wrote that:

" ... our laboratory is the world. Our tests are concerned with the actual, day-to-day happenings of human life, and the test-subjects are our patients, relatives, friends, and, last but not least, ourselves. Fate itself plays the role of the experimenter. There are no needle-pricks, artificial shocks, surprise-lights, and all the paraphernalia of laboratory experiments; it is the hopes and fears, the pains and joys, the mistakes and achievements of real life that provide us with our material" (Jung, 1926/46, p. 92).

It is in the style of a phenomenologist - or better still, a poet - that Jung was writing here¹. Moreover, the sentiment expressed in this passage continues a theme in his writings which begins with his 'Zofinga lectures'², in which he had voiced dissatisfaction with the "intellectual poverty"

¹ This is not to say that Jung explicitly drew upon the principles of Husserlian phenomenology, but rather that he often brought similar concerns to bear in his writings. The passage quoted above is one example of his insistence that psychology should address human experience in a direct and authentic manner, a claim that will be substantiated in the course of this discussion. For a penetrating analysis of the points of connection between Jung and phenomenology, the reader is referred to the work of Brooke (1991).

² The Zofinga lectures are the talks which Jung, as a medical student, delivered to the Zofingiverein, the student fraternity and debating forum at Basel University. Although Jung made no direct references to these talks in his later works, they reveal the seeds of many of his mature concepts. The lectures have recently been translated and published as a supplementary volume to the Collected Works.

of modern science (Jung, 1898, p. 6). In the aptly-titled Modern Man in Search of A Soul (Jung, 1933/85), he again wrote with despair about the positivistic bias of modern thinking:

"Other-worldliness is converted into matter-of-factness; empirical boundaries are set to man's discussion of every problem, to his choice of purposes, and even to what he calls 'meaning' ... no value exists if it is not founded on a so-called fact" (p. 202).

Again, this sentiment is clearly not reflective of a positivist or a 'scientific' thinker!

2.1.2. Jung's poetic intent

The point of the preceding discussion has been to show that while there may have been a Cartesian disposition to Jung's thinking, it cannot be said that his approach was actually aligned with the tradition of scientific materialism. What must still be established is the extent to which Jung emerged as a poetic thinker.

In addition to his dominant No. 1 personality, Jung was aware from an early age of the influence of a competing complex which he termed his 'No. 2 personality'. Whereas No. 1 was primarily concerned with the concrete and rational world of Western modernism, No. 2, in sharp contrast, was "remote from the world of men but close to nature ... above all close to the night, to dreams" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 62). In contrast to the objective, literal and 'horizontal' outlook of No. 1, No. 2 personality therefore served as a subjective and 'vertical' point of orientation. It manifested in an appreciation of nature, aesthetics, and myth, and Jung related that he experienced No. 2 as "another realm, like a temple in which anyone who entered was transformed and suddenly overpowered by a vision of the whole cosmos, so that he could only marvel and admire, forgetful of himself" (*ibid.*). In the following chapter, it will be seen that while No. 1 was bound up with processes of differentiation and separation, No. 2 was oriented towards emergent possibilities of wholeness through the transgression of boundaries - and thus towards death.

Clearly, the interests and needs of No. 1 and No. 2 clashed. In psychiatry, however, Jung felt that he had discovered a reasonable compromise between the sciences (the domain of No. 1) and the humanities (the domain of No. 2). An inspiring encounter with the work of Krafft-Ebing led him to

believe that psychiatry represented "the empirical field common to biological and spiritual facts, which I had everywhere sought and nowhere found" (*ibid.*, p. 130). As we have seen above, the restrictive materialism of modern psychiatry soon however left No. 2 frustrated and unfulfilled, and with its growing dominance in Jung's psychological make-up (cf. Chapter Three), his attention inexorably turned away from medical psychiatry and towards a psychology of depth.

Jung's poetic stance was thus founded in his No. 2 personality. It is most evident in his incisive treatment of the question of modernity, particularly with regard to his emphasis on the need for meaning in an age which has elevated determinism, rationalism and materialism into dogmatic truths (Clarke, 1992, p. xv; cf. Brooke, 1991; Homans, 1979; Progoff, 1953). Jung saw in the iconoclastic attitude of the modern mind a continuation of the "spiritual catastrophe" of the Enlightenment (Jung, 1933/85, p. 200), and he believed that the rationalistic climate of modernism had resulted in a profound desacralisation of the world and a concomitant "lack of meaning in life ... whose full extent and import our age has as yet not begun to comprehend" (Jung, 1934a, p. 415). For Jung, the 'nothing but' accent of modern thinking was nothing short of "negative" (1921, p. 352), "destructive" (*ibid.*, p. 353), "indescribably cheap" (*ibid.*, p. 354), and even "neurotic" (Jung, 1934b, p. 170), in so far as it perpetuates superficiality at the expense of psychic depth and meaning (cf. Miller, 1991). For this reason, too, he advocated a hermeneutic method of understanding, geared towards the resuscitation of metaphor as the authentic language of the psyche (cf. below & Chapter Six). With some justification, it may therefore be stated that Jung's thinking was aligned far more towards the thrust of a postmodern recollection of Being than towards the dictates of modern science. This claim is supported by recent commentaries which situate Jung's work firmly within the postmodern tradition (Barnaby & D'Acierno, 1990; Brooke, 1991; Casey, 1987; Clarke, 1992; Miller, 1991; Rauhala, 1984; Steele, 1982). As with the work of other postmodern theorists (e.g. Foucault, Heisenberg, Maturana, Derrida), Jung's project, as Neville (1992) comments, "challenges the supremacy of reason and the logic of materialism, and points to the paradoxes and ambiguities which are characteristic of post-rationalist thought in every field" (p. 339).

A more thorough exploration of the poetics of Jung's approach will be undertaken in the following section, but it should already be clear that while his occasional lapses into a Cartesian mentality do violence to his own position, the fundamental stance of his psychology was poetic rather than scientific. As Brooke (1991) argues, "it is not that to identify Jung's Cartesianism or positivism is wrong; it is simply extremely limiting" (p. 28). Even Hillman, who staunchly advocates a radical 'reversioning' of analytical psychology to rid it of its hidden Cartesian inclinations, concedes that

Jung's emphasis was primarily on understanding, and that his work therefore cannot simply be grouped with "psychologies that are explanatory, descriptive, or medical in the narrow sense" (Hillman, 1974, p. 171). However, the point must not be lost that there is nonetheless an important sense in which even Jung's mature thought is not entirely divested of a Cartesian heritage. Apart from obscuring the poetic insights towards which Jung himself aspired, this means that his intentions are not always clear: the reader of the Collected Works may well ponder, from time to time, whether Jung was a poetic scientist, a scientific poet, or simply a thinker who vacillated between two ambivalent traditions. If this is true of Jung's *opus* in general, then it is perhaps particularly characteristic of his thanatology. This point may be illustrated with reference to (a) the place of death in Jung's analysis of existence; (b) his concept of psychical reality; and (c) his theory of archetypes. As the aim is essentially to elucidate Jung's approach to death, the emphasis of these considerations will be for the most part on the way in which he thought about death rather than his conceptual understanding of death and dying, which is addressed in later chapters.

2.2. Death in Jung's Analysis of Existence

Jung's attempts to give formal expression to the question of death begin with his career as a medical student. In one of the 'Zofinga lectures', he deliberated briefly about the fragility of human existence, and he mused that the nature of death is such that it defies all attempts at rational comprehension. Speaking to the epistemological and ontological dilemma which has plagued scientific thanatology (cf. Chapter One), he asserted that death is so incomprehensible that "if it had happened only once, to only one person, no one in the world would believe it could happen at all" (Jung, 1898, p. 28). For this reason, he maintained that attempts to bring the study of death into the harsh glare of scientific logic could never do justice to its existential complexity and depth (*ibid.*). As he described it, death intrudes as a dreadful and bewildering reality which ultimately slights even the strongest will to live; it thus delivers a cogent challenge to the modernist illusion of a rational and predictable universe. For the modern person, who lives oblivious of the personal reality of death, life simply 'goes on'. But:

" ... what happens then? Then something happens that no longer fits into the system at all, that is completely incomprehensible, the clarification of a lie, the emendation of an error: he dies! Why? For what purpose? His doctor cold-bloodedly records: death by violence, disease, old age. In short, the game is over ... It is an

incredible fact, But why does death occur? Why should an organism constructed with infinite care and efficiency, whose innermost purpose is to live, come to an end, wither and decay? Why is the purposeful drive to live cut off with such contempt?" (*ibid.*, p. 28).

From the outset, Jung's concern was therefore with understanding death as an inexorable reality of human existence rather than as a scientific fact, and to this extent his thinking essentially paralleled that of existentialist writers of the modern age. In 'The Soul and Death' (Jung, 1934a), his only essay dealing specifically with the topic of death and dying, he advanced the proposition that the reality of finitude imparts value and significance to existence; the meaning of life "never becomes more urgent or more agonising" than in the face of death (p. 404). In this light, he asserted that to refute death as a meaningful reality of existence is to invite a closure or restriction of the possibilities of Being:

"The negation of life's fulfilment is synonymous with the refusal to accept its ending. Both mean not wanting to live, and not wanting to live is identical with not wanting to die" (*ibid.*, p. 407).

Jung recognised, too, that in the rationalistic climate of modern existence the ontological claims of death are however seldom appreciated. He lamented this fact in the following terms:

"Death is known to us simply as the end ... the period, often placed before the close of the sentence and followed only by memories or after-effects in others ... We are so convinced that death is simply the end of a process that it does not ordinarily occur to us to conceive of death as a goal and a fulfilment" (*ibid.*, pp. 405-6).

At that point, he did not offer a conceptual explanation as to how death might serve as 'a goal and a fulfilment', stating only that the validity of his thinking was ultimately grounded in the '*consensus gentium*' (universal agreement) of previous ages (*ibid.*). In other words, he appealed to a forgotten wisdom, or gnosis, that is witnessed in religious and mythical portrayals of death as a supreme spiritual aspiration.

In Symbols of Transformation (Jung, 1912/52), which signalled the beginnings of his 'post-Freudian' phase, Jung similarly referred to death as an aspiration rather than simply an event

"coming from outside" (p. 438), but in that work his concern was primarily with death as a regressive longing during the 'first half' of life (cf. Chapters Three & Four). In later writings (Jung, 1930/31; 1934a; 1961/83), he developed the idea that the 'second half of life', i.e. from mid-life onwards, has as its principal concern a mature acceptance of, and a conscious preparation for, the ending of life. He insisted that it is "hygienic" to discover in death a goal towards which one might strive, for "it is better to go forwards with the stream of time than backwards against it ... an old man who cannot bid farewell to life appears as sickly as a young man who is unable to embrace it" (Jung, 1930/31, p. 402).

It is important to note that for Jung it was not simply a question of making the thought of death more tolerable by framing it as a goal rather than a catastrophe. Rather, he envisioned death as an innate goal of existence, a fulfilment towards which all life is ultimately oriented. This is of course reminiscent of Freud's well-known hypothesis of the death instinct, but Jung rejected this concept on the grounds that it was essentially reductionistic and pessimistic (cf. Chapter Four). It is however evident that he too brought a telic (goal-directed) understanding to bear on the problematic of human finitude. This perspective is particularly evident in a passage in which he likened the natural course of life to the daily path of the sun:

"Life is teleology par excellence; it is the intrinsic striving towards a goal, and the living organism is a system of directed aims which seek to fulfil themselves ... With the attainment of maturity and at the zenith of biological existence, life's drive towards a goal in no wise halts. With the same intensity and irresistibility with which it strove upward before middle age, life now descends; for the goal no longer lies on the summit, but in the valley where the ascent began. The curve of life is like the parabola of a projectile which, disturbed from its initial state of rest, rises and then returns to a state of repose" (*ibid.*, p. 406)³.

In his autobiography, Jung (1961/83) extended these assumptions by describing death as a fundamentally ambivalent goal:

" ... death is indeed a fearful piece of brutality; there is no sense pretending otherwise. It is brutal not only as a physical event, but far more so psychically: a

³ See also Jung, 1930/31, p. 397.

human being is torn away from us, and what remains is the icy stillness of death ... This is a cruel reality which we have no right to sidestep. The actual experience of the cruelty and wantonness of death can so embitter us that we conclude there is no merciful God, no justice, and no kindness. From another point of view, however, death appears as a joyful event. In the light of eternity, it is a wedding, a *mysterium coniunctionis*. The soul attains, as it were, its missing half, it achieves wholeness" (p. 346).

Jung's thinking about death as the ultimate goal of existence now becomes clearer: death represents no less than the culmination of psychological wholeness, a condition which Jung termed the self. In these terms, death means completeness, transcendence and fulfilment (cf. Chapters Three & Four), but it is important to note that for Jung this did not simply amount to a Romantic celebration of life's ending. As is evident from the above passage, death has also a destructive and terrible face, and Jung's appreciation of this tension within the image of death will become clearer in the following chapters.

How then are we to evaluate Jung's approach to death in terms of his analysis of existence? On the one hand, there are clearly grounds for asserting that his thinking departs significantly from the natural scientific tradition. As it emerges in Jung's writings, death is a problem beyond rational understanding; it is a force that lends meaning to existence; and it is an intrinsic goal of life. Moreover, his conceptualisation of death as a state of transcendent wholeness offers the possibility of a pivotal shift from a literal objectification of death to a metaphoric perspective, i.e. from science to *poesis* (see below). On the other hand, it must be noted that this perspective was not always carried through to its full implications in Jung's writings. In places, he continued to treat death as if it were tied to the literal ending of life only, asserting for instance that the question of mortality was essentially irrelevant to an understanding of the mid-life transition "because as a rule death is still far in the distance and therefore somewhat abstract" (Jung, 1930/31, p. 397). This reflects a subtle but fairly persistent claim in his writings that death is a problem of the 'second half' of life only (e.g. Jung, 1934a; 1930/31), and this thinking is sometimes perpetuated by his followers (cf. Hillman, 1979). In these terms, the impact of death as an existential issue throughout life is to some extent obscured, as is its meaning as a metaphoric reality. What this means is that Jung's teleology is not necessarily poetic. As Avens (1982) points out, to see death as a goal that is situated at the end of life only, is still to conceive of it as something that is essentially 'additive' to, and therefore distinct from, life itself. This thinking in turn betrays a proclivity towards the discriminatory logic of positivist science. Hillman (1979) is critical of 'finalistic', or teleological,

models of death for the same reason, maintaining that they fail to acknowledge that which poets throughout the generations have 'known' (in the sense of gnosis), namely that the goal of death "is always now" (p. 30, emphasis added). This claim will become clearer in later chapters.

The central implication of the foregoing considerations is that if death is to be conceptualised poetically, and as a meaningful goal of existence, then that goal should not be limited to the literal ending of life only. Rather, death must be acknowledged as an unyielding and immediate metaphoric presence, a dark background against which the meaning and purpose of existence is constantly illuminated. We must now explore the idea that it is towards such an understanding of death that we are led by way of another route in Jung's thinking, namely his concept of psychical reality.

2.3. Death and Psychical Reality

In conceptualising an order of reality which he termed 'psychic' or 'psychical', Jung was essentially positing that reality is not simply objectively given, but is inherently psychological, i.e. is constituted via the imaginative faculties of the existential subject. Arguably, this idea represents the most judicious attempt on his part to resolve the subject-object dichotomy that epitomises the paradigm of positivism; but at the same time, it occasionally suffers from a self-limiting grounding in a Cartesian language and mentality. A brief exposition of this issue is germane in order to draw attention firstly to the philosophical tensions underlying Jung's notion of psychical reality, and secondly to the poetic basis of his approach to death.

2.3.1. Jung's Kantianism: a critical evaluation

It is an important anomaly of Jung's thinking that he attempted to draw on Kant's theory of knowledge in support of his understanding of the psychical realm⁴ in a way that was essentially 'pre-Kantian' (Brooke, personal communication, 1995). The complexities of the Jung-Kant

⁴ In a letter of 1941, for example, Jung stated that "epistemologically I take my stand on Kant" (Jung, 1973, p. 294).

relationship far exceed the boundaries of this discussion and are in any event tangential to its essential thrust⁵. Suffice it to note that Jung drew on Kant's classical distinction between the *noumenon* (the 'thing-in-itself') and the *phenomenon* (the thing as it appears to the subject) in such a way that it appears to endorse a Cartesian bifurcation of subject and object. As Jung stated it, the 'thing in itself' is essentially impenetrable and can be known only as a mental representation. The fundamental implication of this position is that the 'real' world is forever beyond the psychological one, thereby opening an ontological and epistemological chasm between the human subject and the world of inanimate matter. In other words, psychological life becomes reduced to a series of 'inner' events. In an essay of 1931, for example, Jung insisted that:

"All that I experience is psychic ... My own psyche even transforms and falsifies reality, and it does this to such a degree that I must resort to artificial means to determine what things are like apart from myself ... We are in truth so wrapped about by psychic images that we cannot penetrate at all the essence of things external to ourselves. All our knowledge consists of the stuff of the psyche which, because it alone is immediate, is superlatively real" (Jung, 1931a, p. 353, emphasis added).

This theme is echoed in Jung's insistence that "only psychic existence is immediately verifiable. To the extent that the world does not assume the form of a psychic image it is virtually non-existent" (Jung, 1939/54, pp. 480-1). It is repeated again in the following passage:

"It is my mind, with its store of images, that gives the world colour and sound; and that supremely real and rational certainty which I call 'experience' is, in its most simple form, an exceedingly complicated structure of mental images. Thus there is in a certain sense, nothing that is directly experienced except the mind itself. Everything is mediated through the mind, translated, filtered, allegorized, twisted, even falsified by it ... What we know of the world ... are conscious contents that flow from remote, obscure sources" (Jung, 1926, p. 327, emphasis added).

Considering these statements, the reader unfamiliar with the broader direction of Jung's writings may be justified in assuming that his thinking represents a direct continuation of the Cartesian

⁵ More comprehensive considerations of Jung's treatment of Kant are provided by Brooke (1991), de Voogd (1977; 1984) and Scott (1977a).

alienation of 'inner' and 'outer' worlds, and thus a perpetuation of the principles of positivist science. Indeed, in one place Jung was inevitably led to such a position by route of his own thinking, being forced to conclude that:

"We are ... enveloped in a cloud of changing and endlessly shifting images ... So thick and deceptive is this fog about us that we had to invent the exact sciences in order to catch a glimmer of the so-called 'real' nature of things" (*ibid.*).

As Brooke (1991) comments on this aspect of Jung's psychology:

"Not only is psychological life locked within an encapsulated psyche, or mind, but the 'outer world', drained of meaning and human habitation, is none other than the *res extensa* of Descartes, that can be accounted for only in terms of natural science ... Phenomenology's two fundamental reciprocal criticisms of Cartesian thought in psychology are in this case appropriate. First, Jung is guilty of enclosing psychological life into a solipsistic inner world from which, among other things, it is impossible to speak coherently of any real relationships with other beings. In other words, Jung is guilty of psychologism. Second, in emptying the world of any intrinsic meaning other than that prescribed by natural science, Jung is endorsing that epistemological vision which came to be known as positivism" (p. 66).

The problem appears to lie with Jung's reading of Kant. For Kant's project, enumerated in his classical Critique of Pure Reason (Kant, 1781), was not intended to rupture the phenomenal realm from the world, nor to turn the world into a solipsistic creation of the subject (Brooke, 1991, p. 75). On the contrary, it represented an attempt to elucidate the conditions that make experience of the world possible (cf. Brann, 1991; de Voogd, 1984). As post-modern thinkers read Kant, the foundation of experience is essentially 'Abysmal' (Brann, 1991, p. 89), meaning that it is through the 'nothingness' of imagination that the world is constituted (cf. Chapter Four). In other words, experience is always embedded in an imaginal context (de Voogd, 1977, p. 179). It has been recognised that, in the second edition of Critique of Pure Reason, Kant retreated somewhat from this affirmation of the world-constituting power of the imagination (Murray, 1986, p. 19), and in

his critique of the Kantian *opus* Heidegger (1929/62) found reason to assert that:

"By his radical interrogation, Kant brought the 'possibility' of metaphysics before [the] abyss [of the imagination]. He saw the unknown; he had to draw back" (p. 173).

It will be seen in the development of this thesis that it is ironically towards this abyss that Jung's concept of psychical reality and his appreciation of its grounding in the experience of death leads us, but the point remains that Jung's use of Kant was inaccurate and resulted in an ontology that leaned towards the alienating stance of Cartesian science (cf. Brooke, 1991; de Voogd, 1977; 1984). Therefore, it would be incorrect to justify Jung's concept of psychical reality simply with recourse to Kantian philosophy⁶.

Brooke (1991, p. 66) makes the important point that while it is necessary to critically evaluate the Cartesian element in Jung's writings, to do so is ultimately to adhere to the letter of what Jung says rather than to follow the spirit of his intention. Or as de Voogd (1977) comments, "let us who try to follow Jung do so without following Jung's defence of Jung because that defence turns out to be both self-contradictory and unnecessary. Let us follow Jung the Jungian not Jung the (non-)Kantian" (p. 181). Thus the key to revealing Jung's position as more poetic than it would seem to be from these deliberations - or, as Giegerich (1987) puts it, to effecting a 'rescue of the world' in Jung's thought - is to recognise that he was not ultimately committed to a form of solipsism or subjective idealism in his conceptualisation of psychical life (cf. Clarke, 1992, p. 29). It is reflective of the complexity of Jung's thinking that this is far from self-evident in his writings, but such a case may be made via a consideration of the nature and significance of psychical reality and its grounding in the imaginal realm.

⁶ This means too that we cannot simply criticise Kant's philosophy as it emerges in Jung's writings, as Eckman (1986) seems to do. For Kant's true position is far less Cartesian than Jung's treatment of it might lead one to presume, and is in fact much closer to phenomenology (Brooke, personal communication, 1995).

2.3.2. The imaginal grounding of psychical reality

In Psychological Types, Jung (1921) defined psychical reality as:

"the product neither of the actual, objective behaviour of things nor of ... formulated idea(s) ... but rather of the combination of both in the living psychological process" (p. 52).

In these terms, psychical reality essentially represents a "third reality between subject and object, mind and matter" (Avens, 1984, p. 23). As Jung (1921, p. 52) put it, it is '*esse in anima*' ('reality in the soul'), as opposed to reality that is grounded materially ('*esse in re*') or that is located exclusively in the mind ('*esse in intellectu*'). In 'Spirit and Life', he stated that:

"I do not contest the relative validity either of the realistic standpoint, *the esse in re*, or of the idealistic standpoint, the *esse in intellect solo*; I would only like to unite these extreme opposites by an *esse in anima*, which is the psychological standpoint" (Jung, 1926, pp. 327-8).

In this regard, de Voogd (1984, p. 224) makes the valid point that it is not so much that *esse in anima* mediates between *intellectus* and *re*, but that it embraces them both and widens their common ground by suspending the 'either-or' logic that otherwise keeps them opposed. In this light, psychical reality introduces an ontology that radically undercuts subject-object dualism, superseding in the process the ruptured ontology and epistemology of modernist thinking. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, however, this poetic move was undoubtedly impeded in Jung's writings by a tendency to rely on a mistaken reading of Kant, and thus by a discourse that invites a Cartesian interpretation of the psyche as an encapsulated 'inner' realm. That this was not his intention emerges from a more thorough consideration of his appreciation of psychical reality.

The fundamental tenet of Jung's conception of psychical life is expressed succinctly in his statement that "image is psyche" (Jung, 1929, p. 50, original emphasis). As he understood it, 'image' is neither merely an epiphenomenon of matter nor something 'unreal', but "a condensed expression of the psychic situation as a whole" (Jung, 1921, p. 442). Thus for Jung all awareness, and therefore all reality, is ultimately mediated through the imaginal dimension of the psyche: "image and meaning are identical; and as the first takes shape, so the latter becomes clear" (Jung,

1947/54, p. 204). In essence, this means that it is in the imaginal realm that all experience is ultimately grounded, but this realm is not simply located 'in' the mind; the psyche, Jung (1938/40, p. 84) insisted, encompasses and surrounds the individual (cf. Chapter Four). Imaginal or psychical reality therefore does not refer to an enclosed space sealed off from the world, but is rather an order of reality which brings the material and the mental worlds together in an immediate, living experience⁷. Understood in this light, the concept of psychical reality correlates with that level of experience which Corbin (1972), drawing on Islamic mysticism, has dubbed the *mundus imaginalis*, meaning an intermediary realm between the world of the senses and the intelligible world (cf. Avens, 1980, p. 39). As Avens points out, the critical emphasis here is that "images are not in the psyche as in a container but are the psyche. In other words, images mirror the psyche just as it is - as constantly imagining" (*ibid.*, original emphasis). In Psychological Types, Jung (1921) pointed to precisely this conclusion in asserting that "the psyche creates reality every day. The only expression I can use for this activity is fantasy⁸" (p. 52).

It is now easier to see that Jung's position was ultimately oriented towards a recovery of meaning through a radical departure from reason on the one hand and metaphysics on the other hand (cf. Casey, 1991, p. 320; de Voogd, 1984, p. 223). Through an emphasis on the imaginal as an order of reality in its own right, his understanding of 'the psychical' offers an approach that is neither grounded in the sterile literalisms of positivist science nor tied to the facile and equally literalistic metaphysics of Romantic philosophy. It points, rather, to a realm in which knowledge and experience come together in a living psychological process that is fundamentally metaphorical (cf. Avens, 1980; Brooke, 1991; Murray, 1986). In Jung's terms, the image always has an 'as-if'

⁷ In one passage, Jung himself corrected any notions to the contrary by insisting that by the concept of psychic reality he was "not attempting to reduce the 'world' to our 'idea' of it" (Jung, 1927/31a, p. 140), but for the most part he appears to have ignored the possibility that his intentions could possibly be read in any other way.

⁸ In later works, Jung employed the term 'imagination' to describe this function, limiting the term 'fantasy' to describe "a subjective figment of the mind" (Jung, 1942, p. 167n.18).

quality about it, and this ambiguity constitutes the authentic expression of psychological life (cf. Jung, 1947/54, p. 225n.). More, for Jung the image revealed a psychological truth (i.e. gnosis) that is lost in the literal and objective referents of positivism, and the ungrounded and fantastic aspirations of Romanticism. As Brooke (1991) comments, Jung's position was such that "there was never any 'truth' worth discussing that was not psychologically true, i.e. true for the psyche" (p. 90, original emphasis). Or as Romanyshyn (personal communication, 1995) has indicated, there is a truth to the soul that is not the same as the truth of the rational mind, and it is the former, rather than the latter, which moves us to meaning. This point is evident in the following passage from Jung's Answer to Job:

" ... some people believe it to be physically true that Christ was born as the son of a virgin, while others deny this as a physical impossibility. Everyone can see that there is no logical solution to this conflict and that one would do better not to get involved in such sterile disputes. Both are right and both are wrong. Yet they could easily reach agreement if only they dropped the word 'physical'. 'Physical' is not the only criterion of truth: there are also psychic truths which can neither be explained nor proved nor contested in any physical way. If, for instance, a general belief existed that the river Rhine had at one time flowed backwards from its mouth to its source, then this belief would in itself be a fact even though such an assertion, physically understood, would be deemed utterly incredible. Beliefs of this kind are psychic facts which cannot be contested and need no proof" (Jung, 1952, pp. 359-360).

2.3.3. Death as a psychical reality

One of the chief consequences to evolve from the above discussion concerns the epistemological parameters of psychical reality, and the implications so far as a poetics of death is concerned. As we have already seen, the fundamental problem confronting thanatology is the notion that nothing can be known of death because it is a condition that is beyond the boundaries of human experience. The response of positivist science has been to adopt a narrow focus on the concrete manifestations of death as a generalised phenomenon, while refuting the possibility of subjective knowledge of death that is more than merely abstract and speculative. Romantic approaches, on the other hand, take the route of transcendent metaphysics and appeal to a postulate of death that is anchored in

an essentially unknowable and alien world. The matter might even be left there, as no more than an academic debate, were it not for the realisation that the nihilistic shadows of modern culture make the recollection of death an existential necessity. Poetic thanatology adopts this premise as its *raison d'être*, but all too often it too flounders on overly abstract schemes due to the lack of a meaningful empirical base (cf. Chapter One).

The value of Jung's concept of psychical reality is that it invites a response to death that is essentially imaginative, rather than one that is literal, as in positivism, or fanciful, as in Romanticism (cf. Avens, 1984, p. 25). By affording epistemological and ontological primacy to the imaginal grounding of existence, Jung's hypothesis essentially offers a route to an understanding of death as a metaphoric presence, and thus stands between the extremes of materialism and spiritualism. As Gordon (1961) writes, "none of us, in this life, can know what death is actually like, but this does not dispose of the possibility that death is a fundamental psychic reality, and that ... the experience of a state of death is accessible and primary" (p. 122). In a similar fashion, Hillman (1964) writes that "death and existence may exclude each other in rational philosophy, but they are not psychologically contrary. Death can be experienced as a state of being, an existential condition" (p. 60). In these terms, the notion of psychical reality endorses a poetic deliteralisation of the meaning of death, firstly by recognising that certain conditions may be experienced as approximations of death, i.e. as metaphors of death, and secondly by insisting on the psychological truth attached to metaphoric experience.

In terms of the foregoing considerations, it may be seen that gnosis, as defined in Chapter One, is essentially compatible with Jung's understanding of psychical reality. For the reality of the psyche refers to more than an abstract or intellectual appreciation of images (Harding, 1968, p. 12); as the above discussion has attempted to demonstrate, it is a living experience that draws the subject into the metaphoric ground upon which existence rests. Thus as Jung (1964) insisted, psychical reality is:

"... both images and emotions ... When there is merely the image, then there is simply a word picture of little consequence. But being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity ... it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must flow from it" (p. 87).

Applying this to the present debate, it may be seen that to experience death as a metaphoric or psychical reality - i.e. to have gnosis of death - involves both an affective dimension and an

intellectual dimension. The former refers to the actual experience of death as a psychological state, and in the course of this dissertation it will be shown that this experience can assume many forms and images, depending partly on the attitude and needs of the ego. But to speak of gnosis of death implies that there is also an intellectual component, a reflective awareness or evaluation of the difference between the concrete and the figurative dimensions, so that the vital 'as-if' quality of psychical reality is maintained. For as noted in Chapter One, a metaphor is meaningful precisely because of the element of 'identity-in-difference' (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 153ff.). If this tension is obscured through a splitting of intellectual and experiential faculties, the risk is that the intrinsic meaningfulness of the image of death may on the one hand be drained through an abstract formulation that lacks affective potency, or on the other hand may simply give way to a primitive, pre-psychological literalisation of the image. The former problem is met in the thinker who over-abstracts to the point of irrelevancy, so that 'death' is treated simply as a linguistic ornament. Herzog (1983, p. 136) offers an example of the latter problem with reference to the neurotic who rejects transformation because change is unconsciously equated with 'real' death; here, the essential tension between concrete reality and psychic reality that is maintained through metaphoric experience, or gnosis, is lost.

Jung's understanding of psychical reality is, broadly speaking, hermeneutic and poetic, and it attempts to reclaim the imaginal basis of human experience. It is however unclear as to what extent Jung applied this vision to the question of death itself. On the one hand, we have already seen that even while acknowledging the existential significance of death as an intrinsic goal of life, he tended to think in scientific terms by confining its significance to later life only. Nor did he ever systematically explore the possible links between his theory of psychical reality and his understanding of death, with the exception of his appreciation of the possibility of life after death as an imaginal reality (cf. Chapter Five). On the other hand, his writings are littered with references to death that speak of a perspective that is far from literal. For instance, the following are some of the poetic meanings of death which emerge in the Collected Works:

- an "undifferentiated, unconscious state of primal being ... the great mystery of the original psychic state" (Jung, 1912/52, p. 417);
- "immobility, satiety, rest" (*ibid.*, p. 356);
- the "maternal womb" (*ibid.*, p. 218);

- "the dark abyss" of Being (Jung, 1942, p. 178);
- an *unio mentalis*, "the attainment of full knowledge" (Jung, 1955-56, p. 474);
- a *hierosgamos*, or conjunction of opposites; (Jung, 1961/83, p. 346).

These descriptions reflect an appreciation of death as a metaphoric presence, rather than an objective event, and they will receive the necessary elaboration in the following chapters. However, it already may be clear that what Jung was concerned with was not the death that forms the object of scientific thanatology, but the death that constitutes meaning for the poet. Again, we meet with the idea that death implies a collapsing of boundaries, a state of undifferentiated wholeness which Jung termed the self (see above). In this context, we may also see the importance of correcting Jung's misuse of Kant in his conceptualisation of psychical life. For if death is a condition of psychical wholeness, then, in terms of Jung's (pre-)Kantianism, it must be a wholeness that is simply located within the head, i.e. a form of solipsistic idealism. But when the poetic Jung is recovered from his inaccurate defence of his philosophical position, it then becomes possible to consider death as a *sui generis* reality which is the 'Abysmal' condition for Being (cf. Chapter Four). This is a challenging assumption which will need to be developed and justified at later points. At this juncture, it is necessary to elaborate on Jung's concept of psychical reality with reference to the nature and significance of archetypes.

2.4. Archetypes and the Experience of Death

It is a fundamental tenet of Jung's psychology that the reality of the psyche is ultimately grounded in those suprapersonal propensities which he termed archetypes. As Jung saw it, all imaginative activity is shaped by archetypes, which are "psychic realities, real because they work" (Jung, 1917/43, p. 93, original emphasis); archetypes "direct all fantasy activity into its appointed paths" (Jung, 1951, p. 66). Thus a Jungian hermeneutics of death rests, in the final analysis, upon an archetypal approach. As Jung acknowledged, however, his theory of archetypes is perhaps the most controversial aspect of his psychology (cf. Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992; Dry, 1961; Samuels, 1985a; Steele, 1982), and without being sidetracked into an extensive discussion of archetypes it

is necessary to briefly clarify the essential parameters of his hypothesis⁹.

2.4.1. Archetypes: an overview of Jung's theory

In Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido¹⁰, Jung introduced the term Imago to refer to the "living independence" of the psychical complex, meaning a constellation of emotionally linked images (Jung, 1912a, p. 55). This concept anticipated a later reference to 'archetypes' (Jung, 1919), and from 1919 onwards Jung employed the latter term to account for imaginal configurations which recur across time and place, and which therefore do not appear to originate simply through ontogenetic experience (e.g. Jung, 1934/54; 1936/54). Archetypes express something of the psychological history of humanity, revealing "truths that belong to no time" (Jung, 1928a, p. 190). However, Jung also noted that archetypes in themselves do not carry meaning; meaning emerges only in the ways in which they affect human consciousness (Jung, 1934/54, p. 32; cf. Scott, 1977a, p. 33). In this light, he made a conceptual distinction between the archetypal image and the 'archetype as such', i.e. between content and structural form (Jung, 1947/54). He described the 'archetype as such' as a transcendent and hence ultimately unknowable factor which "never was conscious and never will be. It was, and still is, only interpreted" (Jung, 1940, p. 156). Essentially, it serves as an a priori 'blueprint' for psychological development, acting so as to 'intuitively' shape experience in typically human ways (cf. Jung, 1919; 1921; 1936/37)¹¹. Put differently, the archetype preforms and structures imaginative activity according to particular lines of human development (cf. Casey, 1974; 1991), and thus represents a relatively stable and

⁹ The reader desiring a more extensive appraisal of Jung's thinking about archetypes is referred to the excellent overviews by Brooke (1991), Clarke (1992), Dry (1961), Gordon (1987), Scott (1977a), Steele (1982) and Samuels (1983 & 1985a), and to Hobson's (1971) brief but informative summary.

¹⁰ Translated into English as Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbols of the Libido (Jung, 1912a). The work was later revised with the title of Symbols of Transformation (Jung, 1912/52).

¹¹ In a certain sense, archetypes therefore operate in an 'instinctual' manner, and at times Jung in fact described archetypes as the psychological correlates of instincts (e.g. Jung, 1947/54, p. 166). The connection between archetype and instinct was however never clearly articulated in his writings, and in his later works Jung all but abandoned the distinction between these factors in favour of an understanding of the archetype as operating in a 'psychoid' way, i.e. at both a 'spiritual' or psychological level and a 'biological' level (cf. Chapter Four).

unchanging structure which is 'filled out' or actualised through the contingencies of personal and cultural experience (Sullivan, 1989, p. 144). Jung (1945/54) stated that:

"The unconscious supplies as it were the archetypal form, which is itself empty and irrepresentable. Consciousness immediately fills it with related or similar representational material so that it can be perceived. For this reason archetypal ideas are locally, temporally, and individually conditioned" (p. 346).

To speak of 'archetypal experience' therefore implies the articulation of primordial possibilities of being in the lived world. These possibilities are mediated through archetypal images. In this regard, Jung explained that any given archetypal form may be expressed through a range of possible images that, taken together, reveal an underlying thematic unity which points back to "one essential 'irrepresentable' basic form" (Jung, 1947/54, p. 213), i.e. the 'archetype as such'.

Many of the criticisms surrounding Jung's theory of archetypes centre around the fact that archetypes are often, even among analytical psychologists, implicitly thought of as reified and encapsulated entities within the psyche that are passed down through the generations (cf. Brooke, 1991, pp. 141ff.). But while Jung did occasionally lapse into speculations regarding an organic basis to archetypes (e.g. 1921, p. 444; 1938/40, p. 104), he did not consider them to be inherited in a simple Lamarckian way (Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992). It is important to bear this in mind in view of his tendency to refer to archetypes as 'inherited' potentialities (e.g. 1928/31a, p. 372); however, he meant this to apply only to the form, and not to the content, of archetypes. There is thus no question of a genetic transmission of specific images, and to speak of an archetypal predisposition is simply to say that as existent beings we are endowed with "the potential to have images, drives, fantasies, and emotions" that are definitively human (Gordon, 1987, p. 9). Rauhala (1984) points out that the concept of archetypes therefore represents an attempt on Jung's part to analyse "the most fundamental ontological conditions of mental experience ... [and] the existential deep structure fundamental to consciousness" (pp. 233-4). It is in this sense that we may read Jung's claim that:

"All the most powerful ideas in history go back to the archetypes. This is particularly true of religious ideas, but the central concepts of science, philosophy and ethics are no exception to this rule" (Jung, 1927/31a, p. 158).

While all human experience has an archetypal basis, Whitmont (1969) points out that the

manifestation of archetypal images in the field of consciousness is typically associated with three conditions: (a) in analysis, when the focus proceeds beyond the purely subjective and personal; (b) in psychosis, when the fragmentation of the ego heralds the florid eruption of primitive unconscious contents; and (c) "when inner or outer events which are particularly stark, threatening or powerful must be faced, when there is a state of psychic or physical emergency" (p. 74). The latter category reflects in turn Jung's understanding that certain situations function as 'triggers' for the emergence of archetypal themes (Jung, 1919, p. 137; 1934/54, pp. 38ff.). These are usually the "primal situations of life" (Jaffe, 1971a, p. 140), including the so-called 'critical stages' of human development such as birth, puberty, mid-life and death (Welman & Faber, 1992).

2.4.2. Archetype, symbol and gnosis

Archetypes and their associated images represent the basic metaphors that structure human experience. Jung therefore emphasised the symbolic nature of archetypal images (e.g. 1921, p. 377), and held that the true symbol always has an archetypal core of meaning. This understanding also serves to distinguish between a symbol and a sign. In Jungian theory, the symbol represents "the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown thing" - i.e. the archetype (*ibid.*, p. 474). The sign, on the other hand, points to an already-known entity; the sign is 'univocal', the symbol is 'plurivocal' (Welman, 1995; cf. Chapter Six). A key feature of symbolic experience is thus a sense of ineffability, a characteristic which Jung (1912/52, p. 232; 1947/54, p. 186) referred to as the numinosity of the symbol. This means that the symbol carries forth possibilities of meaning that are not immediately evident, and is thus inherently revelatory (Welman & Faber, 1992). Owing to its numinosity, the symbol also serves as a bridge between conscious and unconscious (Stein, 1957, p. 45); Jung (1916/57) referred to this capacity as the 'transcendent function'.

Symbols are thus carriers of both meaning and wisdom, so that they commonly have a "redeeming power" (Jung, 1921, p. 446). "As the mind explores the symbol", he wrote, "it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason" (Jung, 1978, p. 4). Or similarly:

"In the end one has to admit that there are problems which one cannot simply solve on one's own resources. Such an admission has the advantage of being honest, truthful, and in accord with reality, and this prepares the ground for a compensatory reaction from the collective unconscious ... If you have an attitude of this kind, then

the helpful powers slumbering in the deeper strata of man's nature can come awake and intervene, for helplessness and weakness are the eternal experience and the eternal problem of mankind. To this problem there is also an eternal answer, otherwise it would have been all up with humanity long ago ... The necessary and needful reaction from the collective unconscious expresses itself in archetypally formed ideas" (Jung, 1934/54, p. 21).

In these terms, it is evident that Jung's understanding of the nature and significance of symbolic experience is essentially congruent with the parameters of gnosis, as outlined in the previous chapter; the common feature is an emphasis on knowledge that is immanent, convictional, and transformative. Jung himself employed the term gnosis infrequently, possibly because he wished to distance his psychology from the religious movement bearing the same name, but he nonetheless identified strongly with its implications¹² (cf. Dehing, 1992; Singer, 1990). He described gnosis as knowledge of "the Unknown ...(that) immediately affects us" (Jung, 1916/57, p. 68), and equated it with the authentic revelation of the psyche, "an 'unveiling' of the depths of the human soul first and foremost" (Jung, 1938/40, p. 74). In Jungian terms, gnosis thus represents a conscious appropriation, or recollection, of the possibilities of meaning inherent in archetypal experience. This has far-reaching implications so far as death is concerned:

" ... death is an important interest, especially to an aging person. A categorical question is being put to him, and he is under an obligation to answer it. To this end he ought to have a myth about death, for reason shows him nothing but the dark pit into which he is descending. Myth, however, can conjure up other images for him, helpful and enriching pictures of life in the land of the dead. If he believes in them, or greets them with some measure of credence, he is being just as right or just as wrong as someone who does not believe in them. But while the man who despairs marches towards nothingness, the one who has placed his faith in the archetype follows the tracks of life and lives right up to his death. Both, to be sure, remain in uncertainty, but the one lives against his instincts, the other with them" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 337).

¹² In this regard, it is again necessary to emphasise the distinction between gnosis, as a non-dualistic epistemology grounded in imagination, and the dictates of the medieval Gnostics. For as Jonas (1963, p. 42) points out, Gnosis was in fact characterised by a radical dualism between God and world, and therefore between subject and world. Avens (1984) demonstrates, however, that contemporary gnosis succeeds quite convincingly in correcting this dualism (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 175n.).

From the preceding passage, it is evident that Jung believed that the emergence of symbolic models towards the end of life and during the dying process both structures and grounds the experience of death and dying, and links the individual to emergent possibilities of meaning, i.e. gnosis. These possibilities are followed up in Chapter Five.

2.4.3. An archetypal approach to death: conceptual implications

There are essentially two ways in which Jung's theory of archetypes may be articulated with a poetic analysis of death. First, Jung's psychology leads to the understanding that the experience of death as a metaphoric reality circumambulates around an archetypal core of meaning. Here, we are essentially speaking of death as an archetypal theme of psychological life, which pertains to typical human experiences - such as love, loss and sacrifice - which constitute forms of symbolic, or metaphoric, death. In this regard, it will be seen that the theme of death expresses the vicissitudes and dynamics of psychological development, i.e. individuation, throughout life (cf. Chapters Three & Four). Second, Jung's hypothesis that there are certain 'archetypal situations' leads to the understanding that the encounter with death as a concrete reality, i.e. the actual process of dying, evokes (or 'triggers') a corresponding imaginal response from the collective psyche. In this sense, it may be posited that one's personal experience of the dying process is ultimately grounded and shaped by a transsubjective mythical drama that reflects the reality of death and dying as an eternal human experience.

The distinction between these two directions of thinking amounts to elucidating the archetype of death in the first instance, and understanding death as an archetypal situation in the second instance. Of course, this leads to the important question as to the relationship between these dimensions, and, as noted in Chapter One, it is precisely this issue that the present dissertation sets out to address. In this regard, the considerations advanced in the present discussion suggest that the meaning of death as a metaphoric potential of psychological life on the one hand, and the encounter with death as a concrete reality at the end of life on the other hand, are ultimately connected through the capacity for archetypal imagination. Empirical support for this connection will be sought in the course of this dissertation, by exploring the archetypal metaphors that emerge in the dreams of the dying.

2.5. Summary and Concluding Thoughts

The primary purpose of this chapter has been to trace the poetic themes in Jung's thinking about death and to understand how the tension between his scientific and his poetic styles impacted on his thanatology. What has emerged is that while Jung himself expressed allegiance to a scientific perspective, his approach to death cannot be said to be scientific - nor is it Romantic - but is essentially poetic. This conclusion has been supported by the following ideas:

- (a) Jung appreciated that death is a key existential concern and a defining dimension of human existence. In common with existentialist thinkers, he recognised that ultimately it is the acceptance of death that makes us human and that imparts meaning and purpose to existence, and he understood that in this sense death represents a fundamentally ambivalent goal of existence.
- (b) He insisted that the meaning of death lies beyond rational comprehension and therefore cannot be a scientific problem. It can, however, be approached and experienced as a psychological or metaphoric reality. In these terms, Jung tended to equate death with conditions of transcendent wholeness, which in turn are related to his concept of the self.
- (c) He postulated that the experience and the meaning of death is ultimately grounded in the archetypal heritage of human existence, and he intimated that it is this level of experience that facilitates gnosis of death.

It has been noted that there are however instances where a scientific mentality detracts from Jung's poetic thanatology, particularly with regard to his occasional insistence that death is essentially a problem of later life only. In addition, his sporadic and unintentional excursions into a Cartesian frame of reference in his conceptualisation of the nature of the psyche may lead to the spurious conclusion that even his appreciation of death as a psychical reality simply 'interiorises' its meaning and significance. In other words, a poetic or hermeneutic critique of Jung's thanatology might assume that he simply reduced the meaning of death to an intra-psychic event that takes place within an encapsulated and hermetically sealed mind. It will therefore be necessary to demonstrate that in Jung's writings death in fact emerges as the fundamental ground of Being, an Abyss that is also home to the imagination (cf. Chapter Four).

A further point for consideration is that poetic descriptions of death, framed in the premodern language of myth, alchemy and religion, are interspersed in Jung's writings with tight conceptual formulations phrased in a modern language characteristic of the science of psychology. From the latter perspective, his analysis of death centred for the most part around a theoretical explication of the ego and the self, and the dynamic tension between these processes (cf. Chapter Four). But it is important not to lose sight of the experiential or psychical realities that underpin the technical concepts of analytical psychology, for it is then that the poetic value of Jung's writings may be lost (cf. Downing, 1977); as Brooke (1991) contends, "the language one uses when articulating a phenomenon makes a difference to the experience and meaning of the phenomenon itself" (p. 40). Jung (1940) made precisely this point in arguing that modern psychology simply "translates the archaic speech of myth into a modern mythologem - not yet, of course, recognised as such - which consists of one element of the myth 'science'" (p. 179). For this reason, he endeavoured to remind his readers of the 'original' meanings behind the concepts which he employed. For example:

"It is not a matter of indifference whether one calls something a 'mania' or a 'god'. To serve a mania is detestable and undignified, but to serve a god is decidedly more meaningful and more productive because it means an act of submission to a higher, spiritual being" (Jung, 1929, p. 38).

This does not mean that one must simply abandon the language of Jung's metapsychology, for it lends to poetic descriptions a conceptual rigidity that might otherwise be lacking. Indeed, Gordon (1961) makes the valid point that to use a poetic language to describe death may not always be appropriate - to speak of the disintegration experienced by a schizophrenic patient as a 'sacrifice' seems, for instance, to be overly Romantic.

The issue, it appears, comes down to a need to relentlessly question the tendency to locate the meaning of Jung's metapsychological terms in an intra-psychic space, and to avoid the reification of these terms. In forthcoming chapters, these reflections will be articulated into a systematic model of death and dying from a poetically Jungian perspective. As previously noted, this will entail addressing the imaginative connections between death as a mythic and metaphoric reality on the one hand, and the literal meaning of death on the other hand. To begin with, it is therefore necessary to derive an understanding of the poetic parameters of death and dying, and this task may be best approached by considering the significance of death as a formative influence in Jung's personal existence.

CHAPTER THREE

DEATH AS A FORMATIVE INFLUENCE IN JUNG'S LIFE AND WORKS

Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections (Jung, 1961/83) contains numerous references to the impartible connection between his life and his works. With remarkable openness, he acknowledged that the principles and theories of his academic *opus* essentially amounted to a 'confession' of his personal psychology, translated into a language which Jung himself deemed to be 'scientific':

"My life is what I have done, my scientific work: the one is inseparable from the other. The work is an expression of my inner development; for commitment to the contents of the unconscious forms the man and produces his transformations. My works can be regarded as stations along my life's way.

All my writings may be considered tasks imposed from within; their source was a fateful compulsion. What I wrote were things that assailed me from within myself. I permitted the spirit that moved me to speak out" (*ibid.*, p. 249).

And similarly:

"That is why I speak chiefly of inner experiences, amongst which I include my dreams and visions. These form the *prima materia* of my scientific work. They were the fiery magma out of which the stone that had to be worked was crystallised" (*ibid.*, p. 18).

These reflections may lead the critic to question the extent to which Jung's psychology has validity beyond its capacity to speak to his personal experiences. A reasonable reply to this concern may be formulated on two levels. First, it must be acknowledged that all ideas about the nature and meaning of human existence are to some extent founded in the subjective worlds of their proponents. This is both inevitable and necessary for, as Redfearn (1985) comments, "no dynamic psychology which is not a way of life for its adumbrator deserves to be taken seriously. One's map of the structure of the psyche has to be one's blueprint for living, otherwise it is merely an

academic exercise or a confidence trick" (p. 19). The second consideration that must be taken into account is that when Jung wrote of the 'personal equation' in his psychology he was not referring simply to the particular and idiosyncratic contingencies that shaped and constituted his individual personality - in fact, he devoted relatively little attention to these aspects in his autobiography - but rather to a particular vision that grounded both his personal psychology and his academic writings. Emerging in the historical context of post-Enlightenment rationalism and materialism, the vision that Jung lived and gave expression to centered around the advent of Being in a profane and godless age, and thus brought a personal and theoretical solution to bear on the problem of modern nihilism (cf. Barnaby, 1990; Brooke, 1991; Homans, 1979). In short, his 'subjective confession' was more poetic than it was egocentric. Jung himself described his writings as "a compensation for our times" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 249), and, following his 'confrontation with the unconscious' (see below), he reflected that:

"There were things in the images which concerned not only myself but many others also. It was then that I ceased to belong to myself alone, ceased to have the right to do so. From then on, my life belonged to the generality. The knowledge I was concerned with, or was seeking, could not be found in the science of those days. I myself had to undergo the original experience, and, moreover, try to plant the results of my experience in the soil of reality; otherwise they would have remained subjective assumptions without validity" (*ibid.*, p. 217).

What emerges from these considerations is that beyond the scientific language of Jung's psychology, there is a particular 'calling' which must be elucidated if the poetic significance of his writings is to be appreciated. 'By which myth do you live?' became the dominant personal question that confronted Jung following his estrangement from Freud (see below), and it served to inspire an entire psychology.

Facilitated by the fact that Jung was by nature introspective and was remarkably willing to reveal his innermost thoughts to his readers (Homans, 1979, p. 15), both proponents and critics of analytical psychology have made important contributions to understanding his 'personal myth' and its impact on his thinking (e.g. Atwood & Stolorow, 1977; Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992; Homans, 1979; Jacoby, 1990; Jaffe, 1971b; Papadopoulos, 1984; Plaut, 1984; Redfearn, 1985; van der Post, 1977; von Franz, 1975; Stern, 1976; Wehr, 1987). To date, relatively little attention has however been given to Jung's attempts to come to terms with the reality of death or to the impact which his experience of death as a subjective reality had on his ontology of finitude. Yet we have

already seen that by his own admission there is an important sense in which his works represent an attempt to articulate the meaning of death with that of life (cf. Chapter One), and in this light it may be argued that a core element in the complex interpenetration of Jung's life and works has been relatively neglected by his followers.

Accordingly, this chapter has as its central focus an understanding firstly of the role of death as a formative influence in Jung's life - by 'formative' is meant an experience that significantly shapes or alters the nature and direction of one's existence - and secondly of the ways in which this influence impacted on his thinking about human mortality. In keeping with the realisation that to understand Jung means to be concerned not merely with the personal but essentially with the collective or archetypal qualities of existence, the emphasis here is on the manifestation of death as an epochal myth that shapes the lives of modernists and that lends urgency to the post-modern question of meaning. The analysis does not however purport to yield a systematic conceptual understanding of death and dying in terms of Jung's psychology - a task that is undertaken in the following chapter - nor does it aim to offer a penetrating analysis of Jung the person. Rather, the intention is firstly to reveal that Jung's capacity to dwell in proximity to death was fundamental to his psychology and allowed it to speak to the need for a recollection of death in modern culture, and secondly to use his experiences as a point of reflection as to the meaning of death in psychological life. This understanding will in turn inform the conceptual model of death and dying that is outlined in Chapter Four.

The context for this analysis is Jung's personal 'story', as related in Memories, Dreams, Reflections, with specific reference to three critical phases of his life, namely his childhood years, his mid-life 'confrontation with the unconscious', and his later years of maturation. Each of these 'stages' appears to reveal different facets of the death metaphor and its implications so far as conscious life is concerned: first, heroic deliverance; second, calling and sacrifice; and third, transcendence and vision.

3.1. Early Years: Heroic Deliverance

If any one distinguishing feature emerges from a childhood which Jung described as being characterised by "unusualness" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 83), it is perhaps the remarkable combination of vulnerability and resourcefulness which proved to be particularly fateful throughout his life. In

his early years, these factors brought him into contact with elemental forces at work in shaping not only his own character but that of Western culture in general (cf. Wehr, 1985, pp. 22ff.). His experiences in this regard were shaped by numinous and compelling images which, taken together, signified the emergence of a spiritual and intellectual awakening to the unconscious in both its destructive and its beneficial forms. As a young child, Jung could do no more than to contemplate the revelation of what was felt to be a profound 'secret'. Towards the end of his life, he reflected on this as follows:

"My entire youth can be understood in terms of [the] secret. It induced in me an almost unendurable loneliness. My one great achievement during those years was that I resisted the temptation to talk about it with anyone. Thus the pattern of my relationship to the world was already prefigured: to-day as then I am a solitary, because I know things and must hint at things which other people do not know, and usually do not even want to know" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 58).

By its very nature, 'the secret' defied rational explication, and even in his autobiography Jung offered only vague allusions as to its true meaning and significance. By following those images which lent expression to his secret, it will however emerge that it was intimately connected with the reality of death, and thus prefigured Jung's mature gnosis of the interplay between life and death, the finite and the infinite.

3.1.1. The theme of death in Jung's early years

Jung's earliest memories centre around a striking juxtaposition of existential possibilities. On the one hand, he entered life as an only child¹, and most of his early years were spent in the tranquil surrounds of Laufen, a Swiss parsonage situated along the Rhine river and near Lake Constance. As Wehr (1985, pp. 22f.) comments, the young Carl thus found himself within a particularly sheltered environment: life was defined by the regular patterns of nature, the arrhythmic pace of modern existence was virtually absent, and the surrounding forests and open fields were nothing short of paradisaical. To this extent, his first memories were correspondingly idyllic: warm summer

¹ The firstborn child of Jung's parents, a son named Paul, died a few days after birth. Carl Gustav was born two years later, in 1875, and nine more years were to pass before the birth of his sister, Johanna.

days, golden sunlight filtering through the trees, the smell of warm milk, and splendid sunsets over the Alps (Jung, 1961/83, p. 21). As he summed it up, "everything is wholly wonderful, colourful, and splendid" (*ibid.*). In later years, he was to reflect on the "eternal quality" of these experiences (*ibid.*, p. 36).

On the other hand, Jung counted among the "overwhelming images" (*ibid.*, p. 24) of those years, stark recollections centering around a morbid preoccupation with death and the possibility of personal annihilation. For all its beauty and tranquillity, Laufen was situated near a treacherous part of the Rhine Falls, and fatal accidents were a common occurrence. As a young boy, he would frequently hear talk of bodies being washed ashore, and on one occasion he even attempted, against his parent's wishes, to sneak into the washhouse near the parsonage where a drowned corpse was being kept. Although this proved unsuccessful, he did come across the "extraordinarily interesting" sight of blood and water trickling out of the open drain leading from the washhouse door (*ibid.*, p. 22). In this encounter death still remained an objective and essentially anonymous presence, but it became a far more personal and intimidating reality in Jung's life through its association, in his mind, with an omnipotent deity who both saved and devoured the dead. This connection came about on the one hand through his observation of funerals at which his father, a Lutheran pastor, officiated, and on the other hand through his instruction in Christian doctrine.

From a young age, Jung became aware that "certain persons who had been around previously would suddenly no longer be there", and he came to associate these 'disappearances' with the funerary rites which his father regularly performed (*ibid.*, p. 24). In this way, the burial of the dead became a compelling image of his childhood and induced in him a deep sense of existential insecurity. As the autobiographer recalled:

"I ... had vague fears at night. I would hear things walking about in the house. The muted roar of the Rhine Falls was always audible, and all around lay a danger zone. People drowned, bodies were swept over the rocks. In the cemetery nearby, the sexton would dig a hole - heaps of brown, upturned earth. Black, solemn men in long frock coats with unusually tall hats and shiny black boots would bring a black box. My father would be there in his clerical gown, speaking in a resounding voice. Women wept. I was told that someone was being buried in this hole in the ground ... and that Lord Jesus had taken them to himself" (*ibid.*).

The idea of death as being 'taken' by 'Lord Jesus' assumed an even more sinister and mysterious

meaning for Jung as a result of a bedtime prayer taught to him by his mother: "Spread out thy wings, Lord Jesus mild,/ And take to thee thy chick, thy child./ If Satan would devour it,/ No harm shall overpower it,/ So let the angels sing!" (*ibid.*). Initially, he understood this to mean that 'Lord Jesus' was both a winged bird and "a nice, benevolent gentleman" who ate children to save them from the clutches of the devil (*ibid.*, p. 25). "As far as that went", he recalled, "my argument was comforting. But now I was hearing that Lord Jesus 'took' other people to himself as well, and that this 'taking' was the same as putting them in a hole in the ground" (*ibid.*). This analogy had "unfortunate consequences": 'Lord Jesus' lost the aspect of a comforting, benevolent figure and instead became associated with the grave, destruction and death (*ibid.*). As Jung recalled, "Lord Jesus seemed to me in some ways a god of death ... uncanny, a crucified and bloody corpse" (*ibid.*, p. 28). These morbid ruminations were in turn instrumental in his "first conscious trauma", which occurred around the age of three (*ibid.*, p. 25). It involved an episode in which Jung, playing in the sand in front of his house, saw an approaching figure dressed in a long black robe:

"At the sight of him I was overcome with fear, which rapidly grew into deadly terror as the frightful recognition shot through my mind: 'That is a Jesuit'. Shortly before, I had overheard a conversation between my father and a visiting colleague concerning the nefarious activities of the Jesuits. From the half-irritated, half-fearful tone of my father's remarks I gathered that 'Jesuits' meant something specifically dangerous, even for my father. Actually I had no idea what Jesuits were, but I was familiar with the word 'Jesus' from my little prayer ... Terrified, I ran helter-skelter into the house, rushed up the stairs, and hid under a beam in the darkest corner of the attic ... For days afterwards the hellish fright clung to my limbs and kept me in the house. And even when I began to play in the road again, the wooded hilltop was still the object of my uneasy vigilance. Later I realised, of course, that the black figure was a harmless Catholic priest" (*ibid.*, pp. 25-6).

The considerations advanced thus far point to an excessively morbid fear of death, but it is of great significance for Jung's psychology that his early experiences also reveal a seemingly paradoxical attraction to death. As he recalled:

"There was a fall downstairs ... and another fall against the angle of a stove leg. I remember pain and blood, a doctor sewing a wound in my head ... My mother told me, too, of the time when I was crossing the bridge over the Rhine Falls to Neuhausen. The maid caught me just in time - I already had one leg under the railing

and was about to slip through. These things point to an unconscious suicidal urge or, it may be, to a fatal resistance to life in this world" (*ibid.*, p. 24, emphasis added).

3.1.2. The self, death and regression

Considering Jung's recollections, it is evident that the meaning and significance of death in his early experience goes beyond its literal manifestations and shades into powerful subjective (or 'inner') apprehensions which were bound up with the objective significations of death (drowned corpses, burials, etc.) to which he was exposed. We must now attempt to make sense of his experiences, and to consider their significance for his thanatological theory.

As Yalom (1980, pp. 42ff.) points out, death anxiety appears to have a number of dimensions which refer to different meanings pertaining to the reality of death. Fears of pain, of the loss of physical capacities, and of what will come after death all play a part in death anxiety, but they seem to be somewhat tangential to a more fundamental apprehension, namely the dread of non-being or of "ceasing to be" (*ibid.*, p. 43, emphasis added). Thus the fear of death centers primarily around the possibility of "obliteration, extinction, annihilation" (*ibid.*). In these terms, the meaning of death is contextualised as a dark abyss or 'nothingness', which in its negative form evokes an initially inarticulate dread of non-being (Herzog, 1983, pp. 21f.). It may be advanced that it is this form of inarticulate horror which we encounter in the earliest of Jung's memories. A dark hole in the ground, being taken by 'Lord Jesus', being devoured, 'the Jesuit!': these images all appear to gravitate around an essentially nameless horror which has to do with the threat of annihilation, destruction, non-being. But it is important to note that these images are not just personal: they reflect a primordial experience that is at the core of the human encounter with death - an 'ontological dread' - and thus point to an archetypal structuring of the theme of death in Jung's earliest experiences. As Herzog writes:

"The capacity to feel horror at death is one of the most essential characteristics which distinguish man from the animals, and this horror is quite different from the instinctive fear of death which is, of course, a feature of animal life as well ... The animal does not experience death as something which confronts it like an abyss and engenders immeasurable horror because it seems beyond all comprehension ... It

is only on the basis of horror that a man can develop an inner attitude to the fact of death, and only when he has done this can life itself emerge into consciousness" (*ibid.*, p. 22).

What does this mean in conceptual terms, specifically in the language of Jung's psychology? We must see that death, as a primordial horror, refers to a primal threat to the integrity of an emergent ego (cf. Gordon, 1961; 1978; Mudd, 1990; Williams, 1958; 1962; Wheeley, 1992). So far as Jungian theory goes, this threat emerges primarily from 'within', from the chthonic forces of the unconscious self. The theme of the self will receive extensive attention in the following chapter; it is the experiential core and the chief theoretical concept in analytical psychology, and is typically conceptualised as "the essential dynamic factor which gives meaning and life to the process of ego-development, to relationship to others, and to individuation" (Hubback, 1987, pp. 242-3). In early life, it manifests as an *a priori* psychological matrix, an original wholeness which contains numerous archetypal potentialities for development (Fordham, 1976; 1980; Lambert, 1981; Samuels, 1985a). It is from this matrix that the ego, referring to a complex of functions centering around discrimination (i.e. differentiation into opposites) and self-identity, gradually develops. Developmental theorists, such as Fordham, have postulated that ego development occurs through repeated processes of deintegration and reintegration of the potentialities of the original self. If the ego lacks internal strength and integrity, however, it will be unable to deal with these ongoing processes in the self, leaving it prone to fragmentation; and it is essentially this danger that is thematised as the threat of ego death, of annihilation (cf. Gordon, 1961; 1978; Ryce-Menuhin, 1988; Wheeley, 1992). In other words, the ego is confronted through the possibility of its own destruction with the self as a dark abyss or 'nothingness'. This is similar to the Kleinian view that the fear of being annihilated forms a central unconscious phantasy during the first years of development, and this fear is seen to be a function of the death instinct, a concept which is introduced in a later discussion (Wheeley, 1992).

Jung's early history gives us reason to assume that he may have been particularly vulnerable to the threat of ego disintegration, especially as the capacity to deal with death, as a destructive 'inner force', depends in early development upon a secure bond to the mother (Anthony, 1971; Maurer, 1966). We know that Jung's mother, Emilie, suffered from a prolonged depressive condition and was physically absent - presumably for treatment - during his third year, around the time of his encounter with the Catholic priest. This separation had an indelible impact on him; he recalled that he "was deeply troubled" by the disrupted relationship, and for a long time thereafter he had associated women with "innate unreliability" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 23). Winnicott (1964) has posited

that the danger of ego disintegration in Jung's early years thus reflects a "distortion of integrative tendencies" in his personality, brought about by the absence of a stable maternal presence (p. 451). Atwood and Stolorow (1977) similarly propose that the core issue in Jung's early development was the recurrent threat of ego annihilation resulting from the ruptured tie to his mother, which was never fully repaired.

The point of these considerations is not to reduce the meaning or the threat of death simply to Jung's internal world, but to show that his encounters with objective significations of death thrust him into a marginal realm of human liability in which the boundaries between the literal and the figurative meanings of death were entirely blurred. In other words, 'inner' dangers, pertaining to the threat of annihilation by the chthonic forces of the self, became unconsciously merged and identified with 'outer' objects, such as burials and the figure of the priest. In a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of death in human history, Herzog (1983, pp. 21ff.) has demonstrated that this inability to differentiate between figurative and objective threats of death constitutes a relatively primitive, pre-symbolic mode of being; the relationship between 'inner' and 'outer' meanings of death is literalised or hypostatized rather than being maintained at a metaphoric level of 'identity-indifference'. In short, the 'as-if' quality vital to symbolic experience is lacking (cf. Chapter Two). Thus while at a mature level of consciousness the confrontation with literal death might serve as a meaningful reminder of our debt and obligation to existence - and, in Jungian terms, to the self - at a primitive, pre-symbolic level one is simply struck by "blind horror and panic revulsion" (*ibid.*, p. 22). Because there is little awareness of the distinction between 'real' and metaphoric, "everything becomes an object of terror ... The 'world' becomes uncanny, and man feels that his whole existence is threatened and called into question" (*ibid.*, original emphasis). Thus we recall Jung's sense of existing in a 'danger zone' (*op. cit.*), and it will be seen that this quality of experience was to recur at later points in his life too.

Ultimately, we are led to understand that the threat of death from 'within', and the reality dangers to which Jung was exposed, merged to form a compulsive complex through which his experience of the world was structured. It may be argued that this complex transfigured the world into which he was thrust from a place of pastoral harmony to one characterised by sinister dangers and a macabre uncanniness, and that this in turn set the scene for a portentous tension in his early development. On the one hand, the world of nature, which seemed to him to be "full of wonders" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 48), invited - or 'called' - him to affirm his existence, to go forward, to embrace life; on the other hand, the unremitting threat of death rendered the world dangerous and inhospitable, leading at times to a fearful retreat (e.g. from the approaching priest). From time to

time, this tension appears to have occasioned overwhelming desires to retreat from life itself: for life, being bound to the ego, meant confronting the terror of annihilation. Paradoxically, therefore, the appeal of death, enacted literally in the form of 'suicidal' impulses, was for Jung precisely its image as a sanctuary from the threat of disintegration. It must be noted that there is a regressive movement to this image, for in these terms psychological death means returning to the self as a condition of original, undifferentiated wholeness, i.e. a pre-personal state of unconscious oneness in which the tensions and threats of conscious existence are essentially nullified (cf. Gordon, 1961; 1978; Samuels, 1985a). This tells us something important about the meaning of death in Jungian theory: it refers to conditions of non-differentiation between ego and self, subject and object, and is thus accompanied, in its regressive sense at least, by "associated phantasies of re-entry into the mother's breast or belly ... or a re-fusing with Mother, Nature or Universe" (Gordon, 1978, pp. 32-3).

These considerations touch on complex theoretical issues which are elucidated in the following chapter, but brief clarification is warranted at this point. Essentially, we are dealing with ambivalent archetypal propensities of the self, which emerges as a source of life and containment on the one hand, and as a terrifying and devouring presence on the other hand. Jung (1912/52, pp. 306ff.) pointed out that these primordial potentialities are typically played out in archetypal motifs of the 'dual Mother'², who both nurtures and devours, and who is both the giver and the taker of life. Thus death means "to be in the power of the dark, devouring [M]other" (Kluger, 1991, p. 153) but, as Samuels (1985a) comments, "being in the thrall of the Great Mother is not always a horrid experience ... it is a highly seductive path of regression" (p. 71). These thoughts also lend some credence to the controversial hypothesis of a death instinct (*Thanatos*). Introduced by Freud (1920) in order to account for aggressive and self-destructive tendencies in human behaviour, the death instinct essentially refers to an innate propensity for organic matter to seek its own dissolution. Elsewhere, it will be seen that despite Freud's biological emphasis in his thinking about this concept, contemporary interpretations of *Thanatos* generally concede that its aim is not literal death but psychological dissolution, meaning a desire for fusion and union. In its regressive form, the death instinct is thus oriented towards the re-instatement of the relationship to the Mother so as to avoid

² The term 'Mother', which Jung used to refer to the primordial psyche, i.e. the 'original self' (e.g. Jung, 1912/52, p. 330), is capitalised here to indicate its manifestation as an archetypal image, and to differentiate this connotation from references to the personal mother. Images of the archetypal Mother find classical expression in the primordial goddesses such as Ishtar and Demeter (cf. Kluger, 1991; Neumann, 1963; Sullivan, 1987). In practice, however, a neat differentiation between the archetypal and the personal cannot be maintained, for the archetypal Mother is typically incarnated and experienced in the relationship with the personal mother.

the painful consequences of separation (cf. Brown, 1959/85; Freud & Burlingham, 1943). As will emerge in a later section, it is however possible that the death instinct may then also be implicated in 'higher' aspirations and processes that underlie the poetic quest for meaning and fulfilment.

3.1.3. The emergence of the hero

We are led to the impression that in the early years of his life Jung was precariously suspended between ambivalent potentialities pertaining on the one hand to a need for development, for separation from the Mother, and on the other hand to a regressive propensity towards death, meaning fusion and non-being. In Symbols of Transformation, Jung (1912/52) advanced the theory that it is precisely in the context of such tension and ambivalence that the heroic ego is born. The archetypal image of the hero has been well documented in Jungian literature (e.g. Campbell, 1949; Covington, 1989; Neumann, 1954; Samuels, 1985a; Stevens, 1991), and gives symbolic expression to the problems that are typically encountered and the feats that are necessary in the process of ego development. Essentially, the hero's story is one of a struggle for separation and differentiation from the primitive self, so that the gift of consciousness - commonly symbolised by the 'treasure that is hard to attain' (Covington, 1989) - can be claimed. It is thus the hero's destiny to explore the possibilities of the world, and this ultimately demands separation from the Mother. Neumann (1954) has stated that the hero's task is therefore that of "breaking away from the despotic rule of the unconscious" (p. 127) but, perhaps with his own experiences in mind, Jung recognised that the winning of consciousness is not simply a fluently synchronised process. He wrote that:

"The heroes are usually wanderers³, and wandering is a symbol of longing, of the restless urge which never finds its object, of nostalgia for the lost mother ... the myth of the hero ... is first and foremost a self-representation of the longing of the unconscious, of its unquenched and unquenchable desire for the light of consciousness. But consciousness, continually in danger of being led astray by its own light and of becoming a rootless will o' the wisp, longs for the healing power of nature, for the deep wells of being and for unconscious communion with life in its countless forms" (Jung, 1912/52, p. 205, emphasis added).

³ Here we may think, for instance, of Gilgamesh and Dionysus.

Samuels (1985a) describes this ambivalence as "the essence of the hero's predicament", explaining that "one part wants to grow outward and onward and the other wants to return to origins for strengthening", and he considers this tension to be an essential premise for any concept of life and death instincts (p. 149). The question of the hero's regressive longings will be taken up again in a later discussion; for now, the important point is that the quest for self-discovery entails a crucial confrontation with the possibility of death⁴. Thus the life-threatening dangers which must be overcome in mythic portrayals of the hero's journey may be interpreted as referring both to the destructive forces of the self, and to the hero's own longing for dissolution in the unconscious (see below). It is precisely for this reason that the emergence of consciousness is a heroic task, the magnitude and outcome of which ultimately depends upon the strength or vulnerability of the ego relative to the self. Constitutional or environmentally inflicted weaknesses render the ego vulnerable to disruptive forces - i.e. to the threat of disintegration - and this may in turn heighten regressive desires and therefore impede the task of separation. As is portrayed in numerous myths, the hero is however aided in this task by helpful figures from the underworld⁵. In psychological terms, this means that the emergence of the ego from the unconscious is mediated through symbols, which on the one hand allow for the archetypal potentialities of the self to be differentiated and integrated in the life of the individual (Brooke, 1991, pp. 20-1), and on the other hand offer a means of resolving the tension between life and death, progression and regression, separation and fusion (cf. Maurer, 1966). Strauss (1964) has argued that symbolic resolution of the conflict between the ego (separation, life) and the self (union, fusion, death) is in turn vital for the development of a reasonably stable personality. This contention is supported by the work of Gordon (1961; 1968; 1978), which will be outlined in Chapter Four.

Jung's childhood years offer numerous examples of the emergence of symbols and the pivotal role which they played in resolving the tension between life and death in his experience. Perhaps the most dramatic example is that of a dream which he had at age three, around the time of his

⁴ The idea that there is an important link between death and the emergence of consciousness is supported by the work of Anthony (1971) and Maurer (1966), who have shown that the development of self-identity during the early years of childhood seems to go together with the child's growing awareness of death. A similar articulation has been suggested for the historical emergence of consciousness in the species (Choron, 1963; Herzog, 1983).

⁵ For example, Perseus is given a sword by Hermes, a reflective shield by Athene, and the power to make himself invisible by Hades.

traumatic encounter with the Catholic priest. He recalled the dream as follows:

"The vicarage stood quite alone near Laufen castle, and there was a big meadow stretching back from the sexton's farm. In the dream I was in this meadow. Suddenly I discovered a dark, rectangular, stone-lined hole in the ground. I had never seen it before. I ran forward curiously and peered down into it. Then I saw a stone stairway leading down. Hesitantly and fearfully, I descended. At the bottom was a doorway with a round arch, closed off by a green curtain. It was a big, heavy curtain of worked stuff like brocade, and it looked very sumptuous. Curious to see what might be hidden behind, I pushed it aside. I saw before me in the dim light a rectangular chamber about thirty feet long. The ceiling was arched and of hewn stone. The floor was laid with flagstones, and in the centre a red carpet ran from the entrance to the low platform. On this platform stood a wonderfully rich golden throne ... Something was standing on it which I thought at first was a tree trunk twelve to fifteen feet high and about one and a half to two feet thick. It was a huge thing, reaching almost to the ceiling. But it was of a curious composition: it was made of skin and naked flesh, and on top there was something like a rounded head with no face and no hair. On the very top of the head was a single eye, gazing motionlessly upwards ... I was paralysed with terror. At that moment I heard from outside and above me my mother's voice. She called out, 'Yes, just look at him. That is the man-eater!' That intensified my terror still more, and I awoke sweating and scared to death. For many nights afterwards I was afraid to go to sleep, because I feared I might have another dream like that" (Jung, 1961/83, pp. 26-7).

Even a cursory consideration of Jung's dream is sufficient to suggest that it was closely connected with the tensions between life and death in his psychological world. Of course, there are numerous other possibilities which could be advanced with reference to the rich symbolism in the dream, but consideration of these would take us far beyond the confines of the present dissertation. For our purposes, it will suffice to consider the themes of death and rebirth that emerge, and to briefly address the significance of these themes in the context of Jung's situation at that time, with particular regard to the emergence of the heroic ego.

Jung himself recognised that "the hole in the meadow probably represented a grave" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 27), and that the dream was at least partly to do with "the mystery of Earth" (*ibid.*, p. 28) - and this suggests the archetypal mysteries of Life and Death (cf. Chapter Seven).

Moreover, he associated the underground god in his dream with his fear of 'Lord Jesus':

" ... the phallus of this dream seems to be a subterranean God 'not to be named', and such it remained throughout my youth, reappearing whenever anyone spoke too emphatically about Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus never became quite real for me again, never quite acceptable, never quite lovable, for again and again I would think of his underground counterpart, a frightful revelation which had been accorded me without my seeking it" (*ibid.*).

Following from Jung's associations, the image of the underground god reminds us of the ithyphallic deities of ancient religions and mythologies - such as Hermes (Greek), Shiva (Hindu) and Osiris (Egyptian). As underworld figures, their manifestation points to a key initiation of the ego into the realm of death (Herzog, 1983; von Franz, 1975). This is important because, as Henderson & Oakes (1963/90) point out, it denotes a "secret wish to obtain from the earth a knowledge which [one] cannot find in waking daylight consciousness alone. This is the knowledge of death and rebirth forever withheld except at those times when some transcending principle, emerging from the depths, makes it available to consciousness" (pp. 36-7). In this context, Hermetic figures appear primarily as symbols of a pivotal transition from death (union) to life (separation) or, in later development, from life to death (*ibid.*, pp. 37ff.). The goal of initiation is always associated with the evolution of consciousness, and, as numerous spiritual traditions teach, this goal can be accomplished only through a 'descent' into the underworld, the realm of death and of the self (cf. Eliade, 1958; Henderson & Oakes, 1963/90). But initiation is also a path to deliverance from the Mother, i.e. from death; as Samuels (1985a) comments, "threatening contact with the [M]other ... transforms the ego. The outcome is the enhancement of ego-consciousness" (p. 72). In the context of the present discussion, what this means is that the reality of death must be 'named' so that it can be accepted as something that is related to life, as opposed to a 'nameless horror' which is responded to in unconscious and potentially disastrous ways (Herzog, 1983, p. 28).

Given these considerations, the symbol of the phallus in Jung's dream may be seen as the embodiment of spiritual, life-bestowing power (Wehr, 1985, p. 27), which is in turn expressive of the procreative Masculine spirit, *Logos* (cf. Chapter Eight). As Jung (1912/52) was later to state, "the phallus is the source of life and libido, the creator and worker of miracles" (p. 97). It is ultimately the *Logos* principle that facilitates mastery over the primordial chaos of the self, allowing for the development of consciousness by balancing the claims of the ego and those of the self, so that there is a healthy tension between life and death, separation and integration (Jung, 1912/52,

p. 157; cf. Eliade, 1958; Greenfield, 1985; Neumann, 1963). Then death becomes a metaphoric power in relation to which the possibility of life itself can be affirmed. In this regard, Jung (1961/83) added the following significant comment in reporting his dream:

"This dream haunted me for years ... I could never make out whether my mother meant, 'That is the man-eater', or, 'That is the man-eater. In the first case she would have meant that not Lord Jesus or the Jesuit was the devourer of little children, but the phallus; in the second case the 'man-eater' in general was symbolised by the phallus, so that the dark Lord Jesus, the Jesuit, and the phallus were identical" (p. 27, original emphasis).

Jung simply left the matter there in his autobiography, but there are a number of possible interpretations that could be applied to this intriguing question. In view of the preceding deliberations, it seems reasonable to argue that both meanings are valid; what is important is that the ambiguity inspired reflection on Jung's part as to the connections and the differences between these meanings, and this may have brought to light a metaphoric tension that was lacking in Jung's previous encounters with the reality of death. If this is so, then a central function of the dream was to facilitate an articulation of life and death, and in this sense it served as an essential precursor to Jung's later gnosis of death. Perhaps this articulation was after all the essence of Jung's childhood secret (see above), for as he reflected:

"Who spoke to me then? Who talked of problems far beyond my knowledge? Who brought the Above and Below together, and laid the foundation for everything that was to fill the second half of my life with stormiest passion? Who but that alien guest who came both from above and from below? Through this childhood dream I was initiated into the secrets of the earth. What happened was a kind of burial in the earth, and many years were to pass before I came out again. Today I know that it happened in order to bring the greatest possible amount of light into the darkness. It was an initiation into the realm of darkness. My intellectual life had its unconscious beginnings at that time" (*ibid.*, p. 30).

It is pertinent to comment that the emergence and consolidation of ego-consciousness does not entail a single climactic 'victory' over the Mother, but constitutes a heroic task that must be repeated many times over in the course of development. The tension between life and death, progression and regression, therefore lends a powerful theme to psychological growth and

development. Throughout this process, the capacity to resolve the tension between opposing propensities (inner/outer, life/death, separation/fusion, etc.) is crucial, and this rests in turn upon the symbol making function of the psyche (cf. Gordon, 1968; 1978; 1992; Lambert, 1981; Redfearn, 1978; Whitmont, 1969). As previously noted, symbols facilitate the differentiation of archetypal potentialities from the matrix of the self and their integration in conscious life by linking the known (conscious) to the unknown (unconscious), and thus serve as numinous milestones in the development of consciousness. So far as Jung's childhood struggle to come to terms with the reality of death is concerned, these milestones took the form - apart from his dream of the 'man-eater' - of symbolic games to which he devoted considerable solitary attention. For instance, he would light small fires in the crevices of the garden wall:

" ... a fire that had to burn forever ... No one but myself was allowed to tend this fire. Others could light other fires ... but these fires were profane and did not concern me. My fire alone was living and had an unmistakable aura of sanctity" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 35).

Here we find the image of the eternal and sacred fire, representing both the light of consciousness and a form of ritualistic protection against the threat of death (cf. Atwood & Stolorow, 1977). Jung also developed a particular fascination for stones, and formed a "secret relationship" to one in particular: he would sit on the stone and ponder the question: "Am I the one who is sitting on the stone, or am I the stone on which he is sitting?" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 35, original emphasis). This made him feel reassured, as if his position of relativity in relation to the 'magical' stone stabilised his precarious ego structure. In his tenth year, Jung carved a small wooden manikin which he kept hidden in a pencil-case, together with a smooth stone from the Rhine; "all this was a great secret" (*ibid.*, p. 36). While he was doing research for the writing of Symbols of Transformation, he discovered the meaning of the manikin: it represented an ancient god of healing and protection, "a Telesphoros such as stands on the monuments of Asklepios" (*ibid.*, p. 38).

Ultimately, Jung's games all formed part of his childhood 'secret', which as intimated above was essentially a numinous awareness of the reality of death (and the self) and, at the same time, a connection to the necessity of life. As he explained with regard to his experience of being in possession of the 'secret':

"I felt safe, and the tormenting sense of being at odds with myself was gone ... it was an inviolable secret which must never be betrayed, for the safety of my life

depended on it. Why that was so I did not ask myself. It simply was so" (*ibid.*, pp. 36-7).

3.1.4. Alienation, regression and heroic conquest

Samuels (1985a, p. 71) comments that the necessity for separation between the emerging ego and the original self carries with it the cost of alienation from one's inner world and leads to heightened conflict between the opposites of psychological life. For Jung, this development was connected to his entry into school, at age six. Until then, he had dwelled within a relatively solipsistic realm - "away from the whole human world" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 49) - but now he had the benefit of peer relationships which drew him gradually into the 'real' world. He found that he had much in common with his rustic schoolmates, and being ahead of them academically instilled in him a sense of confidence (*ibid.*, pp. 32-3). However, he also made an important "discovery" regarding his friends:

"I found that they alienated me from myself. When I was with them I became different from the way I was at home. I joined in their pranks, or invented ones which at home would never have occurred to me, so it seemed; although, as I knew only too well, I could hatch up all sorts of things when I was alone. It seemed to me that the change in myself was due to the influence of my schoolfellows, who somehow misled me or compelled me to be different from what I thought I was. The influence of this wider world, this world which contained others besides my parents, seemed to me dubious if not altogether suspect and, in some obscure way, hostile. Though I became increasingly aware of the beauty of the bright daylight world where 'golden sunlight filters through green leaves', at the same time I had a premonition of an inescapable world of shadows filled with frightening, unanswerable questions which had me at their mercy. My nightly prayer did ... grant me a ritual protection ... But the new peril lurked by day. It was as if I sensed a splitting of myself, and feared it. My inner insecurity was threatened" (*ibid.*, pp. 34-5).

Jung's sense of alienation and existential insecurity was further exacerbated when, at age eleven, his parents moved from the rural parsonage to the city so that he could attend the Gymnasium school in Basel. From the outset, he felt that he did not belong in this 'new' world. His classmates

Winnicott (1964), who interprets Jung's fainting episodes as a veiled longing for death.

For Jung, the recovery of a sense of self and of a path back into the human world was precipitated by the voice of conscience. Overhearing one day his father lamenting the financial burden which his son's illness had placed on the family - numerous specialists had been consulted in an attempt to diagnose the cause of the fainting spells - the 'faint pangs of conscience' which he had experienced throughout his sojourn at home became a major force. The words of his father - "it would be dreadful if he were incurable. I have lost what little I had, and what will become of the boy if he cannot earn his own living?" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 47) - galvanised him into heroic action which is best described in his own words:

"I was thunderstruck. This was the collision with reality. 'Why, then, I must get to work!' I thought suddenly. From that moment on I became a serious child. I crept away, went to my father's study, took out my Latin grammar, and began to cram with intense concentration. After ten minutes of this I had the finest of fainting fits. I almost fell off the chair, but after a few minutes I felt better and went on working. 'Devil take it, I'm not going to faint', I told myself, and persisted in my purpose. This time it took about fifteen minutes before the second attack came. That, too, passed like the first ... I stuck it out, and after an hour came the third attack. Still I did not give up, and worked for another hour, until I had the feeling that I had overcome the attacks. Suddenly I felt better than I had in all the months before. And in fact the attacks did not recur. From that day on I worked over my grammar and other schoolbooks every day. A few weeks later I returned to school, and never suffered another attack, even there ... That was when I learned what a neurosis is ... I saw clearly that I myself had arranged this whole disgraceful situation" (*ibid.*, pp. 47-8).

There is a vital image in this story that must not be missed. It is that of young Carl sitting at his desk, engaged in a heroic battle to free himself from the grips of an alluring but treacherous realm. We can imagine him on the one hand being seduced by the promise of a world without adult responsibility, and on the other hand being called by the voice of conscience to assume his rightful place in the world. We can picture, too, his sense of triumph when the impulse to faint retreated and did not reappear, and this is the climactic moment of heroic conquest: it represents no less than the triumph of rational consciousness over the dark forces of the chthonic psyche. For Jung,

it was to culminate in a key moment of self-discovery which occurred shortly afterwards:

"I was taking the long road to school ... when suddenly for a single moment I had the overwhelming impression of having just emerged from a dense cloud. I knew all at once: now I am myself! It was as if a wall of mist were at my back, and behind that wall there was not yet an 'I'. But at this moment I came upon myself. Previously I had existed too, but everything had merely happened to me. Now I happened to myself. Now I knew: I am myself now, now I exist. Previously I had been willed to do this and that; now I willed. This experience seemed to me tremendously important and new: there was 'authority' in me" (*ibid.*, p. 49, original emphasis).

3.1.5. Implications for Jung's psychology: death as the 'enemy within'

The consideration of Jung's early and adolescent years has shown that his first experiences of ego-existence emerged through a series of frightening steps and numinous experiences which gradually thrust him towards self-awareness. The dream of the underground phallus and his childhood games served as symbolic milestones in this process and afforded a resolution of the tensions between life and death in his psychological world. The decisive moment was however his heroic victory in the service of the ego. The consequences of this Promethean triumph must not be underestimated, for not only did it herald the split in Jung's psychical constitution (between No. 1 and No. 2 personalities) which was to prove so significant in later life, but it appears to have had a direct bearing on his conceptualisation of the impact of death in psychological development. Perhaps the most significant consideration in this regard is Jung's belief that death is an essentially regressive force during the 'first half' of life, when the emphasis of individuation is, and must be, on the development of the ego (Jung, 1930/31; 1934a). As we have seen, this development implies overcoming the power of the unconscious, the Great Mother, which is thematised through the archetypal reality of death.

In Symbols of Transformation, Jung (1912/52) asserted that "death with its cold embrace is the maternal womb" (*ibid.*, p. 218) - or put similarly, "death is a re-entry into the Mother" (*ibid.*, p. 439n.) - and he advanced the thesis that it is ultimately against this 'inner threat' that the ego must battle to preserve itself during early life. In terms that speak clearly to his own struggle for

existence, he however recognised that the hero's quest for consciousness is ultimately a battle on two fronts, for this "undifferentiated, unconscious state of primal being ... is at the same time an object of regressive longing" (*ibid.*, p. 417). In the first instance, we are dealing with a conservative tendency of the self, the primordial Mother, to hold fast to that to which it gives life (Kluger, 1991; Neumann, 1963; Sullivan, 1987). In the second instance, it has already been noted that there is an innate ambivalence towards the task of separation on the part of the ego - because for all its significance so far as the development of consciousness is concerned, separation carries with it the burden of existence, and this means tension, conflict and the painful awareness of finitude. Jung too posited that the hero must always fight this secret longing for oblivion, non-being, or death, a longing that is ultimately oriented towards "the world of the child, the paradisaical state of early infancy, from which we are driven out by the relentless law of time" (Jung, 1912/52, p. 292). Thus:

" ... whoever sunders himself from the mother longs to get back to the mother. This longing can easily turn into a consuming passion which threatens all that has been won. The mother then appears on the one hand as the supreme goal, and on the other hand as the most frightful danger - the 'Terrible Mother'" (*ibid.*, p. 236).

And even more emphatically:

" ... in the morning of life the son tears himself loose from the mother, from the domestic hearth, to rise through battle to his destined heights. Always he imagines his worst enemy in front of him, yet he carries the enemy within himself - a deadly longing for the abyss, a longing to drown in his own source, to be sucked down to the realm of the Mothers. His life is a constant struggle against extinction, a violent yet fleeting deliverance from ever-lurking night. This death is no external enemy, it is his own inner longing for the stillness and profound peace of all-knowing non-existence, for all-seeing sleep in the ocean of coming-to-be and passing away" (*ibid.*, pp. 355-6).

In a later work, Jung again advanced the claim that "the hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious" (Jung, 1940, p. 167). It seems however that he may have overstated the case somewhat, for it is clear from the discussion of Jung's early years that regression to the unconscious - i.e. an initiation into the realm of death - is not always inimical to ego development,

and even in the first half of life it has a critical role to play in the individuation process (cf. Chapter Four). These concerns must not however detract from Jung's key recognition that the gift of consciousness is not simply a given, but a task that demands resilience and courage and that may be frustrated by other temptations. Indeed, it may be seen that so far as Jung was concerned the emergence of ego-consciousness in the first half of life is nothing less than a work against death.

3.2. Mid-Life: Sacrifice and Renewal

Given the confines of the present study, we cannot entertain a lengthy consideration of Jung's years of early adulthood, which cover his period as a medical student and as a psychiatrist at the Burgholzli clinic, as well as his psychoanalytic period, i.e. his association with Freud. Suffice it to note that these years essentially involved the consolidation of his egological interests (personality No. 1), but as we have previously observed, his No. 2 personality was nonetheless active and was particularly influential in his choice of psychiatry as an area of specialisation (cf. Chapter Two). Mention must also be made of the fact that following the first meeting between Jung and Freud, in Vienna in 1907, a productive collaboration and friendship developed between the two pioneers of depth psychology, to the extent that Freud saw his younger colleague as his 'crown prince' and envisaged that he would play a critical role in the future of the psychoanalytic movement⁶. However, Jung became progressively disillusioned both with Freud's dogmatic paternalism and with what he saw to be a reductionistic emphasis in psychoanalytic theory (cf. Jung, 1961/83, pp. 169ff.), and his own interests gradually evolved away from those of his mentor. He began to read extensively in the area of mythical and religious symbolism, and when he came across the fantasy material of a young American woman - a patient of Theodore Flournoy, his close friend and colleague - the path was set. He embarked upon an interpretation of her material, and out of this came Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido, the first part of which was published in 1911. It was Jung's first major attempt to elucidate the primordial images that underpin individual development, and as his analysis essentially refuted the primacy of sexuality in psychological life, it inevitably led to a serious rift with Freud. Following a period of mutual antagonism, their friendship and

⁶ The relationship between Jung and Freud was a complex and fascinating one, but cannot be considered in this context. It has been dealt with at length by other authors (e.g. Papadopoulos, 1984; Steele, 1982; Stevens, 1991; Wehr, 1985), to whom the reader is referred.

collaboration was formally terminated early in 1913⁷. This event marked the beginning of Jung's psychology as an independent school, but it also heralded a process of 'inner' transformation that, as Jung described it, suspended him between sanity and madness for nearly four years (see below). In this section, we examine his life and work during this period in terms of a continuing evolution of the problematic of death. It will be seen that in both Jung's own development and in his theory of individuation there is a time when one has to sacrifice one's ideals of heroic mastery in the interests of a more mature and wider form of consciousness. This analysis is undertaken with reference to three themes which elucidate the archetypal significance of death in Jung's mid-life transition, namely 'The Calling', 'The Sacrifice', and 'Wholeness'.

3.2.1. The Calling

Jung's transitional period covers the interval between the years 1912-1916, from his thirty-seventh to his forty-first years. It is described in detail in a chapter in his autobiography that is appropriately entitled Confrontation with the Unconscious. The title is significant, for in light of the previous considerations it suggests a key encounter with the underworld, a process which entails both dangers as well as opportunities for renewal. Fittingly, therefore, the chapter begins with an emphasis on loss:

"After the parting of the ways with Freud, a period of inner uncertainty began for me. It would be no exaggeration to call it a state of disorientation. I felt totally suspended in mid-air, for I had not yet found my own footing" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 194).

This emphasis is repeated in the foreword to the revised edition of Symbols of Transformation, where Jung commented that:

"This book was written in 1911, in my thirty-sixth year. The time is a critical one, for it marks the beginning of the second half of life, when a metanoia, a mental transformation, not infrequently occurs. I was acutely conscious, then, of the loss

⁷ In a letter of 6 January 1913, Jung indicated to Freud: "I shall submit to your wish to discontinue our personal relationship, for I never force my friendship on anyone. For the rest, you yourself know best what this moment means to you. 'The rest is silence'." (quoted by Wehr, 1985, p. 153).

of friendly relations with Freud and of the lost comradeship of our work together"
(Jung, 1912/52, p. xxvi).

To appreciate the gravity of Jung's situation at that time, it must be remembered that not only had he forfeited the support of Freud and his other psychoanalytic colleagues, but that he was lacking direction theoretically, on the one hand having all but abandoned the dictates of classical psychoanalysis while on the other hand not yet having articulated a meaningful theoretical position of his own. In essence then, a crucial part of all that had been invested in his No. 1 personality had evaporated over a relatively short period of time, leaving him once again feeling isolated, unsure of himself, and facing the collapse of his ego boundaries. From 'within', the realm of personality No. 2, came further cause for reflection and renewed doubts as to his accomplishments: though he had written a book (Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido) concerning the vital significance of myth, Jung was forced to concede that he was not living by any particular myth, "but rather in an uncertain cloud of theoretical possibilities" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 195). Accordingly, he fatefully resolved to discover 'his' myth: "I simply had to know what unconscious or preconscious myth was forming me, from what rhizome I sprang" (Jung, 1912/52, pp. xxiv-xxv). As will be outlined in the following section, he set about this task by 'turning within', so as to bring to conscious expression those unconscious forces that lent shape and meaning to his existence. From his autobiography, we know the outcome of this endeavour: it brought him into contact with the primal forces of being, the archetypal 'forms' that ground human existence, and this led in turn to the emergence of his mature psychological theory. For our purposes, we are however more concerned with the archetypal process underlying Jung's dialectical engagement with the unconscious - a process of sacrifice, initiation, death and rebirth - than with the actual archetypal 'contents' (anima, Wise Old Man, etc.) that emerged from this process.

We must understand that Jung had made a conscious decision to deliberately and systematically embark upon a course which he had previously followed more by chance or fate than by volition. But at the same time, his mid-life 'choice' was of course only partly voluntary: it had been thrust upon him both by external circumstances (the break with Freud) and by an associated existential crisis (the absence of a personally meaningful myth). Indeed, it may be seen that the contingencies of Jung's personal destiny had steadily gravitated him towards this point. The absent mother, the ineffectual father, the early encounters with death, the disillusionment with contemporary religion, the loss of friendship and ideology surrounding the break with Freud: the influence of all of these factors combined to lend a compelling quality to his mid-life transition. Thus it would be appropriate to think of his resolution more as a response to a calling - i.e. an 'inner' imperative - than a decision

based on rational motives; for ostensibly, he had little to gain by a course which could, in the context of his situation at that time, be interpreted at best as eccentric and at worst as psychotic. From the outset, however, Jung had an "unswerving conviction" that he "was obeying a higher will", and this certainty sustained him until he had "mastered the task" (*ibid.*, p. 201). The idea that his 'confrontation with the unconscious' represented a 'calling' is further supported by his reflection that:

"From the beginning I had conceived my voluntary confrontation with the unconscious as a scientific experiment which I myself was conducting and in whose outcome I was vitally interested. To-day I might equally well say that it was an experiment which was being conducted on me" (*ibid.*, p. 202, original emphasis).

But what was the nature of this calling? Or more precisely: to what myth was Jung called to give expression? To all intents and purposes, this became the dominant question that guided his endeavour, and by giving form to this question he invited a corresponding response from the unconscious. Initially, this response manifested in a nebulous and almost overwhelming manner. He found himself immersed in "an incessant stream of fantasies" (*ibid.*, p. 200) and, not yet having an adequate theoretical structure of his own to contain and understand these experiences, he feared, quite realistically, the possibility of a complete disintegration of his ego-personality (*ibid.*, p. 202). Again, therefore, he was faced with the threat of death. As he described his situation:

"I stood helpless before an alien world; everything in it seemed difficult and incomprehensible. I was living in a constant state of tension; often I felt as if gigantic blocks of stone were tumbling down upon me. One thunderstorm followed another. My enduring these storms was a question of brute strength ... But there was a demonic strength in me, and from the beginning there was no doubt in my mind that I must find the meaning of what I was experiencing in these fantasies" (*ibid.*, p. 201).

Initially, Jung attempted to compensate for the chthonic power of the unconscious by regularly engaging in yoga exercises, and he also yielded to an impulse to return to the symbolic games which had assisted him during his childhood years. Once again he collected and played with stones, and this both reduced his sense of existential insecurity and reinforced his conviction that he was "on the way to discovering [his] own myth" (*ibid.*, p. 198). Towards the end of December 1913, he felt sufficiently reassured as to the essential integrity of his ego resources, and "resolved

upon the decisive step":

"I was sitting at my desk once more, thinking over my fears. Then I let myself drop. Suddenly it was as though the ground literally gave way beneath my feet, and I plunged down into dark depths. I could not fend off a feeling of panic" (*ibid.*, p. 203).

This episode, and Jung's preceding sense that he was threatened with a disintegration of the ego, enlighten us as to the myth to which he was being called: it was that of the *nekylia*, the hero's descent and initiation into the underworld (cf. Smith, 1990; von Franz, 1975; Wehr, 1985). A synchronistic affirmation of this calling emerged during this period, when he went sailing on Lake Zurich with his childhood friend Albert Oeri. As Wehr (1985, pp. 174f.) relates, the voyage took on a special tone for Jung when Oeri read aloud from Homer's *Odyssey*, deliberately selecting the *nekylia* episode which outlines Odysseus' journey to the land of the dead. Brohm (1981) similarly comments that this reading "was significant because Jung now approached perhaps the most shattering experience of his life, and later frequently referred to it as his own *nekylia*" (p.157).

The understanding that Jung's mid-life transition was fundamentally shaped by the myth of the *nekylia* is further supported by a consideration of the spontaneous visions and fantasies which surrounded his deliberate 'drop' into the unconscious. For instance, there was a shattering vision of an opening to a dark cave that was filled with icy water. In the cave he came across a glowing red crystal on a stone, and saw the corpse of a blond youth floating by, followed by a gigantic scarab and then by a red, newborn sun which emerged from the depths of the water. Finally, blood gushed out of the opening to the cave. Jung realised that this vision "was a hero and solar myth, a drama of death and renewal" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 203), but he could not understand why the vision ended with a torrent of blood rather than with the dawn of a new day. He recalled another vision which he had experienced in the autumn of that year, in which a flood had covered most of Europe. He saw "mighty yellow waves, the floating rubble of civilisation, and the drowned bodies of uncounted thousands. Then the whole sea turned to blood". When the flood reached Switzerland, the Alps grew higher and protected the country (*ibid.*, p. 199). Jung was convinced that this vision was a portentous anticipation of the world's political prospects in the foreseeable future.

Ignited by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the political tensions in Europe finally erupted into World War in August 1914. Switzerland was surrounded on all sides by warring

parties but, as a neutral country, was excluded from the conflict - Jung's vision of the Alps protecting his country had, essentially, been fulfilled. He realised then that his dreams and visions had a double meaning:

"Now my task was clear. I had to try to understand what had happened and to what extent my own experience coincided with that of mankind in general. Therefore my first obligation was to probe the depths of my own psyche" (*ibid.*, p. 200).

In a profound sense, this was the nature and the gravity of the calling to which Jung had responded. This is not to say simply that there was a synchronistic correspondence between his personal psychology and the social tensions of the time, but rather that the calling to which he had responded reflected the constellation or 'activation' of the archetype of death at a collective level; we must appreciate that the metaphoric sacrifice and death to which Jung opened himself was being played out literally on the killing fields of Europe. As history records, it was not to be the last time that the unacknowledged image of death was to haunt humanity in an apocalyptic way.

3.2.2. The sacrifice of the hero

The key point to emerge from the foregoing deliberations is that Jung's 'confrontation with unconscious' was a calling, and it has been argued that this calling was grounded in the archetypal myth of the *nekylia*, the descent to the underworld. In other words, Jung had responded to the primordial calling of death, whose voice had been repressed in the rationalistic ethos of modernism. We must now pay closer attention to a key aspect of this myth, namely the sacrifice of the heroic ideals of the ego, as it was played out in Jung's mid-life period. In this way, something of the nature and significance of the calling of death will also become evident.

The course which Jung followed meant the loss, or sacrifice, of much that he had established over the years. Apart from his relationship with Freud, he gave up his academic position, curtailed his private practice, and placed his family life in jeopardy in order to vigorously pursue the path of self-knowledge. This may be considered extreme or eccentric, but it must be remembered that Jung felt compelled to pursue such a path, and resistance on his part met only with increasing tension and turmoil in his inner life. An anticipation of what was to be required emerged while he was

writing Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido. When he reached the end of the chapter which he had entitled 'The Sacrifice', he realised that this was a portend for nothing less than his own sacrifice (*ibid.*, p. 192). As he put it, "I had foreseen my isolation ... I had known that everything was at stake and that I had to take a stand for my convictions" (*ibid.*, p. 191). However, the true significance of the sacrifice which he was being called to make only emerged in a dream towards the end of 1913, some months before the beginning of the War. The dream centered around a drama in which Jung, accompanied by an unknown brown-skinned man, shot and killed Siegfried, the archetypal hero of Germanic myth, who was driving a chariot made of the bones of the dead. After the murder it began to rain, and the dreamer knew that this would "wipe out all traces of the dead"; nonetheless, "an unbearable feeling of guilt remained" (*ibid.*, p. 204). At this point he awoke, and felt an inner need to understand the significance of the dream. But he could make no rational sense of it, and attempted to return to sleep. Then an ominous voice from within said: "You must understand the dream, and must do so at once! ... 'If you do not understand the dream, you must shoot yourself!'" (*ibid.*, original emphasis). This injunction gripped him with a sense of urgency: "In the drawer of my night table lay a loaded revolver, and I became frightened" (*ibid.*). A moment of crisis had been reached, and it was then that revelation emerged:

" ... suddenly the meaning of the dream dawned on me. 'Why, that is the problem that is being played out in the world.' Siegfried, I thought, represents what the Germans want to achieve, heroically to impose their will, have their own way. 'Where there is a will there is a way!' I had wanted to do the same. But now that was no longer possible. The dream showed that the attitude embodied by Siegfried, the hero, no longer suited me. Therefore it had to be killed ... I felt an overpowering compassion, as though I myself had been shot: a sign of my secret identity with Siegfried, as well as of the grief a man feels when he is forced to sacrifice his ideal and his conscious attitudes. This identity and my heroic idealism had to be abandoned, for there are higher things than the ego's will, and to these one must bow" (*ibid.*, pp. 204-5, emphasis added).

As will become clear in the following section, this dream represented a pivotal point in Jung's individuation and, we may go so far as to suggest, in the history of depth psychology. For its meaning spoke both to Jung and to the spirit of the Age. The imposing figure of Siegfried embodied the wilful, heroic attitude that had been at the forefront of the modernist enterprise, but it was precisely this imperialistic egoism that had to be sacrificed in the service of a 'higher' calling. Correctly, Jung thus recognised that this was a problem that extended beyond his personal *opus*:

it was nothing short of an ethical imperative that confronted humankind. Looking back at this episode, we might say that the revelation of the dream was itself a moment of death for Jung, and in this light we might then also understand the dramatic suggestion 'from within' to shoot himself if he could not understand its message - for as previously mentioned, one is often compelled to enact literally that which cannot be tolerated symbolically or metaphorically.

For Jung, the revelation of the need for a sacrifice of the heroic ego opened the way for the emergence of meaningful material from the unconscious, although a resolution of the conflicts and tensions involved was still a long way off. He now felt more inspired than ever, and set out to "seize hold of the fantasies" which came forth from the inner realm (*ibid.*, p. 205). To do this, he followed a procedure of engaging with the images and weaving a fantasy around their central core, a technique which he later termed 'active imagination'. We need not go into any detail as to the precise nature and meaning of these images, save to comment that over the period of many years there evolved a number of central themes in Jung's fantasies which have since become almost synonymous with his psychology of individuation - such as the shadow (first encountered as the brown-skinned man in the dream of Siegfried), the anima, the Wise Old Man and, of course, the self (see below). In essence, these archetypal metaphors reflected the emergence and development of personality No. 2, and the price that had to be paid for its advancement was nothing less than the giving up of the entrenched attitudes and ideals of personality No. 1. This was an *opus* in the true sense of the word: he felt a sense of "personal defeat" and humiliation whenever the outlines of a numinous emissary from the unconscious appeared and, as he summed it up, "my ego felt devalued" (*ibid.*, p. 208). What this tells us is that the process of voluntary sacrifice and death was repeated many times, and the metaphor of the *nekylia* thus lent expression to a progressive dialectic between the conscious and the unconscious in Jung's experience. For instance:

"I frequently imagined a steep descent. I even made several attempts to get to the very bottom ... I had the feeling that I was in the land of the dead. The atmosphere was that of the other world" (*ibid.*, p. 205).

A dramatic episode revolved around Jung's encounters with 'the dead'. It occurred in 1916, and began, as he related, with an atmosphere of "restlessness" in his house. It was as if a powerful constellation of psychical forces was in progress, and he had "the strange feeling that the air was filled with ghostly entities" (*ibid.*, p. 215). His daughter witnessed an apparition floating past her bedroom door; a solid wooden table split in half with a loud crack; doorbells seemed to ring on their own; "the air was so thick that it was scarcely possible to breathe" (*ibid.*, pp. 215-6). Stating

it simply but accurately, Jung believed that his house had been invaded by spirits, although in retrospect he attributed this to the constellation of an 'inner' archetype (*ibid.*, p. 216). As to the purpose of these visitations, 'they' proceeded to inform him that: "We have come back from Jerusalem where we found not what we sought" (*ibid.*). Jung felt an overwhelming need to give expression to something, and this took the form of his esoteric work, Septem Sermones ad Mortuos (Seven Sermons to the Dead), which he had printed privately under the pseudonym of the Gnostic writer Basilides (cf. Jung, 1916). The work was completed in three evenings, and with this "the haunting was over" (*ibid.*). It seems that once more Jung had answered a particular calling, and that the theme of death was centrally involved in this. As Wehr (1985, p. 192) comments, it needs to be borne in mind that 1916 was a year of verocious battles in the War - Verdun in particular - and civilisation was deeply shocked at the horrific loss of life. Could it be that the 'outer' reality of death had again faced Jung with the task of its recollection 'within'?

3.2.3. Wholeness

Out of these repeated immersions in the unconscious came firstly the crucial insight that "there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life" (*ibid.*, p. 207) - i.e. a recognition of psychological reality - and secondly the first allusions to the self, the source and the ultimate goal of his calling and the reward of sacrifice. The way to this goal was mediated by personified forms of the unconscious. For instance, Jung encountered in his fantasies an old man and a young girl, who informed him that their names were Elijah and Salome; the former matured into a figure of wisdom and inspiration whom he called Philemon, and to whom he gave credit for teaching him the meaning of "the reality of the psyche" (*ibid.*, p. 208). The image of Philemon represented a more mature personification of the underground phallus of Jung's childhood dream - both figures served to 'initiate' him into the imaginal mysteries of death - and it also anticipated an emerging consciousness grounded in the ego but close to the self and to death. In the enigmatic language of Septem Sermones, the goal of the self was alluded to in the concept of the 'Pleroma', which the author described as an undifferentiated state consisting of a number of pairs of opposites (Jung, 1916, p. 7; cf. Hoeller, 1982; Hubback, 1988). In the third sermon, the writer addressed the experience of a primal being, Abraxas, in whom opposites are united and

transcended:

"He is the hermaphrodite of the lowest beginning ...

He is fullness, uniting itself with emptiness.

He is the sacred wedding"

(translated and quoted by Hoeller, 1982, p. 51).

Both the Pleroma and Abraxas may be understood as mythic allegories of the self, the state of wholeness and transcendence. This is supported by the fact that shortly after he had given expression to Septem Sermones Jung experienced an urge to begin sketching and painting, and what emerged from these activities were vivid mandala images, which he recorded in a volume known as the 'Red Book'. In later works, Jung was to describe mandalas as being particularly common symbols of the self (e.g. Jung, 1929; 1950; 1951; 1955-56). During his mid-life period, he gradually realised the personal significance of his drawings:

"My mandalas were cryptograms concerning the state of the self which were presented to me anew each day. In them I saw the self - that is, my whole being, actively at work ... I had the distinct feeling that they were something central, and in time I acquired through them a living conception of the self" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 221).

Through his experiences, Jung moreover came to the realisation that images of the self point not only to a state of wholeness and transcendence, but to a central point of orientation in psychological life:

" ... the goal had been revealed. One could not go beyond the centre. The centre is the goal, and everything is directed towards that centre ... the self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning. Therein lies its healing function. For me, this insight signified an approach to the centre and therefore to the goal. Out of it emerged a first inkling of my personal myth" (*ibid.*, p. 224).

3.2.4. Comment

Jung's mid-life period clearly established death, or the descent to the underworld, as the myth to which he was called to give expression. Reinforcing this point, Smith (1990) demonstrates that this was in fact the single most important myth for modernist authors who wrote during Jung's time (e.g. Joseph Conrad, Thomas Mann, W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot), and he identifies two key features which those authors had in common with Jung's experiences. First, the theme of death and of the *nekylia* emerged in their works in association with a personal crisis, "and this breakdown in the inner sphere is reflected outwardly by the cultural catastrophe of World War I" (p. 252). Second, their work also involved the revelation of archetypal forms. From these considerations, we may discern that, so far as the modern era is concerned, it has been the lot of poets to give expression to the conflicted and refuted voice of death, whose calling is all too often lived out literally and hence pathologically. Jung however was perhaps unique in his ability to reflect on the actual significance of this calling and to weave his reflections into a model of psychology. But it is then also clear that his psychology was poetic and indeed ethical, rather than scientific or technical.

As we have seen to be the case with his early development, Jung's dramatic mid-life experience had a far-reaching influence on the place of death in his writings. In particular, his later works emphasise the need for a 'reversal' of the qualities of heroic resistance which he saw as being of paramount importance in the first half of life, to the extent that, as previously noted, he tended to see death as being the ultimate goal of the second half of life (cf. Chapter Two). Or put differently, he saw the task of the second half of life as being essentially a work towards death. Just as when the sun reaches its zenith it also begins its descent, so too must the ego 'turn back' and recover those aspects of the unconscious which have been disavowed or neglected during its development; and this implies and necessitates the sacrifice of purely egocentric desires. In terms which once more speak to his own experiences, Jung wrote that:

"If we wish to stay on the heights we have reached, we must struggle all the time to consolidate our consciousness and its attitude. But we soon discover that this praiseworthy and apparently unavoidable battle with the years leads to stagnation and desiccation of soul. Our convictions become platitudes ground out on a battle-organ, our ideals become starchy habits, enthusiasm stiffens into automatic gestures. The source of the water of life seeps away ... we may get a dim idea of

all the wants, longings, and fears that have accumulated down there - a repulsive and sinister sight. The mind shies away, but life wants to flow down to into the depths ... No one should deny the danger of the descent, but it can be risked. No one need risk it, but it is certain that some one will. And let those who go down the sunset way do so with open eyes, for it is a sacrifice which daunts even the gods. Yet every descent is followed by an ascent; the vanishing shapes are shaped anew, and a truth is valid in the end only if it suffers change and bears new witness in new images, in new tongues, like a new wine that is put into new bottles" (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 356-7, original emphasis).

Accordingly, Jung also asserted that regression, which he regarded as being essentially inimical to ego development in early life, assumes a different meaning and purpose in later years:

"What must be regarded as regression in a young person ... acquires a different meaning in the second half of life ... The task consists in integrating the unconscious, in bringing together 'conscious and 'unconscious' ... At this stage the mother symbol no longer connects back to the beginnings, but points towards the unconscious as the creative matrix of the future. 'Entry into the mother' then means establishing a relationship between the ego and the unconscious" (*ibid.*, p. 301).

This leads to a final comment concerning the death metaphor during Jung's mid-life transition, namely its connection to the self. For it is evident that we are now dealing, at a conceptual and an experiential level, not with regressive conditions of pre-conscious wholeness or immersion in the Mother, but with states of conscious wholeness and transcendence that orientate one towards the advent of Being and thus impart meaning to finite existence. Herein lies the poetic value of death in Jung's psychology (cf. Chapter Four), but from the descriptions of the self that have thus far been offered it may be tempting, given the cultural dominance of Cartesian ideology, to think of this wholeness along the lines of an 'inner' potential that is in some way distinct from 'outer' reality. A consideration of Jung's mature years, however, will reveal an understanding of death as the incarnation of a hospitable 'space' within which the world is recovered as a psychological world.

3.3. The Mature Years: Hospitality

Following his dramatic mid-life *nekyia*, Jung's *opus* centred around giving conscious expression to the self. Gradually, he came to the recognition that completeness does not imply completion (Wehr, 1985, p. 197), and that the task of consciousness is a life-long one (cf. Chapter Four). In his autobiography, he reflected that:

"There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, at the beginning; later, everything points towards the centre" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 222).

The idea of a 'circumambulation of the self' also establishes the central theme of Jung's mature years - 'mature' referring here not simply to a phase of life but to a psychological attitude and quality of being. Certainly, the period from his mid-life (1912-1917) up to his death in 1961 was remarkable simply in terms of the sheer volume and scope of his writings, which are unparalleled in modern psychology. More subjectively, these years represented for Jung a 'growing into life', leading Stevens (1991) to comment that "if enrichment of the personality does indeed result from working with the unconscious in the manner advocated by Jung, then he was a good advertisement for his own theories" (pp. 190-1). What must concern us in this discussion is the way in which his 'circumambulation of the self' manifested as a mature capacity to live in proximity to death, and the extent to which this in turn grounded his ability and willingness to dwell poetically rather than heroically. To avoid being sidetracked into issues that are not directly relevant to this discussion, the elucidation of these themes will be limited to two key aspects of Jung's mature years, namely (a) his encounter with the African wilderness, and (b) his experience of Bollingen, his home on the shore of Lake Zurich.

3.3.1. Jung in Africa

Jung had a deep passion for travelling and towards the end of 1925 he journeyed to East Africa, where he spent several weeks. His destination was of particular significance, for from the outset

it was a journey with a 'hidden' purpose. This he realised upon his return to Europe:

" ... the suspicion dawned on me that I had undertaken my African adventure with the secret purpose of escaping from Europe and its complex of problems ... as so many before me had done, and as so many were doing at this very time. The trip revealed itself as less an investigation of primitive psychology ... than a probing into the rather embarrassing question: What is going to happen to Jung the psychologist in the wilds of Africa? ... It became clear to me that this study had been not so much an objective scientific project as an intensely personal one, and that any attempt to go deeper into it touched every possible sore spot in my own psychology" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 303).

As was the case with his previous intention to 'experiment' with the unconscious, Jung was thus forced to concede that once again he (i.e. personality No. 1) had been the object of a purposeful manoeuvre by a dimension beyond his immediate awareness (the self, personality No. 2). It is thus possible to see his journey to Africa as a response - initially unconscious - to the calling of the self. In this regard, what Jung had to say about his journey to North Africa in 1920 applies equally to his later expedition:

"In travelling to Africa to find a psychic observation post outside the sphere of the European, I unconsciously wanted to find that part of my personality which had become invisible under the influence and pressure of being European" (*ibid.*, p. 272).

In these terms, Africa served as the voice of true Being, or the self. It may also be said that the self required the African wilderness for its incarnation. As Meier (1985) defines it, 'wilderness' refers to "nature in her original condition undisturbed, unadulterated by man" (p. 1), and what 'Africa' meant in Jung's experience is therefore much more than simply an expanse of land. It is a deeply embodied experience of the self, from which we as moderners have become estranged; it is an archetypal capacity that cannot simply come to the fore amidst the noise and congestion of Western society. In terms of the considerations already advanced in this thesis, it might be assumed that the experience of wilderness is therefore also one of personal death, of non-being in either its negative (regressive) or positive (transcendent) form. This argument is supported with reference to Jung's encounter with the wilderness of Africa.

One of the first impressions Jung had of Africa was that he was returning to his origins, to a world which he had always known, yet at the same time arriving at his destiny (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 53). He described his first experience of the open plains of Africa in the following terms:

"When the first ray of sunlight announced the onset of day, I awoke ... On a jagged rock above us a slim, brownish-black figure stood motionless, leaning on a long spear, looking down at the train ... I was enchanted by this sight - it was a picture of something utterly alien and outside my experience, but on the other hand a most intense *sentiment du déjà vu*. I had the feeling that I had already experienced this moment and had always known this world which was separated from me only by distance in time. It was as if I were this moment returning to the land of my youth, and as if I knew that dark-skinned man who had been waiting for me for five thousand years ... I could not guess what string within myself was plucked at the sight of that solitary dark hunter. I knew only that his world had been mine for countless millennia" (Jung, 1961/83, p, 283).

As Romanyshyn (1990) comments, Jung's journey to Africa was thus thematised as a 'homecoming', but not simply in the sense of a recovery of something 'within'. Rather:

"Within the landscape of Africa a reversal took place which, so to speak, turned Jung's European soul inside out, allowing him to discover the *mana* of the world, and in so doing to recover, out of the distance of his European consciousness, the original maternal mystery of the world ... His homecoming was not a self apart from the world, but a return to the world for a European soul which in achieving its dominance and mastery over nature had lost its ties to the earth" (*ibid.*, p. 73, original emphasis).

Two reflections allow us to see the connections between this recollection of the world in Jung's African experience and the metaphor of death. First, Jung's experience on the open plains suggests a sacrifice, or at least a relativisation, of his rationalist and Eurocentric ego in favour of an opening to the world in its pristine reality. Certainly, this is not a quality of the heroic ego of Western modernism. Second, his sense of returning to his primordial origins implies a return to the grounding of existence, the self; and this, as we have seen, implies a psychological death. As

Jung wrote:

"I enjoyed the 'divine peace' of a still primeval country ... Thousands of miles lay between me and Europe, mother of all demons. The demons could not reach me here - there were no telegrams, no telephone calls, no letters, no visitors. My liberated psychic forces poured blissfully back to the primeval expanses" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 293).

In essence, Jung's experience in the African wilderness was thus one of non-being, a non-dualistic condition brought about through the collapse of Cartesian boundaries. In poetic terms, this constitutes an experience of death, but the manifestation of wholeness described here is very different to the form of non-being associated with Jung's regressive desires during his early years. For whereas the object of regressive longings is ultimately a condition of pre-egoic fusion, Jung's experience on the African plain seems to speak more of a return to origins that is at the same time an evolution and expansion of consciousness (cf. Brooke, 1991, pp. 56f.).

Thus we must be dealing with a face of death that has different ontological implications than that of death as a regressive experience. This distinction will need to be addressed in closer detail at a later stage (cf. Chapter Four).

What emerges from these considerations is not only the connection between the calling of the self and the meaning of death, but something of the poetic significance of death and sacrifice. For if the African wilderness meant a concrete incarnation of the self in Jung's experience, then for him it also brought about a profound recovery of the world as the abandoned and forgotten dwelling place of contemporary Westerners. As Romanyshyn (1990) sees it, Jung's experience was essentially one of "openness to and of the world" (p. 74, original emphasis), and Brooke (1991, pp. 57f.) similarly interprets Jung's encounter with the wilderness as a recovery of the world as a 'temple'. A recollection recorded by Jung highlights these claims convincingly. Watching a herd of wild animals grazing on a Kenyan plain, he experienced a pivotal awakening to the natural world:

"I felt then as if I were the first man, the first creature, to know that all this is. The entire world around me was still in its primeval state; it did not know that it was. And in that moment in which I came to know the world sprang into being; without that moment it would never have been" (Jung, 1938/54, pp. 95-6, original emphasis).

The moment of coming-to-consciousness described in the preceding passage applies as much to Jung as to the world - we might say that the landscape imparted a breath of life over him as much as he did over it - and he described his experience as nothing short of a revelation of "the cosmic meaning of consciousness" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 284). This too suggests an experience of transcendence, i.e. of death. The key point here is that if "the appeal [of Africa] to which Jung responded was the call of the light of consciousness" (Brooke, 1991, p. 54), then there is an irreducible poetic link between moments of death, selfhood, consciousness, and divine revelation. More specifically, the significance of death as a calling seems in this context to pertain to the function of the self as a hospitable 'space' within which the things of the world are revealed in their 'divine' form, meaning free from the distorting and iconoclastic influence of the Cartesian ego (cf. Chapter Four). In other words, death in its transcendent form emerges as a poetic or imaginative space. This possibility will be taken up in the following chapter, but for the present it may be expanded with reference to Jung's life at Bollingen. Before proceeding to that discussion, it is however necessary to note that Jung's experience of the self as incarnated in the landscape of Africa was not only one of transcendent wholeness. Towards the end of his sojourn, he began to fear that he might after all be regressing to a 'primitive' state of development, and he once again felt that the integrity of his personal identity was threatened. While travelling northwards with the Nile river, Jung had a dream in which his black American barber was using a curling iron to give him "Negro hair" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 302). He commented that:

"I took this dream as a warning from the unconscious; it was saying that the primitive was a danger to me. At that time I was obviously all too close to 'going back'. I was suffering an attack of sandfly fever which probably reduced my psychic resistance ... Parallel to my involvement with the demanding African environment, an interior line was being drawn within my dreams ... The only thing I could conclude from this was that my European personality must under all circumstances be preserved intact" (*ibid.*).

In a penetrating analysis of Jung's response to this dream, Brooke (1991) comments that Jung's sense of uncertainty, his vulnerability to the openness of Africa, led to a retreat to Europe - not simply a physical retreat, but a psychological one; "the existential liberation that had revealed to Jung the goal of individuation, the spiritual realisation of the world as a temple, [was] now seen through the defensive eyes of a psychiatrist" (p. 60). In other words, the retreat was from a mode of being that we have termed 'the self' to a Cartesian position of alienation from the world, a return to the defensive boundaries of the modern European ego. For the purposes of this analysis, it may

be seen that Jung's fears of 'going back' to a 'primitive' state essentially gave expression to the dangers of death as a regressive force, perhaps heightened because of his reduced "psychic resistance" (*op.cit.*). Brooke adds that in his later life Jung however recaptured and lived the vision he had in Africa, so that the uncertainty of the ego was no longer felt as a threat but allowed for the maintenance of the self as a fundamental connectedness to the things in his world (*ibid.*, p. 62). It seems to be precisely this capacity that was mediated through and reflected in Jung's life at Bollingen. It may be said that at Bollingen, the centre of psychological life shifted for Jung from the ego to the self.

3.3.2. The incarnation of wholeness as the centre of Being: Bollingen

It is a key but understated understanding of analytical psychology that individuation, as Jung experienced and wrote of it, is not simply an intellectual endeavour but needs to be grounded in concrete reality. The emergence of the self has little impact if it remains at the level of lofty ideals, and it is one thing to talk about archetypal images but quite another to translate them into meaningful and ethical practice (cf. Gordon, 1992). Reflecting this assumption, Jung experienced in the years following his 'confrontation with the unconscious' an impulse to capture his experiences in some tangible way. As he explained in his autobiography:

"Words and paper ... did not seem real enough to me; something more was needed. I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession of faith in stone. This was the beginning of the 'Tower', the house which I built for myself at Bollingen" (Jung, 1961/83; p. 250, emphasis added).

Called the Tower because of its rounded shape, the house at Bollingen was built in 1923. It represented for Jung a place of solitude and renewal, a "maternal hearth" (*ibid.*), but nonetheless still seemed incomplete. In 1927, he added a central structure and a second tower, and extended this structure still further some four years later. He was looking, as he later explained, for a "retiring room", and this he found in the tower annex; it represented a 'spiritual' place which complemented the 'maternal' quality of the first tower (*ibid.*). In 1935 - again after a 'fallow period' of four years - he added a courtyard and a loggia by the lake. Following the death of his wife in

1955, he felt:

" ... an inner obligation to become what I myself am. To put it in the language of the Bollingen house ... I could no longer hide myself behind the 'maternal' and the 'spiritual' towers. So, in that same year, I added an upper storey to this section, which represents myself, or my ego-personality. Earlier, I would not have been able to do this; I would have regarded it as presumptuous self-emphasis. Now it signified an extension of consciousness achieved in old age. With that the building was complete" (*ibid.*, pp. 251-2).

We must briefly contemplate the significance of Jung's building activities. In one sense, they reflected the unfolding of the self. But there is more to it than this, for when Jung states that Bollingen was "a symbol of psychic wholeness" (*ibid.*, p. 252), he means more than merely an objective representation of an 'inner' experience: it was also the place of transformation or, as Wehr (1985) adeptly puts it, "the vessel of his self-development" (p. 376). Jung (1961/83) himself testified to this:

"From the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation - a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be" (p. 252).

In short, Bollingen represented a receptacle for the concrete incarnation of the self, as is affirmed by Jung's reflections:

- it was a place away from the distracting noise of the modern world
- "In Bollingen, silence surrounds me almost audibly" (*ibid.*, p. 253);
- it was a locality where he was able to dwell "in modest harmony with nature" (*ibid.*);
- it was a space of healing, for in its surrounds he felt that "the torment of creation is lessened; creativity and play are close together" (*ibid.*).

These considerations point to a fundamental resolution of the tension between the potentialities of

life and of death, the needs of the ego and the demands of the self, separation and wholeness. Thus there is to some extent a similarity between Jung's encounter with the wilderness and his experience of Bollingen; both represented concrete manifestations of the self, although his experience of Bollingen was probably more volitional than that associated with his African odyssey. There is also a sense in which Bollingen, more so than the African wilderness, was experienced by Jung as not simply a state of wholeness, but the incarnation of this wholeness as the centre of Being, an 'inner' core around which all experience circumambulates. As Jung wrote with reference to the significance of the Tower, "there I live in my second personality and see life in the round, as something forever coming into being and passing on" (*ibid.*, p. 265).

Finally, we must also note the significance of the 'upper storey' of the Tower, representing Jung's ego-personality. This signified the culmination of his *opus*, and it pointed to a mature realisation of the role of ego-consciousness in bringing the potentialities of the self to bear. As with his experience in Africa, it is indicative of a fundamental hospitality to the self, the unconscious, and the things of the world. Again, we may think of the self as a 'space' for the emergence of true Being, but Jung's final building at Bollingen serves as a concrete reminder of the need for a willingness on the part of the ego to receive and to nurture the gift of Being, and this might be seen as a key element of sacrifice (cf. Chapter Four). Perhaps something of this meaning was reflected in an inscription which Jung had placed over the gate of the tower at Bollingen. It read *Philemonis Sacrum - Fausti Poenitentia* (Philemon's Shrine, Faust's Atonement), and for Jung this resonated with a particularly significant metaphor. For he recognised that Faust, the character in Goethe's play with the same title, reflects the destructive aspects of the spirit of heroism which dominates modern existence; it is his land reclamation project that leads to the earth becoming inhospitable, causing even the gods to flee before his technocratic will. But two of the homeless gods, Mercury and Jupiter, are offered hospitality by Philemon and Baucis, humble tramps who live, as Jung did at Bollingen, "modestly with nature" (*op. cit.*). Thus Bollingen, where Jung dwelled poetically, represented his personal atonement for the Faustian hubris of the modern ego, and a place where Philemonic hospitality reigned (cf. Giegerich, 1984). Perhaps it is meaningful that Mercury, one of the gods given shelter by Philemon, is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hermes, the lord of death and the mediator between the gods and the mortals. For certainly, there seems a close correspondence between Jung's sense of benevolence and hospitality in late life, and his capacity to live in proximity to death.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to offer a poetic approach to death, by understanding it as a non-literal reality of psychological life and by using Jung's autobiographical recollections as a structure for analysis. In this regard, it has been shown that death was a basic metaphor for Jung's experience of the self in both its regressive and transcendent forms, and that in the latter sense death served as a calling that initiated a poetic response, namely the sacrifice of exaggerated heroism. As previously noted, Jung however struggled to capture his experiences in a conceptual language. As a result, the concepts which pertain to the meaning of death and dying in his theoretical writings (e.g. ego, self, regression, transformation) do not always substantiate the poetic grounding of death in his personal psychology - especially not if they are approached scientifically. The task ahead is to formulate a conceptual model of death and dying in terms that essentially authenticate the meaning of death in Jung's experience, and its significance in modern life as a calling to sacrifice and hospitality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POETICS OF DEATH AND DYING: A JUNGIAN APPROACH

In considering the theme of death as a formative influence in Jung's life and works, the concept of the self emerged as a key theoretical issue. This is reflected in the fact that Jungian theorists commonly equate the meaning of death with the manifestation of the self (e.g. Fortier, 1972; Gordon, 1961; 1978; Mudd, 1990; Samuels, 1985a; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981), but there have been relatively few attempts to critically evaluate the ontological assumptions underpinning this connection. Continuing the Cartesian heritage of modern Western thought, analytical psychologists appear to often treat Jung's concept of the self - and by implication the reality of death - as a reified and encapsulated space within the person, and thus as a dimension of psychological life that is relatively distinct from the external world (cf. Avens, 1982; Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992; Downing, 1977; Rauhala, 1984). To recover death as a poetic vocation, it is therefore necessary to go beyond a Cartesian ontology of the self, and to reclaim in theoretical terms the fundamental vision that inspired Jung's writings. To this end, it will be useful to amplify certain of Jung's theoretical formulations with reference to the discourse of other poetic traditions, particularly existential phenomenology. This will not lead to a thorough articulation of these schools of thought - a task that is far beyond the scope of this thesis - but will hopefully demonstrate and support the hermeneutic thrust of Jung's thanatology. For the most part, this discussion will involve an elucidation of the ego-self relationship as it pertains to the parameters of death and the tasks of dying.

4.1. The Self and Death: A Conceptual Overview

In the tradition of Western philosophy the term 'self' is typically equated with one's sense of conscious identity (cf. Clarke, 1992). Analytical psychology introduces an important departure to this convention by distinguishing between the ego, as a complex of functions constituting the executive seat of consciousness, and the self, as the totality of all psychological processes, both

conscious and unconscious. While the ego pertains essentially to one's sense of personal identity, the self on the other hand refers to a more 'objective' element of psychological life. As seen in the previous chapter, it both constitutes a directive 'Other' throughout the course of individuation (cf. Papadopoulos, 1984), and stands as a transcendent wholeness which is the ultimate goal of that process. In the revised (1960) edition of *Psychological Types*, Jung (1921) thus defined the self as a "supraordinate personality" (p. 460, emphasis added): it "expresses the unity of the personality as a whole", and encompasses "both the experienceable and the inexperienceable (or the not yet experienced)" aspects of psychological life (*ibid.*). This definition introduces a telic understanding of the self, for as the totality towards which the personality evolves it is always in a state of becoming. At the same time, it is a fundamental tenet of Jung's psychology that the self regulates the process of individuation, and thus orchestrates its own manifestation in time and space. In this sense, the self appears to be also a central point in psychological life, rather than simply the circumference or totality of the psyche. To understand the connection between the self and death, it is thus necessary to begin by clarifying this seemingly paradoxical formulation.

4.1.1. The self as totality and as centre

As is evident from the foregoing discussion, the concept of the self refers to diverse psychological functions and processes. Redfearn (1969; 1985) has identified the following connotations of the term 'self' in Jung's writings:

- (1) a primary 'cosmic' totality analogous to concepts of the unity of oneself and the world as described in Eastern philosophy;
- (2) the totality of the individual;
- (3) the actual experience of, or intimation of, such a totality, i.e. the experience of 'wholeness';
- (4) a primary organising force or agency that is distinct from the conscious ego;
- (5) the unconscious, or the organising centre of the unconscious;
- (6) emerging parts of the totality of the psyche.

This is not the place to debate the relative merits of these definitions, and they will be returned to where necessary. For now, it will suffice to note that Redfearn's definitions gravitate around two key assumptions introduced above (cf. Brooke, 1991, pp. 96f.). First, it emerges that the self may be thought of as a state of wholeness, totality or transcendence: as a cosmic unity encompassing the person and the world (1)¹; the totality of the person (2); the experience of wholeness (3); and emergent parts of the totality of psychical functions (6). Second, the self is defined as the centre of the psyche, a factor that orchestrates the emergence and development of psychological life (4, 5). Brooke notes that in addition to these definitions, analytical psychologists also tend to think of the self as a new centre of psychological life that emerges through a symbolic dialectic between conscious and unconscious (*ibid.*). The realisation of this synthesis constitutes the goal of individuation (Jung, 1952, p. 468; see below).

The question that arises is whether an understanding of the self as the totality of the psyche is incompatible with an appreciation of its function as a central point of orientation in psychological life. So far as Jung (1950) was concerned, the self is a central organising function or central archetype "to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy" (p. 357). However, he asserted that "the self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious" (Jung, 1944/52, p. 41, emphasis added). Moreover, he insisted that this formulation was "not a philosophical idea" but an 'empirical fact' - i.e. a psychical reality - evident in symbolic indications of the co-occurrence of wholeness and centering functions, as in mandala symbols (Jung, 1921, pp. 461f.). Characteristically, he was prepared to rest with this 'proof', and thus did not articulate the issue philosophically. The matter has however engendered considerable debate among his followers (e.g. Brooke, 1991; Edinger, 1960; 1972; Fordham, 1963; Gordon, 1985; Jacoby & Edinger, 1961; Samuels, 1983; 1985a). Fordham (1963) has been a prominent figure in this regard. Arguing that we cannot simply play down theory by appealing to "effective, prelogical experience" (*ibid.*, p. 33), he has advocated a clear differentiation of the domains of totality and of centre. In his works, the term 'self' is therefore applied only to the totality of the psyche, while the term 'central archetype', adopted from Perry (1962), is employed to account for the innate ordering and centering potential of the psyche. On the other hand, Edinger (1960; 1972) has strongly advocated a retention of Jung's classical formulation of the self, claiming that it is a 'necessary paradox' in order to account for both the experience of wholeness and for the pivotal role of the self in individuation and transformation. Viewing the self as only the original totality and the ultimate goal of psychological

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to the definitions cited above.

life, he has argued, does not adequately account for clinical observations pointing to the significance of symbols of the self - such as mandalas and other images of wholeness - in actually orchestrating the growth and development of consciousness from childhood onwards.

This debate is important, but to some extent it is also indicative of an attempt to ground the concept of the self in a quasi-scientific model of the mind. In this regard, Brooke (1991) has argued that while there are certain conceptual advantages to Fordham's approach, the desire to draw clear distinctions between the totality and the centre of the psyche reveals a treatment of Jung's original formulations "as though they presented a scientific model, a geography of mind with the archetypes spread out like stars in an interior space" (p. 97). But the same concern applies to Edinger's acceptance of Jung's model as paradoxical, for it is only anomalous to think of the self as both totality and as centre if this archetypal potential is treated as a reified arrangement within an encapsulated psyche. There are however grounds to assume that despite the scientific undercurrent in Jung's writings, this is not what he intended. To Serrano (1968), he described the self as being simultaneously an "ideal centre" and a "dream of totality" (p. 50), and this reinforces his insistence that the totality and the centre "are indispensable to each other and equivalent" (Jung, 1947/54, p. 276, emphasis added; cf. 1950, p. 357). These comments appear to indicate that what Jung had in mind was more along the lines of an existential capacity for wholeness and ordering than a spatial entity. If this is accepted, then it may also be agreed that the totality and the centre are neither mutually exclusive, nor related only by paradox, but refer to simultaneously emerging potentials that are called 'the self'. As Brooke (1991) states:

"... the self as centre, whether experienced existentially or only intuited as ('theoretical') possibility, does not refer to a reified entity within the psyche (however defined) but to the capacity of the self as a totality to structure psychic life around a centre" (p. 97, emphasis added).

Certainly, such a formulation is indicated by Jung's own experience of wholeness and centredness in his later years, particularly in his life at Bollingen (cf. Chapter Three), and it leads to an understanding that the self, as the centre of Being, is also a calling to wholeness and transcendence. But then it must also be noted that psychical wholeness or totality is not simply limited to the boundaries of the individual person (Jung, 1929, p. 51; 1957, p. 271), and to forget this is to confuse the self with the ego (Jung, 1947/54, p. 226). In one passage, Jung (1938/40)

stated this argument as follows:

"... the individual imagines that he has caught the psyche and holds her in the hollow of his hand ... 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" (p. 84).

In similar terms:

"Behind the opposites and in the opposites is true reality, which sees and comprehends the whole ... We use the word 'self' for this, contrasting it with the little ego ...What is meant by the self is not only in me but in all things, like the Atman, like Tao. It is psychic totality" (Jung, 1959, p. 463, emphasis added).

Brooke (1991, pp. 98f.) points out that in these terms it is not appropriate to think of the self or the psyche simply as being 'in' the person. Rather, the self is a calling both from 'in me' and from 'beyond me', a point which Jung alludes to in the following passage:

"The inner voice is the voice of a fuller life, of a wider, more comprehensive consciousness. That is why, in mythology, the birth of the hero or the symbolic rebirth coincides with sunrise" (Jung, 1934b, p. 184).

It follows from these thoughts that the person (ego) may ultimately be thought to dwell 'in' the psychical matrix that constitutes the psyche, or the self (Brooke, 1991, p. 77). This leads to an appreciation of the psyche which is analogous to the *Lebenswelt* ('life-world') of Husserlian phenomenology (*ibid.*), but this connection is somewhat tangential to the present discussion. The point is that the incarnation of the self, as a condition of wholeness, refers to the ontological unity between the subject and the world, and this is substantiated with reference to Jung's awakening to the world in the African wilderness (cf. Chapter Three). In other words, the self is a capacity that "gathers the world to oneself" (Jung, 1947/54, p. 226), or that allows the world to be reclaimed as our authentic dwelling place (Romanyshyn, 1990). What analytical psychology has to offer to phenomenology, as Brooke (1991, p. 79) demonstrates, is thus a deeper understanding

of the lived world. Particularly, Jung affords an appreciation of the reality that the mythic patterns which shape individual existence also determine the ways in which the world is actualised in contingent experience; the profane world of the Faustian technocrat is for instance a very different place to the monastic world of the poet. Going even further, it may be seen that Jung's thinking, as with his personal experience, promotes the key premise that the revelation of the world as sacred or divine depends ultimately upon an acceptance of the 'littleness' of the personal ego and its obligation to something that is 'higher' or 'bigger' than it. In this light, he asserted that the central task of individuation is the expansion of consciousness beyond "the petty, oversensitive, personal world of the ego" (Jung, 1928, p. 178). If theoretically this entails a confrontation with the reality of the self, then existentially it implies a confrontation with the reality of death and finitude.

4.1.2. Implications for a model of death

The picture that emerges is ultimately one of the self as an 'existential space' (Downing, 1977, p. 95). When we avoid the temptation to literalise and reify the basic constructs of Jung's metapsychology, it becomes evident that the self is essentially a "clearing", meaning a mode of being present to things in such a way that they are revealed in their imaginal depth (*ibid.*). Avens (1982) similarly thinks of the self as "an empty 'place' where many selves come to mingle and depart" (p. 144), and Brooke (1991) posits that:

" ... Jung sometimes thought of the self as a kind of entity, or linked to material continuity through space. However, more important than the self as a 'something' is an understanding of the self as 'no-thing' ... a fertile and hospitable emptiness within which the things of the world ... shine forth" (p. 99).

It is this capacity for transcendent revelation that is at the centre of Being. As with conditions of wholeness, this centre is however not simply located 'in' the person:

"... the centre of the self is that to which I am related most deeply, and to which I try to return in times of ethical questioning, of crisis, of silence. It is a centre that is most intimately mine, yet it is not 'in me' unless I put it there for a time, anxiously protecting it against the unrelenting presence of the world. But that centre may equally be one's home, a holy sanctuary or a favourite tree" (*ibid.*, pp. 97-8).

Conceptualising of psychological wholeness and centredness as concurrent existential capacities pertaining to the self has important implications so far as a poetics of death is concerned. As we have already established, Jung for the most part approached the meaning of death in terms of the self as totality - i.e. as the consummation of psychological wholeness (cf. Chapter Two). However, it is difficult to account for his subjective experience of death as a calling (cf. Chapter Three), unless this totality is also related to the self as a non-egocentric centre of the psyche. Moreover, if the self is appreciated in non-substantialist terms, i.e. as a 'clearing' or 'space', then death too may be thought of as a fundamental 'openness' or 'nothingness' that facilitates the divine revelation of Being, and that brings one into indissoluble connection with the world. Before going on to see how this understanding unfolds in Jung's writings, it is pertinent to note that it is precisely such an appreciation of death that characterises existential-phenomenological approaches to thanatology². For instance, Heidegger (1927/62) described death as "the shrine of nothing" (p. 178, emphasis added), meaning that death is the Abyss of Being, i.e. a primordial 'emptiness' in which the truth of Being emerges (cf. Avens, 1982, p. 147; Demske, 1970, p. 165). Levin (1988) similarly sees death as a fundamental 'openness', and he quotes the Tibetan teacher Trungpa in support of this notion:

"Our most fundamental state of mind ... is such that there is a basic openness, basic freedom, a spacious quality; and we have now, and always have had, this openness" (p. 402).

Likewise, Segal (1989) comments that the poet, in the Rilkean sense, is one who "touches the extremes of life and death and overcomes the threat of nothingness by transforming the physical world into pure Being" (p. 118). He notes too that this essentially entails an "attempt to encompass the world's totality in the inner space of the heart" (*ibid.*, p. 119).

Common to these formulations is the assumption that death is a non-dualistic mode of being and a capacity for vision which has no preconceived logic to it. In the following discussion, it will be argued that a compatible ontology of death emerges when a poetic comportment is maintained towards Jung's theory of the self and its role in individuation. Importantly, Jung's psychology - perhaps more so than other poetic models of death and dying - reminds us that there is, however,

² There are of course important differences between Jung's conceptual thinking and the phenomenological tradition, and these involve more than just terminology. The tensions between these schools of thought must however be neglected in this discussion. That there are also significant points of contact has been demonstrated by Brooke (1991). So far as the present discussion is concerned, we are going no further than to note that Jung and phenomenologists appear to approach the question of death from a similar perspective (cf. Chapter Two).

another face of death that must be reckoned with. For regression to the self as a primitive modality does not imply the shining light of poetic revelation, but rather an immersion in a dark, archaic world of pre-personal relations. The implications of these ambivalent potentialities will become evident in the course of establishing the psychological meaning and value of death, and it is pertinent to begin by clarifying the idea of death as a state of wholeness and non-being.

4.1.3. Death as wholeness and non-being

Gordon (1961; 1978), who has perhaps done most to advance the cause of thanatology within a Jungian perspective, argues that death may be defined as a condition or experience of non-being, by which she means:

" ... a state of absorption in a union which precludes boundaries, differentiation, separateness, and the tension of the opposites. It is an essentially non-dualistic state, in which there is no background and no foreground, no subject and no object, no I and no Thou. It is the state of the closed Gestalt, it is the 'complete' or 'stable' equilibrium, which is the goal of all homeostatic processes" (Gordon, 1961, p. 120).

This definition affords a poetic appreciation of death in two ways. First, it moves away from the interiorisation of psychological reality by offering an understanding of death as a state of non-differentiated wholeness that extends beyond the boundaries of the individual person. In other words, the meaning of death is not simply reduced to an intrapsychic event, but indicates an experience that encompasses both subject and world by collapsing the dualistic boundaries that tend to be maintained through the perspective of the modernist ego. Second, it deliteralises the meaning of death by treating it as a metaphor for transcendence, union or synthesis. In terms of Gordon's definition, the image of death applies, for example, to sleep, meditation, contemplative solitude, being lifted up in prayer, ecstatic union with a lover, or a frightening shift in reality during an hallucinatory experience. On this basis, Gordon (1968, p. 58) has also made an important differentiation between life and death forces, the former referring to the need for differentiation and

separateness, the latter to the capacity for wholeness and transcendence. Thus she writes that:

"Just as the capacity to separate off and to differentiate is potentially present from the start, so ... is the faculty to be in a state of non-being, of death - at least, in an approximation to it - to experience it through phantasy and through symbols; to feel it, to wish for it, to sense it" (Gordon, 1961, p.120).

In a later section of this chapter, these considerations will be applied to a poetic appreciation of the role of the death instinct in bringing about meaningful transformation and growth. Continuing now with an understanding of death as a state of non-being, it must be noted that we are again dealing with ambivalent potentials of the self. On the one hand, death implies a state of fusion, meaning regression to an undifferentiated and boundary-less condition (Gordon, 1968, p. 58). This implies that the ego lives in a state of unconscious identification with the self, with the result that there can be little if any conscious appropriation of the possibilities of the world. It may be a paradisaal state, free of the conflicts and tensions of conscious existence (cf. Chapter Three), but, as Savitz (1990) points out, this state may also take the form of "a frightening world in which boundaries fuse, creation and destruction overlap, and reality and phantasy become indistinguishable" (p. 47). On the other hand, death also refers to a state of union or transcendence, which Gordon (1968) defines as an "evolved state of wholeness formed by the conjunction of parts" (p. 58). Later, it will be established that the ambivalent dimensions of death described here pertain to the tension between 'regressive' and 'progressive' movements in the psyche, and that which face of death is actualised at a given moment depends primarily on the position, strength and attitude of the ego with regard to the self. Consistent with the dominant direction of this thesis, namely an elucidation of the poetic possibilities associated with death and dying, the major focus of this chapter will however be on understanding death as a condition of evolved wholeness, i.e. a transcendent union of opposites. In the following sections, it is argued that as a transcendent reality death manifests as an 'imaginative space' conducive to the recovery of meaning and the integration of disparate and at times conflicting potentialities of psychological life.

4.1.4. Death and transcendence

As a state of non-being, death may be seen to refer to a transcendent 'space' in which personal identity (the egoic 'I') is surrendered or deconstructed, so that one is confronted with the formless

expanse which is the ground of Being - i.e. the self. In Jung's writings, such a position is first evident, albeit in a somewhat convoluted way, in Seven Sermons to the Dead (Jung, 1916). There, he wrote of the 'Pleroma' as a primordial Abyss underpinning all experience and all existence (cf. Chapter Three). He described the Pleroma as a profound 'nothingness' in which "thinking and being cease" (*ibid.*, p. 7); it is "present without any bounds, eternally and completely", and it "penetrates the created world as the sunlight penetrates the air everywhere" (*ibid.*). From this, he deduced that:

"I begin with nothingness. Nothingness is the same as fullness. In infinity full is no better than empty ... A thing that is infinite and eternal hath no qualities, since it hath all qualities ... In the Pleroma there is nothing and everything" (*ibid.*).

It may be asserted that the concept of the Pleroma represented a less sophisticated but essentially poetic attempt to give expression to that order of reality which Jung later termed the self (cf. Hubback, 1988, p. 88). That he did not return to this concept in his later writings was possibly related to his search for a more 'respectable' - i.e. scientific - language, and Seven Sermons was anything but scientific. Nevertheless, it seems that the idea of an unbounded 'nothingness' or space in which the conditions of finite being are transcended did make a relatively early appearance in Jung's thinking. Apart from his formulation of the self as "true reality, which sees and comprehends the whole" (*op. cit.*), this theme occurs again in his revival of the medieval concept of the *unus mundus*. For Jung, this concept was intended to refer to a 'unitary world' in which the realms of 'psyche' and 'matter' form one reality (cf. von Franz, 1968, p. 194). It was an extension to his idea that the unconscious has an essentially 'psychoid' nature, meaning that the physical and the psychical ultimately shade into each other:

"Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing" (Jung, 1947/54, p. 215).

Some commentators, such as Jaffe (1971a, p. 23) see in Jung's concept of psychoid reality a meaningful attempt to overcome the Cartesian bifurcation of psyche and world. This claim is substantiated by the fact that in Mysterium Coniunctionis, Jung's last major work, he gave prominent expression to the connections between his thinking about the psychoid self and the idea of the *unus mundus*. He asserted that the latter concept points to a restoration of oneness, "the

ultimate unity of all archetypes as well as the multiplicity of the phenomenal world ... the original state of the cosmos" (Jung, 1955-56, p. 463). There follows an assertion that "if mandala symbolism is the psychological equivalent of the *unus mundus*, then synchronicity is its parapsychological equivalent" (*ibid.*, p. 464), meaning that in the *unus mundus* realm there is a transcendence of time and space:

"Though synchronistic phenomena occur in time and space they manifest a remarkable independence of both these indispensable determinants of physical existence and hence do not conform to the law of causality. The causalism that underlies our scientific view of the world breaks everything down into individual processes which it punctiously tries to isolate from all other parallel processes. This tendency ... has the disadvantage of breaking up, or obscuring, the universal interrelationship of events so that a recognition of the greater relationship, i.e. of the unity of the world, becomes more and more difficult. Everything that happens, however, happens in the same 'one world' and is a part of it" (*ibid.*).

Following this line of thinking, Jung was led to the conclusion that the *unus mundus* - the 'one world' which was sought and symbolised in the alchemical *opus* - ultimately represents the "eternal Ground of all empirical being" (*ibid.*, p. 534). This connects with his earlier thinking about the Pleroma, and indicates a continuing search on Jung's part to give conceptual expression to a reality of transcendent wholeness. We may however question why he found it necessary to introduce a concept other than that of the self to account for the ontological unity of subject and world. In this regard, Brooke (1991) makes the reasonable comment that the *unus mundus* hypothesis essentially represented an attempt on Jung's part "to jump over the chasm that his separation of subject and object had already created" (p. 175n), i.e. to correct the implicit Cartesianism that had dogged his thinking about the self. Whatever the merits of this argument, it is clear that a poetic appreciation of the self, as outlined above, leaves no need to seek an alternative route to overcome the subject-object dualism of Cartesian ontology.

There is another avenue of Jung's thinking which leads to an appreciation of death as a transcendent reality, and that is his treatment of Eastern religion and philosophy. In fact, it is probably in this context that his poetic vision of death is most evident. The non-dualistic emphasis of Eastern thinking clearly appealed to Jung, who by his own admission discerned in it a wisdom that was lacking, or that had become atrophied, in Western rationalism (cf. Jung, 1929; 1935/53; 1939b; 1939/54; 1944). In turning towards Eastern thanatology, he moreover had the advantage

of being able to draw upon richly symbolic responses to the problem of death, articulated in classical texts such as The Secret of the Golden Flower (Wilhelm, 1931/62) and the Bardo Thodol³ (Evans-Wentz, 1960), about which he delivered extensive commentaries (Jung, 1929, 1935/53, 1939/54). Consideration of these texts, or more broadly of Eastern approaches to death, is unfortunately beyond the confines of this thesis, but it is pertinent to briefly comment on the ways in which Jung's thinking about death was influenced through contact with Eastern sources of gnosis.

As early as Symbols of Transformation, Jung (1912/52) had found an affinity between his concept of psychical totality and the Eastern idea of an all-pervasive 'world-soul' which is both 'in' the individual and at the same time encompasses the personal ego within its totality. Writing of the Upanishadic god Puruscha, who represents 'cosmic consciousness', Jung commented that "those who know him truly pass beyond death; by no other road can they go" (p. 123). In the Bardo Thodol, he again encountered the idea that death is not simply the extinction of existence, but a fundamental 'Voidness' and a 'liberation' from the narrow confines of egocentric consciousness. He observed in his commentary on this text that the "greatness" of such thinking is precisely its recognition of the interconnectedness of death, transformation and 'enlightenment' (Jung, 1935/53, p. 513). In this regard, he wrote that death reveals to us:

" ... the primacy of the psyche, for that is the one thing which life does not make clear to us ... We are so hemmed in by things which jostle and oppress that we never get a chance, in the midst of these 'given' things, to wonder by whom they are 'given'" (*ibid.*, emphasis added).

What Jung meant by the 'primacy of the psyche' (i.e. psychical reality) we already know: it is the imaginal ground of psychological life, *esse in anima* (cf. Chapter Two). With this connection, the poetic thrust of Jung's thanatology begins to take form, for according to his thinking it follows that there is a fundamental connection between the self and death on the one hand, and the realm of imagination, or that capacity which he termed 'symbolic life', on the other hand. This possibility has much to offer towards an understanding of the poetics of death.

³ The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

4.1.5. Death as home to the imagination

In her extensive study of the philosophy of imagination, Brann (1991) finds reason to posit that:

"Every claim that there is a human capability for imagining ... finally comes to speak of some sort of inner space, a space-like field in which the particular depictions take place" (p.581)⁴.

Understanding that the capacity for imaginative vision rests upon the manifestation in consciousness of a transcendent space leads to an elucidation of the poetic connections between death, the Jungian self, and the imagination. This has been a central thrust of the work of Gordon (1961; 1968; 1978; 1992), who has linked the capacity for symbolisation to the ability to tolerate experiences of death and non-being (see below). As noted above, there is evidence that Jung too thought of death as a path to the imaginal ground of the psyche. This has emerged primarily from his discourse on the Bardo Thodol, but elsewhere he similarly asserted that the transcendence or death of the ego leads to a "new state" of being (Jung, 1939b, p. 546) in which (quoting the Zen master Suzuki) "the old ways of viewing things is abandoned and the world acquires a new signification" (*ibid.*, p. 546n, emphasis added). To this he added the following important observation:

"It is not that something different is seen, but that one sees differently. It is as though the spatial act of seeing were changed by a new dimension. You can ... be conscious at various levels, within a narrower or wider field, more on the surface or deeper down. These differences in degree are often differences in kind as well, since they depend on the development of the personality as a whole; that is to say, on the nature of the perceiving subject" (*ibid.*, pp. 546-7, original emphasis).

This line of thinking reinforces the notion that death constitutes (at least potentially) a way of experiencing things that is free from the literalistic and distorting lens of the Cartesian ego. Commenting on the symbolic principles of Eastern thanatology, Levin (1988) similarly concludes

⁴ Brann (1991) adds that the term 'inner space' does not mean an objectified essence 'inside of' the perceiving subject, but rather a quality of "internal externality", meaning "that faculty of the soul which is open to the world outside so as to represent it before, or to, the innermost thinking self" (1991, p. 587). Thus there is no question of a spurious separation of psyche and world in her understanding of imaginative space.

that death is "that moment between the ego's perceptual and conceptual fixes ... when it becomes possible to experience the presencing of beings ... it is a clearing which is good to things, good in particular to their truth, letting them be, and be seen, 'as they are'" (p. 378, emphasis added).

At this point, it is fitting to pause and acknowledge the poetic significance of death. As a space in which images can emerge in their own right, death is home to the imagination. Or, borrowing from Brann's (1991) discourse on imaginative space, it is a "psychic place of places ... an illimitable field of possible places ... an enveloping atmosphere, proper home to the figures that fill it" (p. 598). Thus Sardello (1974, p. 70), writing of death as a fundamental 'nothingness', offers the important comment that in the absence of an imagination of death, there is only a death of the imagination. As the Abyss of Being, death moreover facilitates a recollection of the authentic 'givenness' of the world, and a sense of ontological oneness with the world (cf. Jung's experience in Africa). When Jungian writers speak of the connection between death and rebirth (e.g. Jacobi, 1965; Plaut, 1984; Samuels, 1985a), it must be kept in mind that this relationship therefore cannot simply be restricted to an intrapsychic occurrence: through death, "the world acquires a new signification" (*op. cit.*), and with this comes a sense of the renewal of existence. Thus death is itself a poetic force.

The ideas advanced here find support in Hillman's unwavering project towards the deliteralisation of death. For Hillman (1979), what is meant by death is really a particular perspective that is grounded imaginally, and which is therefore attained only with the sacrifice of literalist and materialist assumptions; the death metaphor "is the most profoundly radical way of expressing this shift in consciousness" (*ibid.*, p. 66). So far as Hillman is concerned, death is thus a mode of being that is opposed to materialism, dualism and oppositionalism, all of which form barriers and defences against the presence and the reality of death (*ibid.*, p. 68ff.). In addition, he reminds us that the underworld, the abode of death, is in its mythic origins a place "where there are only psychic images" (Hillman, 1975, p. 207), and this allows us to understand death itself as a "vast receptivity" to images (Hillman, 1979, p. 53). Ultimately, Hillman too is therefore led to posit that death is a "contained space ... even if the limits are shrouded and undefined" (*ibid.*, p. 189, original emphasis). Writing from a similar perspective, Lopez-Pedraza (1989) also sees death as being the place "where the imagination has its deepest roots" (p. 94), and Ring (1980) likewise concludes that "at death ... we are released into the imagination, the creative expression of our soul" (p. 211, original emphasis).

The analysis of death as home to the imagination has led somewhat away from the traditional

concepts of analytical psychology. With the foregoing considerations in mind, we must now return to the theoretical principles of Jung's psychology that are relevant to the connection between the self and death, and investigate them in a poetic light. In particular, we may now link our inquiry into the poetics of death to two key areas - first, the idea that the development of consciousness and the emergence of the self consists of the recollection of projections, and second the role of the self in facilitating the integration of the personality.

4.1.6. Projection, recollection and symbolic life

The concept of projection was a central one for Jung, and is commonly taken to refer to a process by which 'inner' potentialities are constellated and invested in people or objects in the 'outer world' (cf. von Franz, 1980). Unlike Freud, who conceptualised of projection as a psychological defence against unwanted impulses, Jung regarded this process as an inescapable fact of psychological life and an essential feature of human relationships (e.g. Jung, 1936/54, p. 60). In the absence of projection, psychological life remains bound up in a relatively narcissistic manner (Samuels, 1985a, p. 213), and there is a sense in which Jungian theorists thus tend to think of projection as a necessary factor in the process of adapting to the 'outer' world. But as projection also means that psychical potentialities are lived out fairly unconsciously, and often compulsively (von Franz, 1980, p. 9), it is also commonly accepted that the growth of consciousness ultimately demands "the withdrawal of all the projections we can lay our hands on" (Jung, 1938/40, p. 85). This process implies a recollection of those images, both 'positive' and 'negative', both personal and archetypal, which have been bound up with things 'outside' of oneself. It follows that the self, as a state of psychical wholeness, is an ideal condition in which all projections are withdrawn (von Franz, 1980, pp. 160f.), and in these terms death itself has been conceptualised as "the conclusive ending of all projections" (*ibid.*, p. 158).

As outlined in this synopsis, projection is a useful but potentially problematic concept. The inevitable consequence of thinking of projection simply as a process by which 'inner' images become affixed to objects in the 'outer' world is an understanding of psychological life that is fundamentally dualistic and solipsistic (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 56). Moreover, the withdrawal of projections, and hence the development of consciousness, becomes implicitly but unavoidably equated with the draining of meaning from the natural world (*ibid.*). As Hillman (1973) puts it, what is meant by the process of individuation then simply amounts to "stuffing the person with subjective

soulfulness and leaving the world a slagheap from which all projections, personifications and psyche have been extracted" (p. 123). As a state of psychological wholeness, death too must then be thought of as a sequestered space, congested with images that have been 'reclaimed' from the things of the world. This thinking however accords neither with the idea of death as a poetic space, nor with Jung's understanding of the self as the non-dualistic ground of Being. It also cannot account for the ecstatic emergence of the world, exemplified by Jung's experience in Africa, as a function of non-being (cf. Chapter Three).

There are however grounds to assume that what Jung meant by projection was not a spurious leap from an 'inner' psychological realm on to an 'outer', objective world. In one essay (Jung, 1936/54, p. 59), he advanced the important but understated point that 'projection' is really the hypostatisation of imaginal existence, i.e. a process whereby metaphoric possibilities are lived out in a literal, pre-symbolic, or 'metaphysical' manner. Elsewhere, he similarly intimated that through projection one lives in a primitive state of identity with the world, so that the metaphoric is simply literalised (Jung, 1942/54, p. 245). Considered in this way, projection is also a defining feature of Western rationalism, in which the gods are met literally - even if this only takes the form of their negation - rather than symbolically (Jung, 1935/53, p. 511). As Stein (1991) comments, projections thus constitute one's "ingrained assumptions" that are lived out blindly rather than being brought into the light of reflective consciousness (p. 5). Brooke (1991, pp. 56f.) too thinks of projection as the literalisation of imaginal existence. In these terms, he argues that the 'withdrawal of projections' does not mean a simplistic shift in the locus of experience from 'out there' to 'in here', but rather points to a pivotal move in one's mode of being from iconoclastic literalism to imaginative or symbolic vision. This shift in turn constitutes the essence of psychological transformation (*ibid.*; see below). Essentially, it is only in this sense that a poetic perspective can agree that death equates with the withdrawal of projections, for this is then the same as saying that death, as the Abyss of Being, is home to the imagination (see above).

These reflections serve to reinforce the role of death in the symbolic process. On the one hand, symbolisation depends upon overcoming one's projections, so that imaginal potentialities are not treated or enacted literally. However, Gordon (1992) has pointed out that symbolic experience also implies that images which are 'reclaimed' in this way are not simply superseded in a rationalistic manner, for this too results in a negation of their metaphoric power and meaningfulness. Jung (1921) had a similar argument in mind when he wrote of the need for a 'middle way' (p. 194), in which psychological life is neither ruled by dogmatic intellect nor governed by blind instinct (*ibid.*, p. 213). The capacity for 'symbolic life' (Jung, 1939c) is thus dependent upon the emergence and

maintenance of such a 'middle position', or the 'transcendent function' (cf. Chapter Two). It may be seen from the previous section that it is precisely this function which is served by the manifestation of an imaginative space, for which death is a primary metaphor. But as will be seen in a later discussion, the capacity for imagination rests ultimately with the ego's ability to facilitate a dialectic between separation and wholeness, life and death.

4.1.7. Death, integration and psychological diversity

If death is a metaphor for the process of recollecting those potentialities which have been enacted literally and pre-symbolically, then it must also be afforded a central place in the integration and 'whole-making' of the personality that proceeds over the course of a life-time, i.e. the individuation process. For Jung, the essence of psychological growth was that it constituted:

" ... an act of self-recollection, a gathering together of what is scattered, of all the things in us that have never been properly related, and a coming to terms with oneself with a view to achieving full consciousness" (Jung, 1942/54, p. 263).

Jungian writers generally assert that the process of 'gathering' or integration involves the emergence and articulation of symbols in the life of the individual (cf. Brooke, 1991; Frey-Rohn, 1974; Gordon, 1978; Jacobi, 1965; Sandner, 1986; Samuels, 1985a; Whitmont, 1969). But it follows from the foregoing section that this depends upon an imaginative space in which images can be reclaimed from 'projected', i.e. literalised, form. As Murray (1986, pp. 88ff., 150ff.) argues, the process of integration thus seems to rest upon moments of experiential unity or oneness in which the discriminatory processes of rational consciousness are suspended, allowing the different voices of the self to be heard and claimed as meaningful metaphors. This 'claiming' - or 'appropriation' (Brooke, 1991, p. 107) - of emergent possibilities of Being is a function of the ego (see below), but the actual gathering of these meaningful possibilities is a function of the self, of death. At a later point this statement will need to be elaborated with reference to an understanding of the regressive and progressive dimensions of death, but for now the key point is that the encounter with death is fundamental to the recollection and integration of the potentialities of the psyche and thus precedes true self-awareness. This claim is supported with reference to the fact that dramatic attitudinal shifts often occur in persons who survive a life-threatening situation (see below).

This line of thought should be pushed a little further, particularly as the self is sometimes thought of as the product or goal of integration, rather than a condition of that process. The answer, of course, is that it is both, being on the one hand the mediator or 'middle way' and on the other hand the synthesis of opposites (Jung, 1936, p. 81; 1955-56, pp. 123f.). Moreover, the role of the self as a mediatory space must not be underestimated. As Jung saw it, psychological life is characterised by perpetual conflict and tension between opposites in the psyche. Indeed, the very emergence of consciousness implies a differentiation of opposites from the primordial matrix of the self, meaning that opposition is constitutional to the structure and dynamics of psychic existence (Jung, 1976a, p. 156). However, it may be agreed that the growth of consciousness demands that there also comes a point (or more correctly, many points) when one is able to disengage from this conflict so that the competing voices of the self can emerge and be integrated in conscious life; this is a basic theme of an emergent ego (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 107). The fertile disengagement from oppositional conflict seems for instance to be one of the chief psychological functions of solitude (Storr, 1988, pp. 29ff.), and of the therapeutic space that is offered in analysis (Moore, 1991, pp. 25ff.). In this regard, moments of experiential oneness and non-being may be seen to offer temporary resolution and respite from the tensions of everyday existence, a 'resting place' in which transcendent wholeness supersedes the scattered multiplicity of everyday living (cf. Murray, 1986, p. 90)⁵. The importance of such moments of unification is addressed by Jung in the following passage:

"Life that happens in and for itself is not real life; it is real only when it is known. Only a unified personality can experience life, not that personality which is split up into partial aspects, that bundle of odds and ends which also calls itself 'man'" (1944/52, p. 81, original emphasis).

Murray (1986) points out that while the need for integration tends to be more pronounced in Jung's psychology than in other models, the 'coming together' of the personality is a dominant concern underlying all ontologies of depth and all psychotherapeutic systems. He comments that:

"Professional offices are daily being visited by persons who feel themselves falling apart, at loose ends, losing their grip, overwhelmed by life and its demands. Under such circumstances they come for help to put it all together, to gain or regain their

⁵ In this regard, we may recall Jung's description of his sanctuary at Bollingen as a space in which "the torment of creation is lessened" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 253).

hold on things, to manage at least some glimpse of the forest amid the trees of their life. However they may phrase it, their aim is quite clear: to effect some meaningful synthesis amid the pain, turmoil, or chaos of their life. Presumably the professional will enable this to take place. Somehow it is necessary that we experience a unity of sorts, however tenuous, before we can hope to love in a relatively selfless way or before we can hope to dedicate ourselves consistently over a period of time to tasks whose realisation yields that joy which genuine accomplishment can certainly generate for the person ... Thus the concern of the psychologist (and the client and the family) with the human's personal integration ... It cannot be taken cavalierly by the professional, for it is certainly taken quite seriously by the client. To move toward some unity, some feeling of self-possession in one's world, some confidence and experience that one can and is holding one's own in life, at life tasks, in carrying out responsibilities, in making a mark on the world in some small way, is paramount" (pp. 89-90).

Despite these considerations, critics and revisionists of Jung have expressed strong reservations concerning the emphasis afforded to integration and to the self in his psychology (cf. Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1980; Samuels, 1983; 1985a). Hillman (1975, 1981) is particularly vociferous about the monistic bias in analytical psychology, arguing that the emphasis on union and integration leaves little room for an appreciation of the inherent, and meaningful, diversity of psychological life. For Hillman, monism is not the supreme goal of psychic existence, but simply an archetypal fantasy that has found dominant expression in the Judeo-Christian world-view, and in Jung's theory of individuation. What he calls for is nothing less than a radical deconstruction of the notion of the self in favour of a poetic reclaiming of Hellenic polycentricity. Aligned also with this position, Lopez-Pedraza (1971) voices concern over what often appears to amount to an almost obsessive emphasis on symbols of wholeness in analytical training, so that the significance of other psychic images tends to be overlooked.

These concerns touch on theoretical issues which cannot be adequately dealt with in the present context. We must be cautious not to set up spurious points of connection between different paradigms in analytical psychology, but the point has been made that there is a place for experiences of union and oneness even within a polycentric perspective (Samuels, 1985a, p. 107). For while Hillman's view of psychological development is more concerned with "deepening what is there into itself" (Hillman, 1981, p. 114) than with the emergence of a new product (the self), even he is forced to concede that his project is really aimed at "disintegrated integration" (Hillman,

1975, p. 35) - i.e. at integrating each image according to its own merits. But it may be clear from the above deliberations that this process of 'deepening' depends fundamentally upon moments of integrated wholeness. Thus diversity and integration need not be set up as opposing principles, a point which Lopez-Pedraza (1971) makes in commenting that "the many contains the unity of the one without losing the possibilities of the many" (p. 214). Almost in passing, Jung (1944/52) reached a similar position in describing the manifestation of the self as "drawing the 'many' together for a united variety performance" (p. 81).

Ultimately, what must be borne in mind is that experiences of unification are - and must be - transient, for continued growth and development requires tension between opposites (Storr, 1989, p. 197). As Jacobi (1965) writes, "to linger in a *unio mystica*, as it were 'egoless' ... means the loss of an ever-renewed dialectical discussion between the ego and self" (p. 57). Therefore any integrated state must be seen to constitute not a final goal in itself but a temporary space for gathering and reflection and, in an important sense, the beginning of a new cycle of deintegration and reintegration; as Sandner (1986) sees it, one mandala must collapse so that another might be formed. This argument delivers a radical challenge to the idea that death offers a final state of perfection, and shows again the deficiencies of a Romantic stance towards death. It is also reinforced in Jung's classical statement that, so far as individuation is concerned, "the goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the *opus* which leads to the goal: that is the goal of a lifetime" (Jung, 1946, p. 200, original emphasis).

What these deliberations indicate for analytical psychology is a need to balance an emphasis on the self as the goal of individuation with an appreciation of its capacity throughout life to contain ambiguity and diversity. In recent years, Jungian theorists have in fact come to think of the self as a transitional realm in which transformative experiences take place (e.g. Hall, 1991; Redfearn, 1986; Sandner, 1986; Savitz, 1990; Stein, 1983). This touches on Winnicott's idea of a transitional space, a 'resting place' in which the tension between reality and phantasy is resolved (Winnicott, 1965; 1971), and it places us in that realm which numerous writers have described in terms of the concept of liminality (e.g. Cwik, 1991; Hall, 1991; Homans, 1979; Savitz, 1990; Stein, 1983). Popularised by van Gennep's (1960) and Turner's (1974) studies of initiation rites and cultural change, liminality refers to a transitional stage in the movement from one role or status to another one, i.e. a position of being 'betwixt and between'. Clinically, liminality pertains to situations in which the customary boundaries and structures of personal identity shift or give way.

As Stein (1983) describes it:

"In liminality the "I's" standpoint is not fixed, and it occupies no clearly defined psychological location. It floats; it is not sharply delineated as 'this' and 'not that'; boundaries between 'I' and 'not-I' blur ... The ego is a has-been and a not-yet ... The 'I' is not anchored to any particular inner images, ideas, or feelings" (pp. 9-10).

It may be noted that there is a close correspondence between this description of liminality and Gordon's definition of death as a state of non-being (see above). It is thus not surprising to find that liminal experiences, both personal and cultural, are typically expressed and symbolised by "archetypal patterns of death and transformation, death and rebirth, or death and resurrection" (Hall, 1991, p. 44). The connection between the self, death and liminality is further amplified if we understand that in the liminal realm we are essentially dealing with a facet of the psychological world which Redfearn (1986) has referred to as "the protective and protected parts of the self where transformative experiences can be rehearsed and resolved symbolically" (p. 251). Moore (1991, p. 30) similarly thinks of liminality in terms of an 'inner space' of transformation and healing that is dominated by the potentials of the self. Gordon (1992) too writes of a space in which psychical images can be meaningfully reclaimed so that they "enrich the inner world ... restore a sense of the wondrous, the awesome, the miraculous, the mysterious, the poetic, and so enhance the sense of being truly and meaningfully alive" (pp. 292-3).

Yet again, we are however reminded that death manifests as a polarity. The liminal realm, Savitz (1990) comments, may be a transcendent space in which the physical world is transformed into a place of wonder and multiple meanings, representing a mature awakening to depth and ambiguity. But on the other hand, it may emerge as "a burning cauldron" of fragmentation and destruction (*ibid.*, p. 49). With this comment, we are led to consider in closer detail a theme that has thus far been essentially implicit in this chapter, namely the place of the ego in the death experience. This is best undertaken in the context of an elucidation of the individuation process and the role of the death instinct therein.

4.2. Individuation and the Death Instinct

The emphasis of this chapter thus far has been on understanding the poetic parameters of death

as a state of wholeness and non-being, but it must be recalled that as Jung conceptualised it, the self is not only the totality of the psyche but also an existential centre which orchestrates the unfolding and development of personality throughout the course of life. So far as this function of the self is concerned, the emphasis of our discussion must now shift firstly to an appreciation of death as a poetic calling that constitutes a central theme of the individuation process, and secondly to the vital significance of the ego in articulating this calling into an ethical response to the problem of modern existence. Characteristically, however, Jung's writings regarding the individuation process are diverse and at times ambiguous, and it is therefore necessary at the outset to clarify the major issues surrounding this concept⁶.

4.2.1. The concept of individuation

The editors of the Collected Works (Volume Six) comment that the equivalence of the self with the totality of the psyche means that:

" ... every individual, by virtue of having, or being, a psyche, is potentially the self. It is only a question of 'realizing' it. But the realisation, if ever achieved, is the work of a lifetime" (p. 460n).

In Jung's writings, this life-long quest constitutes the *opus* of individuation, and it encompasses two related tasks. In the first instance, individuation requires differentiation from collective ideals, so that one comes to function as an autonomous individual distinct from the anonymous crowd of mass society. Jung (1944/52) stated the need for this aspect of individuation as follows:

"Natural man is not a 'self' - he is the mass and a particle in the mass, collective to such a degree that he is not even sure of his own ego. That is why since time immemorial he has needed the transformation mysteries to turn him into something,

⁶ As the present discussion is limited in scope, a number of themes will be briefly introduced that are in themselves worthy of lengthy discussion and debate, and the reader is accordingly referred to the contributions by F. Fordham (1969), Goldbrunner (1955), Jacobi (1965), and Samuels (1985a), all of whom provide more extensive overviews of individuation. Informative appraisals of Jung's theory are also provided by Brooke (1991), Clarke (1992), Holt (1992), Jacoby (1990), and Lambert (1981).

and to rescue him from the animal collective psyche, which is nothing but a *variete*" (p. 81).

In Psychological Types, he thus defined individuation as:

" ... the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated ... the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology. Individuation, therefore, is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality" (Jung, 1921, p. 448, original emphasis).

Stated simply but accurately, this implies a demand to 'be oneself!' (cf. Clarke, 1992, p. 158). However, the goal of 'individuality' must not be confused with a narrow course of 'individualism', which implies a deliberate or unconscious opposition to the norms of society (cf. Jung, 1921, p. 448). Nor does individuation mean the pursuit of isolation at the expense of meaningful engagement with the world, i.e. an essentially narcissistic endeavour whereby one's own needs and desires always take precedence over those of others. To think otherwise is to confuse the needs of the self with those of the personal ego; as an example, the person who simply abandons his or her family in order to pursue a personal whim is certainly not answering the calling of individuation. Rather, individuation entails a process whereby one achieves a definite sense of one's uniqueness and inevitable separateness on the one hand, while maintaining a meaningful relationship to the world of objective interests on the other hand (cf. Homans, 1979, p. 103). In short, the path of individuation involves the making of authentic, ethical, and autonomous decisions.

The second meaning of individuation has already received attention. It pertains to the integration of disparate parts of the personality, which leads to a growing emergence of the self in conscious life. This process proceeds by way of a dialectical engagement of opposites (Jung, 1944/52, p. 4) and, as we have seen, it is also orchestrated by the self, which serves both as the mediator and as the ultimate goal of the individuation process. Let us again note that a meaningful synthesis of parts can however only come about when opposites have indeed emerged; thus the initial demand of individuation centres around the differentiation of the ego from the matrix of the primitive self (Gordon, 1968).

It must be noted that the two aspects of individuation described above are essentially complementary, and they co-exist throughout Jung's works (cf. F. Fordham, 1969). Awareness

of oneself as distinct from the collective mass is a necessary prerequisite for the conscious integration of the 'inner' potentials of the psyche, and conversely coming to terms with formerly unconscious forces that shape one's personal destiny inevitably enhances a sense of individual responsibility and autonomy. On the other hand, frustration of the need for individuation perpetuates the characteristically modern problems of alienation and mass-mindedness, a concern which Jung emphasised in The Undiscovered Self (Jung, 1958/82).

4.2.2. Individuation as a calling

There is some ambiguity in Jungian theory as to the question of whether individuation is a natural and inevitable process, or a specific vocation that demands particular talents. On the one hand, Jung (1921, p. 449) maintained that individuation cannot proceed unless one has successfully adjusted to the demands of culture and society, and unless there is a combination of ego strength and flexibility so that unconscious material can be integrated without the integrity of the ego being compromised. In this light, he asserted that individuation is only for those "who can consciously assent to the power of the inner voice" (Jung, 1934b, p. 180). On the other hand, he also wrote of individuation as an innate and natural process of development which "means no more than that the acorn becomes an oak, the calf a cow, and the child an adult" (Jung, 1952, p. 468). In the latter sense, the maturation of the personality is essentially a given, and may even pursue its course "without the knowledge or assistance of the individual" (Jung, 1917/43, p. 108). Elsewhere, Jung (1950) similarly stated that individuation involves an "almost irresistible urge to become what one is, just as every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of its nature, no matter what the circumstances" (p. 357). Jaffe (1971a) has argued that in this form of individuation "the archetype of the self reaches its goal ... even if the world of the unconscious remains in darkness and not a single archetypal image is seen, let alone understood in all its implications" (p. 80). These comments lead us to the conclusion that the analytic process, a sequence of dreams, or even a psychosis may be seen as part of the process of individuation (F. Fordham, 1969, p. 111; cf. Saayman, 1984).

The apparent discrepancy in these formulations is resolved if we understand that individuation is a "universal law of life" (Jacobi, 1965, p. 60) which may either pursue its course 'silently' and without the active participation of the ego, or which may assume the proportion of a calling which is consciously experienced and acceded to. In both forms the self is the orchestrating force which

strives for realisation, but whereas in the 'natural' form of individuation its unfolding proceeds in a largely unconscious manner, in the latter case the ego participates actively in the process of maturation and is transformed as a result (*ibid.*, pp. 15ff.). Jung (1952) stated it as follows:

"The difference between the 'natural' individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realised, is tremendous. In the first case consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness gains in scope and insight" (p. 468).

The issue therefore comes down to the realisation that the propensity towards individuation is innate, but the extent to which this translates into meaningful growth depends in the final analysis upon the volition and capacity of the ego. Not only is a combination of strength and flexibility required (Gordon, 1992), but there must be an openness to participation in the transformative process, which is often painful and frightening. This will be clarified when we come to discuss the need for sacrifice as a path to conscious maturation.

The key point to emerge from this discussion is that the self strives for manifestation irrespective of the ambitions of the ego, and this translates into a movement (conscious or unconscious) towards wholeness and integration. As Jung (1952) stated:

"Whatever man's wholeness, or the self, may mean *per se*, empirically it is an image of the goal of life spontaneously produced by the unconscious, irrespective of the wishes and fears of the conscious mind. It stands for the goal of the total man, for the realisation of his wholeness and individuality with or without the consent of his will. The dynamic of this process is instinct, which ensures that everything which belongs to an individual's life shall enter into it, whether he consents or not, or is conscious of what is happening to him or not" (p. 459).

Given that the quest for wholeness is ultimately a calling to death (cf. Chapter Three), it seems feasible in this light to speak of a Jungian equivalent to the 'death instinct', referring to an innate propensity towards wholeness and non-being that is located in the functions of the self. Theoretically, the vicissitudes of individuation may then be related to the manifestation of this force and the corresponding response of the ego to its demands. While Jung's approach to death was fundamentally teleological (cf. Chapter Two), he however refuted the notion of a death instinct, and

it is necessary to account for his concerns before considering the possible application of this concept to his theory of individuation. It is pertinent to proceed by way of a brief overview of the death instinct in psychoanalytic theory.

4.2.3. Freud and the death instinct

Any attempt to postulate the idea of an innate propensity towards death must take account of the work of Freud and his theory of the death instinct, Thanatos. For a more thorough treatment of this issue than is possible in the present context, the reader is referred to Norman O. Brown's Life Against Death (1959/85) and Richard Boothby's Death and Desire (1991), both of which offer a penetrating analysis of the development and philosophical implications of Freud's theory.

The theory of an instinctual drive towards death (*der Todestrieb*) is arguably the most daring and enigmatic element in the psychoanalytic corpus (Laplanche, 1976, p. 106). It was introduced in Freud's writings in his renowned essay of 1920, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (Freud, 1920), but it is evident that the massive destruction of World War I had forced him to contemplate the place of death and aggression in human existence some time before this (e.g. Freud, 1915). As Freud described it, the death instinct is aimed at a reduction of tension in the psychic apparatus, and is thus oriented towards an ideal state of quiescent equilibrium; this urge attains ultimate expression in the phantasy of returning to the mother's womb (cf. Chapter Three). Precursors to the idea that all life seeks its own dissolution were evident in Freud's work prior to 1920 (cf. Boothby, 1991, pp. 2ff.), and this line of thinking had found its most articulate expression in his hypothesis of a 'pleasure principle', a term used to indicate that the psychic system operated so as to release tension and avoid pain (Freud, 1920, pp. 8ff.). However, this somewhat simplistic model raised a number of theoretical problems, and the theory of the death instinct offered a resolution to these. First, the pleasure principle alone could not account for the compulsion to repeat traumatic experiences, as shown for instance in the repetitive games of children and in the recurrent nightmares experienced by war veterans suffering from combat related stress. Second, it failed to provide an understanding of the dynamics of masochism, in which the pursuit of pleasure and pain evidently merge. Third, it could not explain so-called 'negative therapeutic reactions', referring to the tendency for neurotic patients to obstruct treatment by re-creating their most painful losses in the analytic process (Freud, 1937, pp. 243f.; cf. Boothby, 1991, pp. 2ff.). Accordingly, Freud saw the death instinct as an hypothesis that proceeded 'beyond the pleasure principle' by postulating

an instinctual drive centering around destructive and aggressive impulses, which operates alongside and in opposition to the innate drive for life (Eros). Masochism, repetition compulsion and negative therapeutic reactions could now be accounted for in terms of the vicissitudes of the death instinct. From 1920 onwards, the vision of instinctual dualism remained central in Freud's thinking; as he stated in one paper, "only by the concurrent or mutually opposing action of the two primal instincts - Eros and the death instinct ... can we explain the rich multiplicity of the phenomenon of life" (Freud, 1937, p. 243).

Despite the centrality of the concept of Thanatos in Freud's thinking, it has found relatively little favour among his followers (Boothby, 1991, p. 7). For the most part, criticisms centre around the idea that the death instinct represents the most speculative of Freud's theories, and thus lacks 'scientific' respectability and validity (*ibid.*). Boothby comments that there is however an important sense in which it is more the nature of the concept that has proved offensive rather than its academic merits: "the idea that every organism is destined to die for internal reasons, that death and destruction are the aims of a basic principle, perhaps the most basic principle of all life, violated the canons of common sense and religious belief even more than it offended scientific rationality" (*ibid.*, p. 8). In a similar vein, Pontalis (1978) has gone so far as to suggest that the often maligned emphasis on sexuality (Eros) in psychoanalytic thinking may sometimes serve to "cover up" the even more maligned theme of death (p. 86).

The rejection of Freud's theory of Thanatos may therefore be related at least partly to the concealment of death in the history of academic psychology (cf. Chapter One). However, it is also of great significance that Freud made a fateful and unfortunate turn towards biology in support of his thinking, so that Thanatos was ultimately envisioned as the propensity for organic matter to aim at its own literal dissolution - thus leading to an overly pessimistic view of human nature (cf. Balint, 1955; Boothby, 1991; Brown, 1959/1985; Gordon, 1961; Laplanche, 1976). In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, for instance, Freud asserted that "it would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of instincts if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained", and thus concluded the death instinct has as its goal a return to 'dead', inanimate matter (Freud, 1920, p. 38). In this context, his claim that "the aim of all life is death" (*ibid.*) was bound to elicit strong opposition even from within his own ranks, let alone from those of his critics. Brown (1959/85) and Boothby (1991) have consequently proposed a significant 'revisioning' of the meaning of the death instinct, and have argued that there is a need to move away from literal assumptions regarding the goal of Thanatos. Brown associates the death instinct with religious aspirations towards wholeness and transcendence, while Boothby's project revolves around a Lacanian

interpretation of Thanatos as a force aiming at the 'deconstruction' of the literalist ego. Contemporary Jungians may find striking similarities between the direction of such thinking and the ideas that will be developed below.

4.2.4. The death instinct: A poetic view

Jung distanced himself from Freud's theory of the death instinct, ostensibly because of its reductionistic and pessimistic undertones as a biological imperative. For instance, he wrote of Freud's concept that:

"It was a concession to intellectual logic on the one hand and to psychological prejudice on the other that impelled Freud to name the opposite of Eros the destructive or death instinct. For in the first place, Eros is not equivalent to life; but for anyone who thinks it is, the opposite of Eros will naturally appear to be death. And in the second place, we all feel that the opposite of our own highest principle must be purely destructive, deadly, and evil. We refuse to endow it with any positive life-force; hence we avoid and fear it" (Jung, 1917/43, p. 53).

Jung did not attempt to recast the theory of Thanatos in his own writings. However, his teleological appreciation of the self and of death nonetheless seems to resonate with the notion of an innate propensity towards non-being. In his essay on 'The Soul and Death' (Jung, 1934a), for example, there is a passage in which Jung's thinking seems remarkably similar to Freud's early understanding of the goal of Thanatos:

"Life is an energy-process. Like every energy-process, it is in principle irreversible and is therefore directed towards a goal. That goal is a state of rest. In the long run everything that happens is, as it were, no more than the initial disturbance of a perpetual state of rest which forever attempts to re-establish itself" (pp. 405-406).

In *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung, 1912/52), he had similarly come very close to the idea of a death instinct. There, he posited that "libido fights against libido, instinct against instinct" (*ibid.*,

p. 260), and he explained that:

"It is as if the libido were not only a ceaseless forward movement, an unending will for life, evolution, creation ... where death is a mishap or fatality coming from outside ... the libido also wills its own descent, its own involution" (*ibid.*, p. 438, emphasis added).

In the previous chapter, it has been noted that Jung saw the 'descent' of the libido as a regressive 'return' to its primordial origins, and this led to the assumption that there is a fundamental tension in the psyche between the need for ego separation and development on the one hand, and an innate longing for fusion and synthesis on the other hand. However, Jung stopped short of recasting this formulation into a theory of life and death instincts, and there is in fact a common perception that his theory of libido is, in contrast to Freud's thinking, essentially monistic (cf. Gordon, 1961). Nonetheless, the idea of an innate propensity towards death has been advanced by a number of contemporary Jungian writers (e.g. Gordon, 1961; 1978; Mudd, 1990; Samuels, 1985a; Shoham, 1990; Wheeley, 1992). Commonly, they offer an understanding of Thanatos as a force that emerges from the self and that is oriented on the one hand towards a re-connection with one's primal origins, and on the other hand towards the transcendence of the finite ego, i.e. a state of wholeness brought about by a union of opposites. This move finds its most systematic expression in the work of Gordon (1961; 1978), who identifies two opposing forces in the psyche. On the one hand, she writes of a drive for separation and differentiation that is located in the functions of the ego. On the other hand, she postulates a propensity towards death and non-being that is in the service of the self. In these terms, Gordon (1961) defines the death instinct as "the valence of the self, that is, its attractive force" (p. 125, emphasis added) or, put differently:

" ... a distinctive drive towards wholeness, be this accomplished through fusion, through projective identification or through ordering, synthesising, regression or progression" (Gordon, 1978, p. 33).

Samuels (1985) similarly argues that "the self, manifested in 'death-instinct' form, has to do with experiences of merger, fusion, oneness" (p. 99), and Mudd (1990), too, thinks of the impulse towards death as being located in the functions of the self.

It is possible that Jungian writers are more amenable to speaking of a death instinct than is the case with psychoanalytic theorists because the notion of psychical reality, which grounds their

theorising, makes it clear that we are not dealing with a desire for literal, biological death but with the need to connect with something that is felt to be greater than oneself. Approached from this perspective, Thanatos becomes not a reductionistic but a poetic concept. For if death is conceptualised as an imaginative or poetic space (as defined above), then the death instinct must similarly be seen as a vital tendency towards the awakening of imaginative vision and the winning of mature consciousness. In this way, we are led to a view of the death instinct as a poetic calling. To use Demske's (1970) words, the propensity towards death is "a force which calls one, gathers oneself together, and provides an orientation toward that which gives meaning to existence" (p. 166). In these terms, the calling of death, or the death instinct, is the existential pivot of individuation. It must however be recognised that at other times the death instinct may serve as a regressive force which is inimical to separation and development (Gordon, 1961), as we have witnessed in the analysis of death as a formative influence in Jung's life (cf. Chapter Three). Theoretically, it therefore may be anticipated that the tension between the 'regressive' and the 'progressive' dimensions of the death instinct will emerge as a key dynamic in the course of individuation. This may be elucidated with reference to an understanding of the relationship between the ego and the death instinct.

4.2.5. The ego and the death instinct

It is pertinent at this juncture to recall that the self, as it is conceptualised in Jungian theory, refers to (a) a 'uroboric' state of primordial chaos and non-differentiation; and (b) a state of evolved or transcendent wholeness referring to the conscious fulfilment of psychical potentials. It follows that the death instinct manifests as an ambivalent potentiality, oriented on the one hand towards a regressive state of primitive fusion and on the other hand towards a 'higher' synthesis of opposites in the form of the transcendent self. In practice, a neat distinction between these potentials cannot be maintained because a progression to wholeness always implies a degree of regression to origins (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 111; Washburn, 1990, p. 7), but for present purposes it is useful to consider them as separate movements in the process of transformation. In this regard, Gordon (1961) suggests that the actualisation of either the regressive or the progressive dimensions of the death instinct depends upon the dynamic tension between the ego and the self at any given moment. She thinks of this tension as involving a 'wholeness-separateness' axis: when there is a lack of differentiation between the ego and the self or when the ego is constitutionally vulnerable, as in the infant and in the psychotic patient, the death instinct may manifest as a regressive force which

precipitates or maintains a condition of primitive chaos and fusion; but when the ego is differentiated from the self, and when it is sufficiently strong, the death instinct may operate as a creative calling towards wholeness and transcendence, as for example in the artist and in the mystic. Gordon points out that this model may also account for differing attitudes towards the experiential presence of death:

" ... a person who has invested his emotions in the experience of separateness and identity, that is, in the ego and its functions - such as sensations, reason, reality testing, and personal achievement - such a person will regard death as the enemy - the thief, the raper, the ruthless destroyer; for death will take from him all that he values. But the person whose needs are primarily directed towards synthesis and wholeness and towards lessening tensions may look on death as a liberator, a lover, a bringer of peace" (*ibid.*, p. 124).

A number of important considerations emerge from this model, and for our purposes these may be elucidated with reference to the concept of the ego-self axis. Initially advanced by Neumann (1959; 1973), this concept refers to the vital relationship between the self as the guiding or directive centre of the psyche and the ego as the centre of consciousness:

"The ego-self axis is the centre of a complex of parallel and opposing processes which take place between the directing totality centre on the one hand, and consciousness and the ego centre on the other ... We speak of the ego-self axis because the psychic development and processes that take place between the corresponding centres of the ego and self are such that the two centres and systems sometimes move away from, and sometimes toward each other" (Neumann, 1973, pp. 45, 47).

The ego-self axis therefore represents a constantly shifting fulcrum of psychological life. The concept has been elaborated by Edinger (1960; 1972), who identifies three positions of ego-self relatedness, namely (a) identity, (b) alienation, and (c) separation. A brief consideration of the different needs and tensions applying to these positions is useful in understanding the implications of the death instinct in psychological life.

Ego-self alienation refers to a state in which the ego is 'detached' from the self; the part is disconnected from the whole. This means that the ego loses its vital grounding in the self, so that

the ego-self axis - i.e. the vital connection to the imaginal ground of Being - is damaged. This leads in turn to a 'death of the imagination' (cf. Sardello, 1974), i.e. an impairment of the symbolic process, with the result that conscious existence is dogged by literalistic assumptions about oneself and the world. Existence then becomes characterised by a sense of meaninglessness. Damage to the ego-self axis may occur when the unconscious is resisted or denied because of an exaggerated heroism on the part of the ego, but it often has its roots in adverse environmental conditions during early childhood. In particular, Edinger claims, ego-self alienation may come about because of non-acceptance of parts of the child's personality by the parents. Patients with this history are often surprised to discover in treatment that the therapist accepts them unconditionally, and this contributes towards restoration of the relationship between the ego and the self (Edinger, 1972, p. 40). However, it is a key recognition of Jungian thought that alienation is also a potentially healing experience; it may invite (or perhaps force) meaningful self-reflection and this in turn opens the way to a restoration of the ego-self axis. Accordingly, alienation emerges as a classical archetypal feature of religious experience and psychotherapy alike (Brooke, 1991; Edinger, 1972).

Ego-self identity refers to a state in which there is a lack of differentiated boundaries between the ego and the self, reality and phantasy. This implies a condition of primitive *participation mystique*, in which the ego is simply absorbed in a uroboric union with the collective psyche (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 141, 327; cf. Edinger, 1960; 1972; Neumann, 1954). As previously indicated, this state is also equivalent to death in its 'negative' or regressive form. It must however be noted that in practice complete ego-self identification is rarely if ever encountered - perhaps save for the extremes of biological birth and death - and we are typically dealing with a relative condition which Edinger (1972, p. 7) terms 'residual ego-self identity'. A variation of ego-self identification occurs when the ego arrogates to itself the qualities of the self, resulting in a condition of extreme narcissism characterised by an infantile-omnipotent hubris of consciousness (*ibid.*, pp. 7ff.). Something of this quality of existence is captured in the metaphor of Faust (cf. Chapter Three).

The term ego-self separation is potentially misleading, for it does not imply an estrangement or distancing from the self (as in ego-self alienation) but rather a condition in which the self is encountered and incarnated as a conscious, living reality. This means that the ego-self axis operates as a dynamic and directive force, so that ideally one is aware of the self as an 'inner voice' and guiding principle. In terms of the considerations outlined above, it may be argued that the self then manifests in conscious life as a poetic or imaginative space conducive to gathering and integration. Ego-self separation thus implies a mature capacity to dwell in proximity to death while maintaining a sense of personal autonomy; it is a mode of being which facilitates a regenerative

meeting with the elemental forces of existence and an awakening of authentic Being through the death experience.

The positions of ego-self relatedness described above are not static and unchanging, and there is a constant flux between them. For as previously noted, individuation involves recurrent processes of differentiation, in the service of the ego, and reintegration, in the service of the self (Edinger, 1972; Lambert, 1981; Samuels, 1985a). In these terms, states of evolved wholeness represent the synthetic product of a dialectic between alienation and inflation/ identification (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 19). Ideally, there will be a progressive movement towards increasing awareness of the self, i.e. an emergence of the ego-self axis, over the course of a life-time. A useful metaphor is to consider individuation as a spiral process (rather than a linear one) in which there is a cyclical repetition of tasks and conflicts but, when viewed over a long period of time, progressive movement and development (cf. Brooke, 1991; Edinger, 1972).

Consistent with Gordon's (1961) hypothesis of a 'wholeness-separateness' axis as outlined above, Edinger's model suggests that whether the death instinct acts as a regressive force or as one oriented towards a creative evolution of wholeness ultimately depends upon the position of the ego relative to the self or, more broadly, the relationship between ego-consciousness and the unconscious. Under conditions of ego-self identification, the death instinct will operate regressively, for what is actually required if consciousness is to develop is a process of heroic separation and differentiation, as outlined in Chapter Three. On the other hand, the death instinct may be envisioned as a poetic force oriented towards transformation and the recovery of meaning when psychological life is characterised by a sense of discord and alienation. Here the death instinct may be envisioned as the voice of Being, a calling to incarnate the self as a poetic and hospitable space within which habitual patterns can be re-evaluated in a symbolic light and the scattered parts of one's personality integrated into a meaningful whole. For the modern person, this calling, which if not heard is likely to issue in symptoms commonly associated with alienation (depression, despair, suicidal inclinations, etc.), may assume the significance of a force that is oriented towards healing and towards the recollection of Being in a rationalistic and profane world (cf. Edinger, 1972, pp. 7ff.).

As previously noted, the voice of the self - or in the present context, the death instinct - emerges both from 'within' and from the world, but in modern existence this calling tends to be obscured by the agitating noise of the anonymous crowd and the distraction of technology (cf. Damske, 1970; Romanyshyn, 1989; Storr, 1988). With reference to Jung's mid-life *nekyia* (cf. Chapter

Three), we have also seen that the calling of death under these conditions is ultimately bound up with the need for a sacrifice of the heroic, rationalistic ego, a theme that is pursued in the following section. Commonly, the death instinct may then issue as the voice of conscience or guilt - recall Jung's dream of the slaying of Siegfried and his guilt when reading the myth of Faust - but it may be argued that this force sometimes emerges in more subtle ways. For instance, a patient once complained that chronic tiredness was preventing her from keeping to the demanding work schedule which she had set for herself. In the course of our session the understanding came to her that instead of being an irritation that impeded her progress, her tiredness was really an invitation to disengage from a compulsive need for achievement; it called her away from a Masculine world of competitive drives and ambitions and towards a quieter, Feminine space of solitude and regeneration. The tiredness that she embodied seemed to be a benevolent manifestation of the death instinct, operating so as to bring about a necessary balance in her pattern of existence. Support for this line of reasoning comes from Samuels (1985a), who contends that "a combination of psychoanalytic and analytical psychological approaches suggests that the death instinct has a purpose; namely to act as a necessary antidote to the pain and anxiety resulting from rupture and separation so that, in the peace and quiet of an integrated state of oneness, the boilers of creativity can be restoked" (p. 99). On the other hand, Freud has shown us that the death instinct may also erupt in negative symptoms such as masochism, sadism, and overt destruction (see above). Or as Hillman (1979) puts it:

"Rather than die to metaphor, we kill literally; refusing the need to die, we attack death itself. Our civilisation, with its heroic monuments, tributes to victory over death, ennobles the Herculean ego, who does not know how to behave in the underworld" (p. 110).

This recognition makes the task of a recollection of death all the more necessary, and this means coming to terms with the death instinct in such a way that it emerges as a creative rather than a destructive force. In the following section, it is argued that this task equates with the capacity for sacrifice.

4.3. The Poetics and Tasks of Dying

The previous section has advanced an understanding of the death instinct as a poetic calling, but

it is important to recognise that the vital correlate of this calling is, as Leman-Stefanovic (1987) puts it, a comportment of "proper hearing" (p. 75, emphasis added). What this means is that for the potentialities of death to be realised there must be a corresponding attitude on the part of ego-consciousness that is receptive and hospitable to the emergence of the self. Avens (1980) appears to capture the essence of this argument in writing that:

"We can get to the specifically and ontologically human, the 'no-thing' at the centre of our being, only by moving through the poetic mode and by using poetic tools. Only the poet in us is tuned to our essential 'no-thing-ness" (pp. 33-4).

Such a stance or attitude on the part of the ego has been expressed by a variety of metaphors, but the common theme is one of a mature and ethical hospitality to and reverence for the emergence of Being. Jung, as we have seen, identified at a personal level with the figure of Philemon (cf. Chapter Three). For Heidegger (1936), it was the metaphor of the poet that expressed the need for hospitality or *Gelassenheit* ('letting be' or 'awaiting'). Hillman (1979) conceptualises of psyche itself as a metaphor for receptiveness to imaginal depth. Levin (1988) thinks of '*Bardo* vision' - the vision of death - as a non-dualistic alternative to 'everyday seeing', which refers to the discriminating perspective of the Cartesian ego. Commonly, these diverse terminologies all introduce the need for a mode of being that is grounded in a radical relativisation of the heroic, imperialistic ego. In terms of Jung's theory of individuation, we are dealing here with the issue of how a meaningful dialectic between conscious and unconscious, or between ego and self, may be effected. A motif which both draws together the various metaphors mentioned above, and which returns Jung's theoretical considerations to their imaginative origins, is that of sacrifice. It represents the culmination of a mature injunction to answer to the calling of death (the death instinct), and for our purposes it may be described as the poetic correlate to the process of dying.

4.3.1. Dying and the meaning of sacrifice

If death is a state of wholeness and non-being equivalent to the self then, as Gordon (1961, p. 120) points out, dying may be thought of as a necessary process that leads to, or is oriented towards, this state (cf. Singer, 1990, p. xxi). Again, this a poetic formulation: it avoids a rationalistic separation of life and death, living and dying. Dying is therefore not simply restricted to its literal denotations but refers to any process involving the surrender or loss of one's customary ego-

identity, or part thereof, in favour of emergent wholeness. Essentially, we are dealing here with a task that must be repeated throughout the course of individuation. It is a task which may be resisted, or it may occur in a relatively unconscious manner, so that little of the meaning of dying is actually made conscious. On the other hand, the process of dying may be articulated as a conscious and purposeful response to the calling of the self, in which case it assumes the archetypal significance of a sacrifice. As Mogenson (1991) comments, "for an event to be called a sacrifice, it must also restore a sense of sacredness to life. Somehow, the renunciation must make life richer" (p. 47). In these terms, sacrifice constitutes the poetic meaning of the process of dying. In the final analysis all people die, but in the context of modern Western culture few can be said to translate this process into one of meaningful sacrifice. Put another way, the difference between the 'natural' form of individuation and the conscious evolution of this process (see above) may be the capacity to translate dying into sacrifice.

For the most part, Jung's comments on dying tend to be limited to its implications as an event at the end of life (cf. Chapter Two). However, his appreciation of the existential significance of sacrifice is fundamentally poetic. In his major essay, 'Transformation Symbolism in the Mass' (Jung, 1940/54), he described sacrifice as a process of surrendering oneself to something that is felt to be 'higher' or 'beyond' oneself; in the ritual of offering a sacrificial gift, as in the Catholic Mass, the participant is symbolically "giving himself up" (p. 257, original emphasis). As he understood it, this represents the surrender of the ego to the self, so that "a more compendious personality ... [can] emerge in the course of development and take the ego into its service" (*ibid.*, p. 258). Jung emphasised, however, that sacrifice constitutes a meaningful undertaking only when there is a conscious awareness of the process. Indeed, he noted that whereas unconscious sacrifice is like participating in the ritual of Mass without reflecting on its meaning, a conscious and deliberate renunciation of egocentricity is akin to Abraham's sacrifice of his son or Christ's decision in Gethsemane; "the one may be felt very earnestly and experienced with all piety, but the other is the real thing" (*ibid.*, p. 261). Or it may be said: the one is dying, the other is a sacrifice.

It is worth noting that the precise nature and significance of sacrifice depends to an important degree on the state of ego-self relatedness. Under conditions of ego-self identification, it clearly cannot be said that the task of sacrifice is that of surrender to the self. As has been repeatedly stated, what is needed in this context is separation from the Mother, the primordial unconscious. Accordingly, the sacrifice that must be made involves the renunciation of regressive desires, i.e. a 'work against death' (cf. Chapter Three). This means abandoning the paradise of unconscious

childhood and acceding to the demands of life. In 'The Stages of Life', Jung (1930/31) wrote that:

"Every problem ... brings the possibility of a widening of consciousness, but also the necessity of saying goodbye to childlike unconsciousness ... This necessity is a psychic fact of such importance that it constitutes one of the most essential symbolic teachings of the Christian religion. It is the sacrifice of the merely natural man, of the unconscious, ingenious being whose tragic career began with the eating of the apple in Paradise" (p. 388).

Elsewhere, Jung (1912/52) similarly insisted that for the growth of consciousness "the relation to the mother must cease, must die, and this is almost the same as dying oneself" (p. 312). In clinical practice, this is a theme that tends to be played out in the neurotic patient who is fixated on images of the past as a neurotic defence against evolution towards the future (cf. Frey-Rohn, 1974, p. 155; Jaffe, 1971a, p. 83). Here, the therapist is called to facilitate a sacrifice of sorts - as, for instance, in assisting the patient to move away from entanglements with parental imagos, or initiating the termination of therapy when it has served its purpose. In this regard, Gordon (1961) draws attention to the important possibility that it may ultimately be a fear of death which maintains such a neurotic stasis; for to enter into life means accepting the inevitability of death and the painful loss of the cherished ego (also cf. Williams, 1958; 1962). This sheds light on Jung's enigmatic comment that the neurotic who cannot separate from the mother is held there by a fear of death (Jung, 1912/52, p. 271).

On the other hand, sacrifice as a willing surrender to the self implies a 'work towards death' (cf. Chapter Three), and becomes an imperative of individuation when psychological life is characterised by a state of alienation. Here, the need is to relinquish the iconoclastic and imperialistic ego in the quest for wholeness and authenticity. Jung (1940/54) observed that we are "forced to make this effort by the unconscious presence of the self, which is all the time urging us to overcome our unconsciousness" (p. 263), and this corresponds to the idea that the death instinct may propel one towards transformation and integration. In this regard, he explained that:

"This conflict between conscious and unconscious is at least brought nearer to a solution through our becoming aware of it. Such an act of realisation is presupposed in the act of self-sacrifice. The ego must make itself conscious of its claim, and the self must cause the ego to renounce it ... I renounce my claim because I feel impelled to do so for painful inner reasons which are not altogether clear to me.

These reasons give me no particular moral satisfaction; on the contrary, I even feel some resistance to them. But I must yield to the power which suppresses my egoistic claim" (*ibid.*, p. 260).

And similarly:

"What I sacrifice is my own selfish claim, and by doing this I give myself up ... I can be sure that in giving up my egoistic claim I shall challenge my ego personality to revolt. I can also be sure that the power which suppresses this claim, and thus suppresses me, must be the self. Hence it is the self that causes me to make the sacrifice; nay more, it compels me to make it" (*ibid.*, p. 261).

What comes out of this discussion is that sacrifice may involve separation from the self on the one hand, and connection with the self on the other hand. An important point of contact is that in both forms it is the self that pushes for the sacrifice to be made. As Jung explained:

"Now, since the relation of the ego to the self is like that of the son to the father, we can say that when the self calls on us to sacrifice ourselves, it is really carrying out the sacrificial act on itself ... But what does the self gain? We see it entering into manifestation, freeing itself from unconscious projection, and, as it grips us, entering into our lives and passing from unconsciousness into consciousness, from potentiality into actuality. What it is in the diffuse unconscious state we do not know; we only know that in becoming ourself it has become man" (*ibid.*, p. 262).

Thus with regard to Jung's heroic struggle against his fainting episodes it was the voice of conscience, which is the same as that of the self (cf. Brooke, 1985), which motivated his renunciation of regression, and in his mid-life period the sacrifice of the heroic ego was once again occasioned by the voice of the self, issuing as guilt and as a calling to death (see above & Chapter Three). Moreover, it makes clinical and theoretical sense to say that sacrifice involves both separation and reconnection, and this may be understood at two levels. First, the incarnation of the self requires that to some extent one 'detaches' oneself from the entanglements of everydayness and the noise of the collective mass, so that attention can be directed towards the poetic task of bringing the reality of the self to fruition. Second, dying can only translate into meaningful sacrifice once separation between the ego and the self has occurred; and Jung's psychology teaches us that this is itself a sacrifice, a form of dying.

4.3.2. Sacrifice and transformation

The foregoing considerations lend substance to Jung's comment that sacrifice involves a "process of becoming human" (Jung, 1940/54, p. 262, emphasis added). The implicit assumption here is that the renunciation of personal claims in the service of the self must not be seen as inimical to the actual development of the ego. For while sacrifice is in the service of a 'wider' and 'deeper' consciousness, it has been emphasised that it is ultimately the ego that must be the bearer of this consciousness. This important theme was previously introduced with regard to Jung's building of the final annex at Bollingen, which symbolised the consolidation of a mature and hospitable 'ego-ness' in late life. In addition, he wrote that:

" ... sacrifice proves that you possess yourself, for it does not mean just letting yourself be passively taken: it is a conscious and deliberate self-surrender, which proves that you have full control of yourself, that is, of your ego" (Jung, 1942/54, pp. 257-8).

Similarly:

" ... the clearly felt, ruthless setting aside of the so beloved ego and so important ego is no light matter ... But since everything passes, the moment may come when the relinquished ego must be reinstated in its functions ... the moment will infallibly come when the individual, like the exemplary Job, must hold fast so as not to be thrown catastrophically off balance ... The holding fast can be achieved only by a conscious will, i.e. by the ego. That is the great and irreplaceable significance of the ego" (Jung, 1934/50, pp. 318-319).

Thus sacrifice does not imply regression to primitive, pre-egoic modalities (cf. Brooke, 1991, p. 111), a point reinforced in the following passage:

"Conscious wholeness consists in a successful union of ego and self, so that both present their intrinsic qualities. If, instead of this union, the ego is overwhelmed by the self, then the self too does not attain the form it ought to have, but remains fixed on a primitive level and can be expressible only through archaic symbols" (Jung, 1947/54, p. 225n.).

What is given up in sacrifice, therefore, is not the ego *per se* but those attitudes and actions which impede the unfolding of the visionary capacities of the self. In the context of Western rationalism, this usually means a sacrifice of the heroic mode of ego development (cf. Chapter Three). Sacrifice, as the poetic grounding to dying, thus entails a pivotal shift in the perspective of ego-consciousness from iconoclastic literalism to imaginative vision or, as Brooke (1991, p. 117) sees it, from heroic utilitarianism to reverent hospitality. As he explains:

"Psychological transformation involves the sacrifice of the heroic as the dominant mode of being-in-the-world, and the realisation of a mode that is essentially receptive and hospitable. This sacrifice and transformation may be quite subtle or it may be experienced as a psychological upheaval. It constitutes a deliteralising of one's contingent life, including one's personal identity. The deliteralising reawakens the existential link between personal identity and the self as a primordial incarnation" (*ibid.*, p. 119).

If the calling of death, i.e. the challenge of dying, is met poetically, the ego therefore becomes a vehicle through which the incarnation of the self as a poetic space is realised. In clinical or therapeutic terms, this may be equated with the emergence of self-knowledge through the process of reflection, which Jung described as a 'bending back' or "turning inwards", so that compulsive actions (projections) become deliteralised and transformed into psychological images (Jung, 1937, p. 117). Moreover, he wrote of a "reflective instinct", and suggested that the impulse towards reflection ultimately comes from beyond the realm of the ego (*ibid.*). Von Franz (1980) has taken this idea further, asserting that:

"... the impulse to reflection comes finally from the unconscious, more precisely from the self. When reflection occurs together with insight into the projection, it is very closely related to the phenomenon of deep moral change ... through which the entire personality is renewed and altered" (p. 161).

This description of reflection amplifies our appreciation of what is entailed in the process of sacrifice. It means no less than a willingness to suspend one's fixed assumptions, or projections, about oneself and one's world in favour of an attitude of undefensive openness to "imaginative disclosures" (Brooke, 1991, p. 119), which may be both precious and shattering. This means being able to "accept even the humblest things in one's own nature" (Jung, 1929, p. 48), as well as "an attitude that accepts the irrational and incomprehensible simply because it is happening" (*ibid.*, p.

17). Through this capacity to tolerate ambiguity, the existential link between the ego and the self is restored, leading to transformation that may be experienced as a 'renewal' or 'rebirth' of the ego itself (cf. Jung, 1935/53, p. 514; 1940/50, pp. 141ff.). Brooke (1991) writes that the sacrifice of exaggerated heroism means that:

"The centre of gravity of psychological life ... shifts from the humanistically imagined ego to that ambiguous and embodied clearing within which the depth of beings is revealed and the world is thereby gathered ... Thus the reconnection with the self is also in a paradoxical sense a process that frees one from the images which previously lived through, or haunted, one. Again paradoxically, the move to increasing openness and freedom is a process that deepens one's sense of oneself and one's experience of those beings with which one is engaged" (p. 119).

We get a sense of this in Jung's comment that individuation implies an expansion of ego-consciousness, which comes to constitute "a function of relationship to the world of objects, bringing the individual into absolute, binding and indissoluble communion with the world at large" (Jung, 1928, p. 178). Indeed, many of Jung's writings, particularly in his later years, circumambulate around this theme, and attempt to give expression to the necessary qualities that comprise a 'sacrificial attitude' (cf. Edinger, 1972, p. 96). Drawing once again on Eastern teachings, he for instance wrote of the need for a simultaneous 'letting go' and 'holding fast' on the part of the ego (Jung, 1929, p. 16; 1934/50; pp. 318-9), and he argued that this implies a capacity which seems so alien to our culture of heroism, namely that of 'letting things be'. Comparing this to the Taoist principle of 'action through non-action' (*we wu wei*), he commented that:

"We must be able to let things happen in the psyche. For us, this is an art of which most people know nothing. Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, and negating, never leaving the psychic process to grow in peace. It would be simple enough, if only simplicity were not the most difficult of all things" (Jung, 1929, p. 16).

Elsewhere, Jung likened this capacity to the *kenosis* doctrine of Pauline writings, in which the incarnation of Christ is described as a process involving the 'emptying' of subjective consciousness (Jung, 1942/54, p. 293n.). Elaborating on this concept, Hall (1991) notes that "the actual emptiness of 'I' is seldom experienced and perhaps must be classified as a mystical experience

when it occurs ... What is experienced frequently, however, is the 'emptiness of I' in the sense of 'I' referring to a fixed content" (p. 46, original emphasis). Drawing on these comments, the sacrifice of the heroic mode may be said to entail the capacity to "listen but ... not meddle" (Jung, 1936, p. 46). Arguing that "Being appears ... through letting be", Avens (1984, p. 97) similarly refers to a comportment that 'watches' emerging images without filtering them through the distorting lens of rational consciousness; this amounts to a shift from representational thinking to meditative thinking (*ibid.*, p. 100). Holt (1975) identifies an analogous transformational shift from 'speaking' to 'listening', and it is in this light that he understands the concept of a recollection of projections. Stein (1992) has similarly voiced the need for the ego to be "allowed to become a true *theoros*, that is, literally, one who gazes in wonder, observes, beholds, perceives in contemplation the inner and outer world" (pp. 234-5). Watkins (1984) thinks of an attitude whereby we "watch our psycho-mental flux without interfering in it or becoming attached to its contents (and thereby losing awareness) and yet ...[are] still ... receptive to it" (p. 21). Brooke (1991) expresses a similar idea in writing that "the mature and healthy individual ... is not a slave to a single univocal master, but rather a host who provides a space in consciousness for the many faces of the self to come into being" (p. 19)⁷.

In essence, these amplifications of the meaning of sacrifice seem to circulate around an ego-based function which Gordon (1977) has termed an 'as-if' attitude. This refers to an imaginative capacity which allows for a mature recognition of the psychological world from which one operates, and it is an essential factor in the symbolic process. As Gordon states, the 'as-if' attitude allows for a meaningful connection between observable realities and inobservable phenomena (*ibid.*, p. 336), and it may thus be seen to facilitate a deepening of experiential reality. Stein (1991) comments that in the absence of an 'as-if' attitude the transcendent function, which orientates us towards the world of the self, cannot operate; under these conditions "one is limited in range to ego-consciousness, and there is thus no penetration into depth, no emergent feeling for the self, no sense of the levels of psyche and their harmonic resonances, and little integration of unconscious material" (p. 5).

Ultimately, the concept of sacrifice may be identified as a pivotal theme in the postmodern enterprise towards a recollection of meaning in a culture dominated by nihilistic and Romantic extremes. For our purposes, it may be reiterated that the poetic attributes associated with sacrifice

⁷ A patient communicated something of these considerations to me in a remarkably poetic way, describing her experience of therapy as a space in which a multitude of noises in her life were given the opportunity to play a harmonious melody.

- reflection, imagination, contemplation, dreaming, and so on - rest upon a hermeneutic dialectic between life, located in the functions of the ego, and death, located in the processes of the self. Thus the dearth of sacrificial qualities in modern Western culture would seem to be tied inseparably to the concealment of death as the essence of Being.

4.4. Summary and Reflections

A number of overlapping themes have been developed in the course of this chapter, and it is now pertinent to summarise what has emerged regarding the poetic parameters of death and dying. Beginning with an understanding of the connection between the self and death, it has been claimed that death is essentially a state of non-being, a void or 'nothingness' that is the very ground of Being. In these terms, the experience of death manifests as ambivalent potentialities. On the one hand, it may refer to a regressive condition of boundaryless chaos and fusion, thus implying the dissolution of personal identity in an archaic world. On the other hand, the emphasis of this chapter has been on understanding death as a transcendent reality, i.e. a condition of evolved wholeness which equates with the incarnation of the self in conscious life. In this regard, death has been described as an imaginative space, a clearing in which one's experience of the world and of oneself is deliteralised and a poetic sense of meaning restored. Understood in this way, death may also be seen as a valuable 'resting place', a liminal realm which facilitates a gathering together of the disparate voices of the self for the purpose of differentiation and integration.

Another major theme has been to consider death as a calling. This calling issues from the self as the centre of Being and its manifestation has been conceptualised in terms of the operation of the death instinct. Understood poetically rather than from the perspective of scientific reductionism, the death instinct may be thought of as a force that is oriented towards wholeness, transcendence and meaning, particularly in the context of Western rationalism. When the ego is insufficiently developed or lacks internal cohesiveness, on the other hand, the death instinct may emerge as a regressive force that impedes the evolution of consciousness. This distinction has led to the appreciation that the poetic or imaginative possibilities of death can be realised only when there is a corresponding comportment on the part of the ego. This comportment has been elucidated with reference to the archetypal significance of sacrifice, which represents the poetic meaning of dying as a surrender to the self. Drawing on diverse Western and Eastern traditions, it has been argued that a sacrificial attitude ultimately implies the provision of a hospitable place for the emergence of

the self. This may require the renunciation of regressive ties to the past, but the dominant cultural demand that we are faced with is the sacrifice of the heroic mode of being. This refers in turn to the need for reflective awareness and the willingness to 'let things be', i.e. a shift from belligerent doing to poetic hospitality. With this shift, dormant opportunities for healing and renewal can be claimed in one's personal life; but equally, one then begins to return to the world something of its authentic enchantment.

Reflecting on these considerations, it seems that death on the one hand, and sacrifice on the other hand, are psychological necessities in the postmodern quest for a recollection of Being. Our thinking about individuation must accordingly afford emphasis to the role of death and dying as opportunities for transformation and growth throughout the course of existence. While the theme of death has been somewhat neglected in analytical psychology (cf. Chapter Two), some Jungian writers have indeed championed the recollection of death in an age of materialism and nihilism. The pioneering efforts of Gordon (1961; 1978) and Hillman (1964; 1979) have already been noted, and it has been seen that in different ways both of these writers have emphasised the necessity of death in the recovery of the psyche as our imaginal home. Jaffe (1989) has similarly drawn attention to the idea that one must "accept death constantly as a pre-condition of inner transformation" (p. 38), and Jacobi (1965) too has reminded us that in the individuation process "the primary concern is the individual experience of 'death and rebirth' through struggle and suffering, through a conscious, lifelong, unremitting endeavour to broaden the scope of one's consciousness and so attain a greater inner freedom" (p. 62). In addition to these theoretical contributions, a number of important empirical studies have emerged from the Jungian project, but these will be credited in the following chapter.

4.5. The Death Metaphor and Literal Death: Poetic Connections

The question to which we must now return, indeed the foundational question guiding this study, concerns the extent to which the parameters of death as a metaphoric reality apply to the encounter with death as a literal reality. Also, to what extent can the contingencies of sacrifice be said to pertain to the actual process of dying at the end of life? The issue here is not as simple as it may seem, for it is evident that there are significant differences between the literal and the figurative meanings of death. For one thing, the experience of death as a metaphoric reality carries with it a recognition at one or other level that there is also a continuation of life - for only when the

metaphoric is literalised does one lose sight of the vital difference between literal and imaginative possibilities of existence (cf. Chapter Two). On the other hand, the person facing death as a concrete reality does not have this consolation, and is confronted with the shattering loss of all that has been embodied, all connections to the world, and all future possibilities. Surely, then, the dying person is afforded few of the poetic opportunities of death that have been outlined in this chapter? And surely it is not appropriate to speak of the poetics of sacrifice to one who is dying? Indeed, it may seem somewhat Romantic to think of literal death in metaphoric terms. At the very least, our poetic formulations would seem to be profoundly irrelevant to the person who is faced with the immanent loss of his or her life. Certainly, these assumptions appear to be fairly ingrained in our care of the dying in modern society; we feel that we have little in the way of therapeutic benefit to offer to the dying, and all too often we console ourselves with the rationalisation that they too do not wish to contemplate the ending of life. This is the way of modern Western medicine (cf. Chapter One).

However, that there is a vital poetic or metaphoric dimension to literal death and dying is suggested by way of Jungian theory. In the first instance, the notion of psychical reality implies that the contingencies of personal existence are always grounded in metaphoric nuances of meaning which point beyond the concrete and the rational. For as Romanyshyn (e.g. 1975; 1982; 1989) has emphasised in his writings, human existence is psychological, i.e. imaginative and metaphorical, even if it is not recognised or experienced as such in the iconoclastic climate of modernism. What this means for thanatology is that the literal event of death and the literal process of dying are ultimately grounded in and shaped by an imaginative reality beyond the will of the ego. Or, to state it from another angle, it may be argued that the psyche meets the approach of (literal) death imaginatively. In the first two chapters of the present thesis, this argument was advanced as a fundamental assumption underlying the possibility of gnosis of death; it was postulated that gnosis refers to an articulation in conscious life of the key points of connection, as well as the essential differences, between the concrete and the symbolic meanings of death. For this reason, Chapters Three and Four have essentially attempted to elucidate the metaphoric parameters of death and dying. Considered as an empirical issue, it may thus be assumed that the encounter with literal death, and the process of actually dying, will reflect, at least at an unconscious level, those themes which have been identified with regard to death as a metaphoric reality (i.e. regression/transcendence, wholeness, sacrifice, etc.).

These considerations may be extended with reference to the notion of an archetypal grounding to existence. In this regard, it has been noted that archetypal themes are particularly prominent during

critical transitional stages of the life-cycle, and that this may be particularly true for the process of dying (cf. Chapter Two). It was also posited that the confrontation with death evokes or 'triggers' associated archetypal 'models' which structure and shape the individual's experience of the dying process. We may now inquire as to the extent to which these archetypal themes correlate with the conceptual themes that have been identified and elucidated in the course of this dissertation. In other words, what are the mythic or poetic points of connection between death-as-a-metaphor and death-as-literal? Or, as Gordon (1978, p. 45) phrases the question, are we really justified in talking about 'death' when referring to psychological experiences of fusion, union or non-being?

One empirical avenue which suggests that there may well be a thematic continuity between the experience of literal dying and the parameters of death as a metaphoric reality is that of research into so-called near-death experiences (NDEs), referring to the recollections of subjects who have been resuscitated from states of clinical death or virtual clinical death. Interest in NDEs has proliferated over the past few decades, but in the present context only a limited overview of the literature is possible. For the most part, studies have attempted to identify typical, recurring themes and patterns associated with NDEs (e.g. Bates & Stanley, 1985; Grey, 1985; Greyson, 1983; Lindley *et al.*, 1981; Moody, 1988; Ring, 1980; 1984; Serdahely, 1987/88. Owing to the consistency of findings it has become accepted practice to speak of a 'core' NDE (cf. Ring, 1980; 1984), which includes the following features:

- (a) an out-of-body experience, such as the sensation of observing one's body from a distance;
- (b) the experience or image of a 'journey', usually involving travelling through a dark tunnel;
- (c) the experience of unity and transcendence, i.e. of the dissolution of the ego into a more encompassing reality;
- (d) the transcendence of time and space - e.g. being able to see vast areas of the world;
- (e) an experience of 'enlightenment', which is typically described as ineffable (i.e. beyond rational comprehension or description);
- (f) encounters with spiritual or religious figures;

(g) paradoxicality, i.e. sensing the identity and transcendence of opposites.

Remarkably similar experiences have been described by persons who, in positions where death has seemed imminent and inevitable (e.g. drowning, mountain falls), have relinquished egoic control, usually following an initial period of 'resistance' to the surrendering of life (Dlin, 1980; Hunter, 1967; Noyes, 1972; Noyes & Kletti, 1977). Moreover, research has shown that spontaneous and drug-induced visions reported by the dying also correlate closely with NDE experiences (Grof & Halifax, 1977; Pahnke & Richards, 1969; Kast, 1964; Osis, 1961; Osis & Haraldsson, 1977).

An interpretation of NDEs and related phenomena is not called for in this context, but two points may be briefly noted. First, it is evident that the confrontation with death does appear to evoke, at least in some cases, an imaginative drama that points beyond a purely literal interpretation of death. In this regard, the fact that a 'core' experience may be identified suggests that there is indeed an archetypal grounding that lends a metaphoric perspective to the encounter with literal death (Grof & Grof, 1980; Grof & Halifax, 1977; Grosso, 1984). This is supported by the fact that while the 'form' of NDEs seems relatively stable, the actual 'content' does show individual and cultural differences. For instance, encounters with religious or spiritual figures tend to be congruent with the religious orientation of subjects (Bates & Stanley, 1985; Ring, 1984). Second, it may be seen that many of the features listed above show a thematic continuity with the metaphoric parameters of death and dying described in this chapter, particularly so far as images and motifs of transcendence, unity, the manifestation and integration of opposites, and the 'expansion' of vision are concerned. In Jungian terms, these themes are symbolic of the emergence and experience of the self (cf. Chapters Seven & Eight). Research also indicates that NDEs and experiences of nearly dying often have a profound impact on the survivors. In this regard, a pattern of favourable attitudinal change has been described that includes (a) a reduced fear of death; (b) a sense of being connected with eternity; (c) a feeling of having a special 'calling' or destiny; (d) a sense of life as precious and sacred; (e) a belief that one's life is under the guidance or protection of a 'higher' force; and (f) an increased willingness to accept factors beyond one's control (Kalish, 1969; Noyes, 1980; Smith, 1979). Again, these findings may be indicative of profound transformation brought about through compelling contact with the reality of the self.

Within the discipline of analytical psychology, relatively little research has however been undertaken to investigate the basic metaphors that structure the experience of dying, and to determine the extent to which these metaphors correspond with the conceptual parameters of death and dying as outlined above. In the following chapter, a case is made for using dreams as a means of

discerning the metaphoric patterns that emerge during the dying process, and a review of relevant literature is offered.

CHAPTER FIVE

DREAMS, DEATH AND DYING

The recognition that dreams have a meaningful place in existence, and that they may be a source of wisdom and healing, is probably as old as humanity itself (cf. Caillois, 1966; Diamond, 1974; Hall, 1977; Meier, 1989; Thorndike, 1923; White, 1975). In the rationalistic climate of modern existence, however, dreams are seldom appreciated as sacred disclosures. Freud (1916/17) saw his contribution to the understanding of dreams as a revival of the tradition of "the dream interpreters of antiquity" (p. 87), and did succeed to some extent in rekindling appreciation of the dream as a valuable source of knowledge. However, his reductionistic hermeneutics (cf. Chapter Six) left little room for an appreciation of the dream as more than simply a defensive concealment of threatening impulses or, at best, a recollection of purely personal concerns. In contemporary psychoanalysis, the dream even appears to have lost its status as the 'royal road' to the unconscious, and is often seen as belonging more to the realm of psychobiology than to the practice of psychotherapy (cf. Blum, 1975; Brenner, 1969; Hall, 1977; Waldhorn, 1967).

Jungian practitioners, on the other hand, have traditionally favoured dreams as more than ornamental exhibitions or disguised wish-fulfilments, and thus commonly situate the dream at the forefront of research and theory building. (cf. Hall, 1977; Mattoon, 1978; Samuels, 1985a; Weiss, 1986; Whitmont, 1990). It may therefore be expected that a Jungian approach to thanatology will similarly afford prominence to the role of dreams in the dying process. This chapter provides an overview firstly of Jung's approach to dreams, and secondly of empirical research on dreams in the context of dying. Consistent with the poetic intent of this work, attention is also given to the need to 'deconstruct' Cartesian assumptions about the nature of dream mentation, so as to arrive at an understanding of dreaming as an authentic and autochthonous mode of being through which the approach of literal death is envisioned in an imaginative manner.

5.1. Jung and Dreams

Despite Jung's insistence that he had no "theory" about dreams (Jung, 1976a, p. 293), oneiric imagery contributed significantly to his analysis of existence. He drew extensively on dreams to substantiate his theory of personality and, as previously seen, to guide his own experience of individuation (cf. Chapter Three). In contrast to Freud's assumption that the manifest dream content is a defensive concealment of repressed impulses (the 'latent' content), Jung (1945/48b) insisted that the dream is a "natural expression of the unconscious psyche" (p. 287, emphasis added), or "a spontaneous portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious" (Jung, 1916/48, p. 263). In similar terms, he asserted that:

"There is no doubt that neurotics hide disagreeable things, probably just as much as normal people do. But it is a serious question whether this category can be applied to such a normal and world-wide phenomenon as the dream. I doubt whether we can assume that a dream is something other than it appears to be ... In other words, I take the dream for what it is. The dream is such a difficult and complicated thing that I do not dare to make any assumptions about its possible cunning or its tendency to deceive. The dream is a natural occurrence, and there is no earthly reason why we should assume that it is a crafty device to lead us astray" (Jung, 1938/40, pp. 26-7, original emphasis).

The remembered dream should therefore be taken as an authentic revelation of psychical processes (Welman & Faber, 1992), for it is "probable that the dream means just what it says" (Jung, 1945/54, p. 347). In Jung's psychology, dreams are thus seen to bring forth important insights not known to waking consciousness, and to "awaken dormant qualities in the personality" (Jung, 1945/48b, p. 289). In this regard, Jung believed that a primary function of the dream is that of compensation, meaning that oneiric imagery adds to, balances, or 'corrects' the attitude or position of ego-consciousness:

"The dream rectifies the situation. It contributes the material that was lacking and thereby improves the [conscious] attitude. That is why we need dream-analysis in our therapy" (Jung, 1916/48, p. 250).

In addition, Jung referred to the 'prospective' function of the dream, which involves:

"... an anticipation in the unconscious of future conscious achievements, something of an exercise or sketch, or a plan roughed out in advance. Its symbolic content sometimes outlines the solution of a conflict" (Jung, 1916/48, p. 255).

The idea of a 'prospective' value to dreams accords with Jung's telic approach (cf. Chapter Two), but this does not necessarily mean that dreams are therefore 'prophetic'. Jung explained that we are simply dealing with "an anticipatory combination of probabilities which may co-incide with the actual behaviour of things but need not necessarily agree in every detail" (*ibid.*). Nor can a clear distinction between the compensatory and the prospective functions of dreams be maintained, for in the final analysis the manifestation of images which compensate for deficits in ego-consciousness will also point to imaginative possibilities for further growth and development. This leads to the understanding that dream symbols both reflect and orchestrate the process of psychological development by facilitating the integration of unconscious material, i.e. the transcendent function (cf. Jung, 1926; Stein, 1990; Welman & Faber, 1992). It has been suggested that this process may apply even to unremembered dreams (Hall, 1977, pp. 151f.). Thus the observation may be made that dreams on the one hand reveal and facilitate the natural course of individuation, and on the other hand afford valuable opportunities for conscious reflection and participation in the transformative process. Jung wrote that:

"... if, as happens in long and difficult treatments, the analyst observes a series of dreams often running into hundreds, there gradually forces itself upon him a phenomenon which, in an isolated dream, would remain hidden ... This phenomenon is a kind of developmental process in the personality itself ... [The dream images] arrange themselves into a kind of plan. They seem to hang together and in the deepest sense to be subordinated to a common goal, so that a long dream-series no longer appears as a senseless string of incoherent and isolated happenings, but resembles the successive steps in a planned and orderly process of development" (Jung, 1945/48b, p. 289).

5.1.1. The symbolic language of dreams

Jung's insistence that the dream must be taken 'for what it is' (*op.cit.*) does not imply that the analytical psychologist 'does' less with dreams than do Freudian analysts (Mattoon, 1981; Samuels, 1985a). For as Jung repeatedly asserted, the dream speaks a language that is essentially beyond rational comprehension, and it must therefore be 'deciphered' if it is to make conscious sense. The issue of interpretation is dealt with in the following chapter; in this section, the implications of the symbolic, i.e. archetypal, language of dreams is briefly considered.

Consistent with his conceptual distinction between an ontogenetically determined 'personal unconscious' and a phylogenetically based 'collective unconscious', Jung differentiated between archetypal dreams and personal dreams. The latter "are the nightly fragments of fantasy coming from the subjective and personal sphere, and their meaning is limited to the affairs of everyday" (Jung, 1945/48b, p. 290). Archetypal dreams, by contrast, are characterised by allusions to mythic themes and motifs, and "reveal their significance - quite apart from any subjective impression they make - by their plastic form which often has a poetic force and beauty" (Jung, 1945/48b, p. 290). As noted in Chapter Two, archetypal images both reflect collective human concerns, and embody ancient forms of wisdom (gnosis). With regard to the 'work' that is 'done' with archetypal dream images in analysis, Jung (1978) stated that:

"Together the patient and I address ourselves to the 2,000,000-year-old man that is in all of us. In the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, with the age-old unforgotten wisdom stored up in us. And where do we make contact with this old man in us? In our dreams" (p. 100).

While attempts have been made to distinguish objectively between archetypal and 'everyday' dreams and to quantitatively grade the degree of 'archetypality' in dream reports (e.g. Kluger, 1975), it must be noted that this distinction is theoretical rather than practical. For as previously stated, archetypes are the basic metaphors of existence (cf. Chapter Two), and this means that all dreams should be understood both in terms of their personal significance and in terms of mythic or archetypal themes which may be discerned from them (cf. Chapter Six)¹. Of course, some dreams

¹ In similar terms, Williams (1963) has argued that the theoretical distinction between the personal and the collective unconscious is somewhat misleading. In reality, she asserts, we must acknowledge the 'indivisibility' of these dimensions of psychological life.

do seem to be 'more' archetypal than others, but the point is that the language of the dream is always mythic and poetic, i.e. archetypal. This claim has found its strongest advocates in Hillman and his followers (e.g. Berry, 1974; Hillman, 1979), but Whitmont (1990) has similarly suggested that:

" ... dreams have a tendency to play and dramatise - indeed, at times even to overdramatise. They do not offer 'simple' or rational statements but present allegorical stories, sometimes quite weird, and even fragments or wholes of almost stage-worthy plays. They play with endless variations of 'central' themes and forms in expectation-tension, creation-destruction-recreation, or lyrical modes that remind us of dramatic art ... It would appear as though the intent were to have an idea or archetype incarnated by using the artist's ways of calling forth an experience that involves embodied emotion and dramatic meaning" (p. 4).

Whitmont goes on to suggest that the dream may therefore be seen as "a special instance of a general trend of the life process to present itself to our perceptions through endless arrays of seemingly arbitrary, often capricious forms which do not necessarily have any practical survival value or purpose" (*ibid.*, pp. 4-5). In other words, dreams reflect a form of mentation which 'poetises' existence, "akin to a staging of a play for an onlooking or listening audience" (*ibid.*, p. 5). In this way, dreams serve to enrich the world of the rational, literal-bound ego. Quoting Whitmont again:

"We meet here with a particular manifestation of spirit in life, with an exhibition of what we may call the expression of existential fullness or wholeness of life, not intended for a practical purpose in the narrower sense of the word, but certainly not necessarily devoid of meaning. Artistic exhibition rather than or in addition to survival purposefulness seems to be nature's way of creation and manifestation" (*ibid.*, p. 6).

This approach to dreams and dreaming raises a number of important issues, some of which have emerged in the literature as a critique of Jung's position - or more broadly, that of modern depth psychology (cf. Boss, 1957; 1977; Romanynshyn, 1977; Scott, 1977b). One theme concerns the need for a hermeneutic basis to the interpretation of dreams, so that something of their authentic meaning is preserved; this receives attention in the following chapter. Another issue that warrants consideration is the move towards understanding dreaming as a mode of being, rather than as a

series of discrete temporal events.

5.1.2. Dreaming as a mode of being

Whitmont's sentiments reflect an escalating trend towards thinking of dreaming as a form of poetic mentation that is not simply restricted to 'the dream' as a nocturnal occurrence. This paradigmatic shift cuts across the boundaries of different theoretical schools and involves recognition of the need to appreciate dreaming as a "mode of existence" (Brann, 1991, p. 338), or a way of "imaginal contemplation" (*ibid.*, p. 345). This approach is characteristic of the work of Boss, who wrote that:

"There is in reality neither a 'had' dream nor a 'made' dream, if one thinks of such a thing as a possessable object. There are only people who dream in this way or that. At one time, a person exists as a dreaming being ... at other times, as a waking being. Being awake and dreaming: two equally autochthonous - though very different - ways or possibilities of existing ... Therefore, every dream theory which is to be taken seriously presupposes an adequate insight into the basic constitution of how we exist" (Boss, 1977, pp. 7-8).

Essentially, Boss was critical of 'scientific' dream theories - which he associated with the work of Freud, Jung and Adler - on the grounds that they neglect appreciation of the existential capacity for dreaming by focusing on 'the dream' as a relatively reified entity (*ibid.*, p. 7). Thus what Boss was ultimately opposed to is the tendency, reflective of an intrapsychic ontology, to treat dreams and dream images as entities within a hermetically sealed mind. For Boss and other phenomenologists, a poetics of dreaming must also seek to restore to psychological life its non-dualistic belongingness in the world (Romanyshyn, 1977, p. 73; cf. Alderman, 1977; Scott, 1977b), and from this perspective it is clear that dream images should not be treated simply as fragments of nocturnal fantasy. On the contrary, they are indicative of an imaginative capacity, an ongoing creative flux that proceeds independently of, and at times seems to be opposed to, the comportment of ego-consciousness (cf. Jung, 1945/48b, p. 287). But this means that dreaming cannot be definitively separated from waking existence. As Romanyshyn (1977) states, "one is never absolutely awake ... one's wakefulness is always tinged with dreaming, just as one's dreaming always maintains its touch with the world of being awake" (p. 76).

We cannot hope to do justice to the phenomenologists' approach to dreams in this discussion, and their position need not be pushed much further at present. It should however be noted that in recent years analytical psychologists too have taken up the theme of dreaming as an existential capacity or mode of being. Whitmont's comments, reflected above, clearly indicate a shift away from thinking of the dream simply as an interior event, and Dieckmann (1980) similarly questions whether there has not been too much emphasis in Jungian theory on the differences between waking and dream mentation. Watkins (1984) in fact credits Jung with the realisation that "the unconscious is always in a sense dreaming, mythmaking. Because our attention is outwardly directed we fail to notice the mythic dreams being constantly spun" (pp. 42-3, emphasis added). This direction is ardently pursued by Hillman (1979), whose position is that dreams themselves are archetypal phenomena which bring a poetic perspective to bear on reality. In these terms, the primary significance of dreams is that they embody the language of the 'underworld', i.e. the imaginal realm. Thus:

"We must reverse our usual procedure of translating the dream into ego-language and instead translate the ego into dream-language. This means doing a dream-work on the ego, making a metaphor of it, seeing through its 'reality' (*ibid.*, p. 95).

Again, we meet with the idea that dreaming is an alternative mode of vision, the vision of *mythos* as opposed to the *logos* oriented reality of the realist and dualist ego (*ibid.*, pp. 93ff.). However, this is not necessarily as radical a departure from Jung's thinking as has been suggested (cf. Samuels, 1985a, pp. 237ff.; Shelburne, 1984). For while Hillman (1979, pp. 78f.) does reprove suggestions that the dream serves the interests of self-regulation through compensation, it may be seen that by bringing a poetic perspective to bear dreams do, in one sense, compensate for the one-sidedness of rational consciousness. What must be borne in mind is that compensation is not a mechanical process (Jung, 1945/48b, p. 287) but refers to the meeting and balancing of different perspectives or points of view (*ibid.*, pp. 287ff.). Thus compensation is ultimately in the service of the self, and might be seen as a vital factor in the existential awakening that comes with individuation:

" ... since everything living strives for wholeness, the inevitable one-sidedness of our conscious life is continually being corrected and compensated by the universal human being in us, whose goal is the ultimate integration of conscious and unconscious, or better, the assimilation of the ego to a wider personality" (*ibid.*, p. 292).

Here Romanyshyn's comment that through its imagistic grounding dreaming "brings into view a depth of existence which in waking life remains more or less invisible, hidden and assumed, a vertical depth in place of the horizontal one" (1977, pp. 78-9, original emphasis), is particularly appropriate. And, as will be seen in the following chapter, Jung's hermeneutics is indeed oriented towards an 'initiation' of the ego into the language of the dream, rather than being an endeavour to translate the dream into the scientific perspective of the modern ego.

The issue, then, comes down once again to the need to avoid a Cartesian interiorisation of psychological life. When Jung is read poetically, rather than from an implicitly scientific perspective, then his ideas on the function and value of dreaming are not radically different to those outlined above. In the first instance, it must be recognised that those dramas revealed in our dream life refer not to specific places in an encapsulated mind but to imaginative possibilities in the lived world. We must appreciate that dreaming is an activity that constantly weaves the mythic patterns that shape one's existence, and that, at one level of inquiry, existence is always a dream unfolding in the world. In waking life these patterns may remain hidden, save for moments when one's customary ego boundaries weaken (as in daydreams, waking fantasies, hallucinations, synchronistic phenomena, etc.). In nocturnal life, on the other hand, the suspension of waking faculties facilitates the emergence of these patterns in consciousness, and what emerges may then be remembered as 'a dream'. In this way, nocturnal dreams reveal the metaphors by which we live in waking life, and thus afford a perspective that deliteralises the contingencies of personal existence and identity. This understanding restores to 'the dream' something of its historical value as a source of gnosis. In this regard, Romanyshyn (1977) highlights the reality that our dreams, when attended to, awaken us to previously neglected possibilities of Being:

"Dreaming presents the dreamer with heretofore 'undreamed' of possibilities, and in this sense dreaming deepens the grounds of one's life. But to dream is also to awaken ... so that this deepening is to be seen as simultaneously a rising up to these undreamed of possibilities. Indeed, it is only in this waking and rising up that the deepening occurs, only in the waking and rising up that the dream is re-membered as a dream, that is, stitched back into the fabric of one's waking life ... Waking life, therefore, holds an ontological priority over dreaming ... An interrogation of the anthropological conditions of dreaming bears witness, therefore, to the heights which human existence can reach when it deepens its life in dreams" (p. 82, original emphasis).

By emphasising the validity and the necessity of articulating dream mentation with directed waking thought, Romanyshyn avoids the trap - which Hillman seems to sometimes fall into - of romanticising dream life to the detriment of waking consciousness. This theme is further reinforced by Whitmont (1990):

"Exposed to the pleromatic replay of life 'memories' of past, present, and future possibilities, it is up to the ego whether and to what extent it wants or is able to avail itself of the dream's revelations ... aiming toward incarnation, the dream's dynamic also aims at being put into living reality, to be realized, that is, made real in one's personal life" (p. 12).

5.1.3. Dying, dreams and gnosis

We now come to the crux of the empirical aspect of this dissertation. In the previous chapter, the argument was advanced that the confrontation with literal death may evoke and be shaped by those metaphors (archetypal images) that ground the meaning of death and dying as psychological realities. In view of the considerations advanced in this chapter, it is clear that our inquiry is ultimately directed towards the ways in which the approach of (literal) death is imagined (or 'dreamed') by the psyche, and it is assumed that dream mentation will be the most accessible means of assessing this question. By phrasing the research question in this way, we are moreover recognising that death is ultimately met and experienced from two different perspectives or modes of being, on the one hand the reality of ego-consciousness, and on the other hand the reality of dreaming. In Western culture, these perspectives tend to emerge as literalistic (rational) and imaginative (dream-like) understandings of death respectively (cf. Jung, 1934a, pp. 410ff.), and we are therefore asserting that beyond the iconoclastic vision of the Cartesian ego there is an archetypal dream of death, i.e. a revelation of death as a mythic possibility of existence. In these terms, gnosis may be defined as a conscious appropriation of and participation in this dream, an immersion in a constantly evolving *poesis* which moves one towards a natural deepening of the possibility of one's own death. This claim receives support from Whitmont's assertion that there is:

" ... a dynamic of dreaming that symbolically is akin to a 'remembering' of smaller or larger pieces of what the soul has 'known' ... We may presume that every dream

dips back into such a prior knowing which strives toward a grounded 'here and now' fulfilment through individual waking and conscious living" (1990, p. 8).

By adopting the approach outlined above, the present study seeks to restore the mystery of death to its authentic province, the realm of dreams (Hypnos, the god of sleep, and Thanatos, the god of death, are brothers). To this realm belongs the archetypal myths of life and death, the eschatological images of religion, the ancient funerary texts, and the rituals of dying that have been kept alive in a few traditional cultures. In modern life, characterised by the erosion of traditional belief systems, it is however primarily in our nocturnal existence that the forgotten dream of death is revealed. For this reason, nocturnal images serve as perhaps the last vestiges of wisdom, or gnosis, for the dying person. In his paper 'On the Nature of Dreams', Jung (1945/48b) had the following to say about the modern person's encounter with death:

"If he is a man whose whole make-up and nature do not tolerate excessive unconsciousness, then the import of this moment will be forced upon him, perhaps in the form of an archetypal dream. It would be in vain for him to try to understand the dream with the help of a carefully worked out context, for it expresses itself in strange mythological forms that are not familiar to him. The dream uses collective figures because it has to express an eternal human problem that repeats itself endlessly, and not just a disturbance in personal balance" (p. 292).

To take this point further, it may be recalled that from the perspective of the ego, death may be denied or avoided, it may be accepted or welcomed, and it may be treated literally or metaphorically; the attitudes and responses that are ultimately brought to bear will, as previously indicated, depend on the position of the ego *vis-a-vis* the self, and this position shifts in tune with the dynamic flux of psychological life (or, in technical terms, the ego-self axis). Thus the mythic grounding to dying, revealed and orchestrated through the mentation of dreaming, may accordingly complement, compensate, or contradict the waking experience of the dying person; but in the final analysis, it is vital that ego-consciousness attunes itself to the mythology of dreaming if dying is to be more than simply a catastrophic, or even dull, ending to life.

5.1.⁴~~5~~. Dreaming as a preparation for death

The deliberations advanced above suggest that the psyche exhibits a spontaneous preparation for death (cf. Gordon, 1978; Hannah, 1981), and it may be argued that this preparation emerges not as a rational response but by way of the imaginative discourse of dreaming. In his essay on 'The Soul and Death', Jung (1934a) referred to this possibility, basing his assumptions on clinical experience:

"I have observed a great many people whose unconscious psychic activity I was able to follow into the immediate presence of death...I have frequently been able to trace back for over a year, in a dream-series, the indications of approaching death" (p. 411).

In another essay of the same year, Jung (1934b) again suggested that the approach of literal death is reflected in the dream activity of the psyche, even when the possibility of death is not recognised or known consciously. He illustrated this by way of a case - now renowned in Jungian circles - of an adolescent girl who manifested with symptoms suggestive of muscular atrophy, but which may also have been a case of hysteria. The clinical picture led him to suspect an organic disease, but there were signs of conversion disorder as well. Jung elicited two dreams from the girl in order to assist with the differential diagnosis. In the first dream, she arrived home at night to find everything 'as quiet as death'. In the living room, she discovered her mother hanging from a chandelier, swinging to and fro. In the second dream, a terrible noise broke out in her house, and she discovered a frightened horse racing through the rooms. It entered the hall and jumped through the windows, falling four floors to its death. Jung inferred that both dreams represented the natural, instinctual life of the body - the mother imago being symbolic of the origins of life, and the image of the horse being an archetypal expression of the chthonic psyche. On this basis, he concluded that "the animal life is destroying itself" and that the dreams therefore pointed to "a grave organic disease with a fatal outcome" (*ibid.*, p. 160). This prognosis was soon confirmed, as the girl died shortly thereafter.

From this case, Jung concluded that the approach of death is revealed and anticipated through archetypal images and motifs. He wrote that "it is notorious that one often dreams of one's own death, but that is no serious matter. When it is really a question of death, the dream speaks another language" (*ibid.*). It may be seen that his conclusions essentially support the theoretical

assumptions developed in this thesis: the psyche anticipates and prepares for death spontaneously; this process is conveyed through archetypal themes and motifs; and it is reflected and constellated through the language of dreams.

Gordon (1968) points out that there is a tendency in analytical psychology to focus on the content of symbols, to the detriment of an appreciation of the symbolic process. Thus it is necessary to note that the imaginative preparation for death does not refer to the content of dreams only, but also to the form, or process, of dream mentation. The argument here is that the dream invites one to participate in the imaginative play of the psyche; and as we have seen in the previous chapter, to reflect, to imagine, to symbolise, means to give up for a while one's egological attitude, and this is itself a process of surrender and sacrifice, i.e. a path to death. Indeed, the nature of gnosis, as outlined in Chapter One, is such that it always involves a 'death' of the ego in favour of emergent imaginative possibilities. For as Avens (1984) comments, "there has to be a certain amount of selflessness and self-abandonment in every act of true imagining" (p. 98).

Jung's recognition of imagination as a preparation for death is probably less well known than the attention which he gave to the interpretation and amplification of images. In one work, he however asserted that imagination represents a natural work towards death (Jung, 1929, p. 46; cf. Chapter Eight), and in Memories, Dreams, Reflections he posited that:

"With increasing age, contemplation, and reflection, the inner images naturally play an ever greater part in man's life. 'Your old men shall dream dreams' ... In old age one begins to let memories unroll before the mind's eye and, musing, to recognise oneself in the inner and outer images of the past. This is like a preparation for an existence in the hereafter, just as, in Plato's view, philosophy is a preparation for death" (1961/83, pp. 351-2).

Reading between the lines, Jung appears to be saying here that with the approach of life's ending, a dream-like comportment becomes the most appropriate mode of being, a poetic way to meet the reality of death. The idea that conscious participation in the process of dreaming may serve to prepare the individual for death will be returned to in Chapter Eight. The empirical focus of this study is however on the archetypal themes and metaphors that emerge during the course of dying, and it is now appropriate to present a review of literature pertaining to this area.

5.2. Dreams and Dying: Empirical Contributions

The role of dreams in the dying process has received relatively scarce empirical attention in thanatology, a fact commented upon by most researchers venturing into the field (Barrett, 1988/89; Cookson, 1990; Greenberg & Blank, 1970; Prince & Hoffman, 1991; Zender, 1986)². Again, this neglect must be seen in relation to the positivistic bias that dominates contemporary thanatology, particularly as dream research presents unique difficulties for approaches reliant upon objectivity, quantification and the precise manipulation of variables (cf. Cookson, 1990). In this section, research to emerge from the thanatology movement will be addressed with regard to (a) group studies and (b) case studies. Following this, the contribution of Jungian researchers will be considered.

5.2.1. Group studies

The employment of group studies in evaluating the meaning of dreams in the dying process has typically involved a comparative analysis of content. In terms of this approach, images and themes identified in the dreams of dying persons are assessed according to one or more comparison groups consisting of persons who are not dying.

In a study dating from the early years of the thanatology movement, Cappon (1959) investigated the dreams of six groups of subjects: (a) dying patients; (b) patients with progressive and incurable diseases who were not yet terminally ill; (c) patients with acute illnesses; (d) patients with chronic non-fatal illnesses; (e) patients treated for a mental disorder; and (f) patients who had attempted suicide. He observed that dying subjects recalled significantly fewer dreams than those in the other groups, and saw this as indicative of somatic and psychological disintegration as death approached. He did not however identify any specific differences in the actual content of dreams between the

² Cookson (1990) notes that she was able to locate only four studies in the area. Apart from studies undertaken by Jungian researchers, an extensive literature search for the present study located eight empirical investigations pertaining to dreams in the dying process. This figure does not however include studies which have investigated the theme of death in the dreams of physically healthy persons (e.g. Barrett, 1988/89; Gutheil, 1948; Litman, 1980), which are not dealt with in the context of this thesis.

groups, and the fact that dying patients reported fewer dreams has little meaning in itself. In the first instance, Cappon did not employ a control group of physically healthy subjects, and this leaves the question open as to whether or not dying persons report or remember fewer dreams than healthy subjects. In the second instance, his study appears to have exercised few controls over confounding variables that may impact on dream recall, such as type of physical pathology, levels of medication, etc.

In a later study, Hone (1983) compared dying and non-dying cancer patients, and found that the dreams of the former group were characterised by themes of withdrawal from outer life, misfortune, travel, passive changes in location, references to time, and unfamiliar settings. On the other hand, the dreams of non-dying cancer patients showed involvement with other persons, active movement, attention to environmental detail, and greater emotion. Hone concluded that the dreams of dying subjects reflect an unconscious attempt to come to terms with death and to prepare the dreamer for this. This is an important possibility, but the lack of a solid theoretical understanding of the forementioned themes detracts from the impact of Hone's findings.

Coolidge and Fish (1983/84) reported the results of a comparison of the dreams of dying patients with those of healthy elderly subjects. They found support for their hypothesis that the dreams of the dying would show more themes of death than those of the comparison group. In most cases conspicuous images and motifs of death (such as attending a funeral or a dream figure actually dying) did not pertain directly to the dream-ego but were 'projected' upon other characters. The researchers concluded that this may reflect denial or unresolved feelings on the part of the dreamer as to the possibility of his or her own death. They found that the dreams of dying patients also showed higher levels of emotionality, particularly to do with themes of aggression. They suggested that the subject being a victim of aggression in dreams may be indicative of an unconscious sense of being forced to die against one's will, while the subject being the perpetrator of aggressive acts could indicate displaced anger and hostility. Other themes to emerge from their study were pregnancy and birth (interpreted as desires for renewal) and the loss of resources (seen as indicative of attempts to come to terms with the loss of life). On the whole, this study is valuable in so far as it is based on a rigorous approach to interpretation and is grounded within a theoretical framework (psychodynamic). It thus moves beyond a bland comparison of groups.

In a more elaborate study based on a similar research design, Prendergast (1986) compared the dreams of terminally ill patients with three other groups: cancer patients in remission from cancer, acutely ill patients, and healthy persons. It was reported that dying patients dreamed no less or

more often of death than subjects in the other groups, but the dreams of the dying did however manifest fewer living characters and social interactions, and more themes of unhappiness. Prendegast concluded that dreams reflect conscious issues and concerns pertaining to dying, with particular regard to loss and social isolation.

Zender (1986) investigated dream content in terminal illness with specific reference to levels of depression and anxiety, but found no specific relationship between emotional state and dream content. He also could not support the hypothesis that dying persons might manifest dreams of travel and activity as compensations for loss of physical abilities. However, it seems that Zender adopted a different approach to interpreting themes of death than did Hone (see above), and this may contribute to the difference in findings between the two studies.

Finally, Prince and Hoffman (1991) compared the dreams of dying patients in a palliative care facility to results obtained from a normative sample. The dying group displayed fewer human characters but more child characters, and revealed less physical activity but increased cognitive activity on the part of the dream-ego. The researchers however found no evidence of heightened emotionality in the dreams of the dying, and offered no interpretive account of the themes that were identified.

Considering these findings, it is clear that group studies have yielded inconclusive and in some cases contradictory findings. This may be at least partly due to the fact that different studies have tended to use different methods of interpreting or rating dream content. For instance, while some researchers accept that the reality of death may be symbolised in dreams through various metaphors, other studies have tended to rate death as an element in dreams only when it manifests in a conspicuous or literal way. As a result, important thematic similarities between studies, and even between individuals and groups within particular studies, may be missed in favour of an emphasis on the apparent diversity of dream images.

5.2.2. Case studies

Case studies of dreams in the dying process have received even less attention than group comparisons, possibly because the former are seen to be methodologically limited both in terms of the control of variables and in terms of the generalisability of findings (Cookson, 1990). Apart from

the contributions of Jungian theorists, which are dealt with below, only two case studies emerged from a search of thanatological literature.

In a relatively early study, Norton (1963) examined the dreams of a young woman dying of breast cancer, and reported on recurrent themes of physical activity. He interpreted these dreams as a form of wish-fulfilment, reflecting the patient's desire to be physically healthy and active again. Greenberg and Blank (1970) similarly observed the dreams of a dying cancer patient, who had been referred for treatment of depression and hostility. They found that despite a high level of conscious denial of death on the patient's part, his dreams appeared to anticipate death by reflecting themes of loss and decathexis. In addition, they identified numerous themes in the subject's dreams which may be symbolic of death (e.g. a shadowy stranger, dreaming that he is a ghost). The writers concluded that the dream series revealed an acceptance of death at an unconscious level, even though this did not translate into conscious insight.

5.2.3. Contributions from analytical psychology

Relative to other approaches, Jungian psychologists have generally afforded greater attention to the significance of dreams in the dying process. These contributions have taken the form of single case studies (Edinger, 1972; Grotjahn, 1980; Hyman, 1977; Lockhart, 1977; Sabini & Maffly, 1981; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981), multiple case studies (Fortier, 1972), and the collation and interpretation of anecdotal accounts of the dreams and visions of the dying (Jaffe, 1978; von Franz, 1986; Whitmont, 1969). In addition to studies of oneiric imagination in the context of death, Gordon (1978) offered an analysis of the Rorschach protocols of persons who were dying. Hannah (1981) has reported on a series of images, which emerged during active imagination, from a patient who later died unexpectedly.

The studies cited above display remarkably consistent findings. This may be attributed to consistency both in interpretive approaches, and in the theoretical articulation of findings. Commonly, Jungian researchers have sought to probe beyond the subjective experience of dying in favour of elucidating the archetypal images that structure this experience. Owing to the relative agreement of these studies, it is expedient to draw attention to the salient themes that have emerged, rather than to present a summary of each study. In order to avoid needless repetition, the following discussion will not focus on the actual patterns of imagery which have been reported

in these studies, but rather on the common interpretations that have emerged.

(a) Symbolic indications of death and dying

There is general agreement that the actuality of death is anticipated and reflected in symbolic images which bear striking similarities to death-related motifs in myth, religion and alchemy. In other words, the reality of dying, or the threat of death, appears to constellate an archetypal response which grounds the individual's experience of the dying process, at least unconsciously. Some studies have confirmed the idea that dreams or spontaneous fantasies may even anticipate cases of sudden or unexpected death (Hannah, 1981; Jaffe, 1978; von Franz, 1986; Whitmont, 1969). In the context of terminal illness, dream imagery also appears to serve as a valuable indicator of the course and prognosis of the illness, and some researchers have pointed to the significance of dreams as diagnostic aids (Hyman, 1977; Jaffe, 1978; Lockhart, 1977; Sabini & Maffly, 1981; Welman & Faber, 1992). For instance, Lockhart (1977) suggests that certain patterns of imagery may assist with the recognition of serious physical illness even when this is not evident medically, and both he and Hyman (1977) describe cases of patients whose dreams appeared to anticipate the diagnosis of cancer. The latter author concludes that "dream symbols may be interpreted to reflect both psychic and organic states" (*ibid.*, p. 28). In a pilot study to the present project, Welman and Faber (1992) reported the case of a patient, who was in therapy with the present author, whose dreams similarly offered timeous warning of the development of a breast tumour.

(b) The self and transformation

Consistent with the theoretical premises of Jungian thanatology, empirical studies have found that the approach of death tends to be expressed through images of wholeness and transcendence, i.e. themes of the self. On this basis, Fortier (1972) concluded that death entails a restitution of the ego-self axis. Welman and Faber (1992) amplified the dream series of a dying cancer patient with regard to two prominent themes, that of death and rebirth, and that of a progressive evolution of images pertaining to the archetypal Feminine. Support was established for the idea that, at the level of psychical reality, death constitutes the emergence of the self and the transcendence of the finite

ego. The most extensive study of dreams in the dying process has been undertaken by von Franz (1986), who drew on a variety of sources to collate dreams reported within a period of six months prior to the dreamer's death. Rather than following the usual procedures of content analysis, von Franz adopted an innovative approach of identifying thematic similarities between the dreams of the dying and the symbolic language of alchemy. Using Jung's method of amplification (cf. Chapter Six), she highlighted a number of motifs which appear to shape the experience of dying, such as sacrifice, vegetation images, the motif of the journey, and images of resurrection. From these motifs, she identified two particularly prominent themes: the transcendence and conjunction of opposites, and the concept of a 'subtle body', referring to a totality which encompasses both the 'physical' and the 'psychological' bodies. Von Franz concluded that the final approach of death appears to be reflected in dream life by themes of integration and unification, indicating the emergence of the self as a dominant dimension of psychological life.

As may be expected, Jungian researchers have also commonly directed attention to symbolic indications of transformation and individuation during the dying process (Edinger, 1972; Fortier, 1972; Grotjahn, 1980; Lockhart, 1977; Sabini & Maffly, 1981; Singer, 1972; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981). In this regard, images of wholeness are usually interpreted as indicative of finality and the completion of the *opus* of individuation, whether this is consciously realised or not (Edinger, 1972; Fortier, 1972; Singer, 1972; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992). Sabini and Maffly (1981) posited that in the course of dying dreams "give the outline of an individuation process, and tell us something about the place of illness in that process" (p. 123). Welman & Faber (1992) similarly contended that in the context of dying dreams are indicative of profound transformation and the manifestation of previously unacknowledged potentialities of the self. In her study, von Franz (1986) concluded that:

"... almost all the symbols which appear in death dreams are images that are also manifested during the individuation process - especially as it unfolds during the second half of life ... it is as though this process, if not consciously experienced before death, may be 'telescoped' by the pressure of impending death" (p. xiii).

The studies mentioned above may therefore be seen to lend empirical support to the idea that the ending of life is not simply a period of psychological stagnation but, potentially, one of creative growth and development. There is broad agreement that, when related to consciously, dreams that manifest in the presence of death may encourage the dying person to engage more fully and meaningfully with life itself (Edinger, 1972; Fortier, 1972; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992;

Wheelwright, 1981). Edinger (1972) has concluded that dream symbolism appears to serve the purpose of 'initiating' the dying person into the mysteries of death which are not apparent to everyday consciousness; reporting on a series of dreams recorded for a period of two years prior to the dreamer's death, he argued that dreams may be seen to provide "lessons in metaphysics" which serve as a preparation for death (p. 200). Wheelwright (1981) established a similar principle in her analysis of a long series of dreams from a dying patient. A case study by Welman and Faber (1992) indicated that even though dreams were not discussed with a dying subject, the numinosity of the archetypal images seemed to inspire meaningful transformation, as reflected in profound shifts in the subject's conscious attitude towards death.

(c) The possibility of life after death

The final theme to be considered is perhaps the most controversial and misunderstood concept to emerge from Jungian explorations into dreams and dying. It involves the idea that dream images manifesting prior to death point to the promise of a continuation of existence after the death of the body. This is a central line of interpretation in von Franz's work. She identified motifs pointing to the destruction of the 'old' body and the concomitant manifestation of a 'new', 'subtle' body, and concluded that dreams of death reveal "a kind of continuation of the life process which ... is unimaginable to everyday consciousness" (von Franz, 1986, p. 156). Or even more explicitly:

" ... the unconscious psyche pays very little attention to the abrupt end of bodily life and behaves as if the psychic life of the individual, that is, the individuation process, will simply continue ... there are also dreams which symbolically indicate the end of bodily life and the explicit continuation of psychic life after death. The unconscious 'believes' quite obviously in a life after death" (*ibid.*, pp. viii-ix).

Whitmont (1969) has similarly argued that dreams at the end of life portray death "not as a threat but as a fulfilment, a temporary next phase" (p. 287). Welman & Faber (1992) have also maintained that images of death are revealed as fundamentally paradoxical, pointing on the one hand to destruction and disintegration, and on the other hand to resurrection and rebirth.

That images manifest during the dying process which have for countless generations incarnated the hope of immortality need not be disputed here; it is the interpretation given to such images that

is open to considerable debate. Jung (1934a) argued that the possibility of life after death is "of such incalculable import that it should spur the spirit of research to the greatest effort" (p. 413), and he proposed that dreams were the most suitable data for considering this possibility:

"Not only my own dreams, but also occasionally the dreams of others, helped to shape, revise, or confirm my views on a life after death" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 336).

Of course, it is beyond our epistemological limits to know whether there is indeed post-mortal existence, but this does not mean that life after death is not an important psychological issue, particularly for the dying person. However, considerable caution must be exercised in drawing inferences as to the possibility of eternity from dream images, and it must not be forgotten that we are ultimately dealing with a psychical, or symbolic, reality rather than a literal one (cf. Jaffe, 1978; Mogenson, 1991; Welman & Faber, 1992). This is an important issue which has numerous implications so far as working with the dying is concerned, and it will be followed up in a later chapter (cf. Chapter Eight).

5.3. Conclusion and Empirical Aims

The central implication to emerge from Jungian studies of dreams in the context of death and dying is that the process of dying is grounded and reflected in archetypal images of death and associated psychological possibilities (wholeness, rebirth, transformation, etc.). It has also emerged that dying is associated, at least at an unconscious level, with the emergence of the self as the archetype of wholeness, and thus with the 'completion' of individuation. There is also agreement that conscious participation in the archetypal drama of death and dying may facilitate meaningful growth and transformation.

In essence, the studies referred to above lend support to the idea that dreams open the way to a meaningful gnosis of death, and reveal imaginative possibilities that compensate for the loss of symbolic models in modern religious and social life (Edinger, 1972; Fortier, 1972; Grotjahn, 1980; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981). Edinger (1972) and Jaffe (1978) seem to sum it up in asserting that apart from their other functions, dreams manifesting during the dying process serve in the first instance to prepare the individual for death, and in the second

instance to instruct him or her as to a meaningful path of dying. Jaffe writes that:

"The dreams or visions in question are usually of a symbolic character. Their images can be taken as assertions, or at least as intimations of what would otherwise remain inexplicable. They resolve primarily around the question of life and death, or the 'beyond'. True, images which rise from the unconscious cannot solve the mystery of death. But they may serve to lessen man's fear and dread of its darkness, which would suffice to explain the value attributed to them" (*ibid.*, p. 41).

Despite these valuable contributions, a need for further research in the area is indicated. In the first instance, many of the studies cited in the foregoing summary reflect the inevitable limitations of single case-study designs, namely a lack of generalisability beyond the parameters of the particular study. To some extent, this problem is mitigated by the consistent findings between studies, but it would nevertheless seem that there is a need for a comprehensive study which aims to identify the basic metaphors of death and dying. Secondly, a common thread running throughout the studies that have been referred to in this chapter is the tendency to limit the implications of the research findings either to the context of literal death and dying, or to the imaginative possibilities of death. In other words, the important connections (and differences) between the figurative and the literal meanings of death remain relatively unsubstantiated at an empirical level. This deficiency may impede the move towards a gnosis of death in Jungian psychology.

These concerns motivate the empirical aims of this thesis, which are:

- (a) To identify common themes that emerge in the dreams of a sample of dying persons. As previously mentioned, the intention here is to identify the basic metaphors that shape and lend meaning to the dying process. In this regard, attention must be given to indications of both the literal and the figurative meanings of death and dying. In the former instance, we are dealing with mythic and personal images associated with the loss of life, destruction of the body, physical suffering, etc. (cf. Herzog, 1983; Ziegler, 1986). In the latter case, we are more concerned with images of wholeness, transcendence, fusion, sacrifice, transformation, and so on. We are particularly interested to observe the tension between these meanings within particular images, and to consider the variations of the theme of death between different subjects - for instance, whether death is represented as threatening and intrusive, as a welcoming embrace, etc. From there, it may be possible to relate different patterns of imagery to different positions of the ego-self relationship, so as to

substantiate the idea that the form in which death is revealed is inextricably tied to the attitude and position of the ego (cf. Chapter Four).

- (b) To consider the ways in which dream images mediate a meaningful gnosis of death, and to explore the possibilities for transformation and growth that emerge from this process.

An attempt was made to accomplish these aims by conducting an extensive investigation of the dream material reported by dying persons. This study involved (a) a thematic analysis of dream content, using Jung's method of amplification to elucidate the symbolic themes that emerged in the data, and (b) the use of relevant case material to document the experience of dying and its relationship to dream imagery. These aspects of the study are reported in Chapters Seven and Eight. In the following chapter, the methodological principles guiding the study are discussed, with particular emphasis given to the need for a hermeneutic approach.

CHAPTER SIX

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, an overview of the methodological parameters of the present study is presented with regard to (a) the need for a hermeneutic method; (b) a consideration of the hermeneutic basis to Jung's method of amplification; (c) the subjects employed; and (d) the research design and procedure.

6.1. Towards a Hermeneutic Methodology

Giorgi (1970; 1975) and Romanyshyn (1975) point out that the dominance of the natural scientific approach in the humanities has resulted in a corresponding proclivity for the use of scientific (i.e. quantitative) methodologies in psychological research. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, have enjoyed less popularity owing to the perception that they lack rigorous control and are thus less valid and reliable. It has already been argued that, so far as thanatology is concerned, the bias towards quantitative methods has resulted in a proliferation of studies that have little to offer so far as a psychological understanding of death and dying is concerned (cf. Chapter One). It follows that a poetic approach to thanatology must therefore also be supported by a methodology that is not rooted in the objectifying stance of positivist empiricism. For the purposes of this study, it was felt that Jung's method of amplification offered a particularly suitable poetic dialogue between approach and method, particularly as Jung aligned this interpretive method with the thrust of hermeneutics and *poesis*. Before considering the hermeneutic basis of amplification, it is pertinent to offer a brief definition of hermeneutics.

6.1.1. Hermeneutics: a definition

In broad terms, hermeneutics refers to the understanding and interpretation of texts¹ (cf. Follesdal, 1994; Jarrett, 1992; Packer & Addison, 1989; Ricoeur, 1974). It has its origins in the tradition of biblical exegesis, but Dilthey is generally credited with the establishment of hermeneutics as a formal method of inquiry in the humanities (Follesdal, 1994; Jarrett, 1992; Martin & McIntyre, 1994). Dilthey (1900, pp. 259ff.) emphasised that interpretation involves a continual dialectic between the perspective of the interpreter and the text that is interpreted, and this theme continues to express the general spirit of hermeneutic methodologies. In contrast to the emphasis on objectivity and control in the natural sciences, hermeneutics insists that the interpreter can never be a dispassionate observer, but inevitably brings a particular perspective - social, historical, cultural, etc. - to bear in the interpretive procedure (Dallmayr & McCarthy, 1977; Packer & Addison, 1989). The actual process of interpretation is thus the central focus of hermeneutics, particularly so far as the fluid relationship between the researcher and the text is concerned. This relationship is defined by the concept of the 'hermeneutic circle', which refers to a meaningful dialectic between questions and answers (or interpreter and text), a continual return to the phenomenon concerned, and a persistent flux between interpretations and evaluation of the interpretive process itself (Brooke, 1991; Packer, 1989; Packer & Addison, 1989). The central purpose of the hermeneutic circle is to maintain the authentic integrity of the text while still gaining insight and understanding into its essential meaning. In these terms, hermeneutics may be seen to offer a poetic alternative to quantitative methods; it may be said that gnosis, as convictional knowledge rather than that derived from demonstrative logic, is ultimately the province and the task of hermeneutic inquiry (Welman, 1995).

6.1.2. The validity of interpretive methodologies

The criticisms of interpretive methodologies are many and complex, and can only be sketched here. From the perspective of scientific rigour, a major question that pertains to hermeneutic research concerns the validity of the interpretive process. Critics generally argue that interpretations are

¹ The term 'text', which will be used throughout this discussion, refers broadly to any phenomenon that is subject to interpretation. It may thus include an image, a dream, a work of art, a particular symptom or a patient's case history, an historical event, etc.

bound to be subjective and arbitrary (Hirsch, 1967; Martin & McIntyre, 1994). As Taylor (1994) states the issue, "a successful interpretation is one which makes clear the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form. But how does one know that this interpretation is correct?" (p. 182). In short, how can it be ensured that interpretations do not simply reflect the prejudices or biases - i.e. the 'personal agenda' - of the interpreter, rather than something of the actual meaning of the text? The answer to this emerges from an appreciation of the circularity of hermeneutic inquiry. Essentially, the hermeneutic circle may be thought of as comprising two related 'arcs' or movements. The first, a 'forward flexing arc', involves establishing a particular perspective that informs and guides the interpretive process. The second, a 'backward flexing arc', refers to a process of evaluating one's interpretive understanding of the text (Packer & Addison, 1989). Ideally, there is an ongoing dialectic between these 'arcs', meaning that the interpretive process "must not merely call into question the materials it examines; rather, it must relentlessly turn back on itself and its procedures" (D'Acierno & Barnaby, 1990, p. xxii). Thus the hermeneutic circle is essentially 'open', in so far as one's understanding of the text is continually articulated with a critical evaluation of one's procedures. In other words, it is accepted that the researcher will always have certain preconceptions, but it is the task of hermeneutic inquiry to persistently 'test' these perspectives within the interpretive structure itself. Follesdal (1994, p. 234) argues that the hermeneutic method therefore follows a hypothetico-deductive process, in terms of which hypotheses are generated and their deductive consequences checked against the original material to determine their validity. Essentially, interpretations are always framed as hypotheses (rather than answers) which may be accepted, refuted or modified, and this process allows for 'internal validity' of the hermeneutic method. Packer (1989) concludes that:

"The effort to adopt an informed starting point and to keep interpretation open to correction are hermeneutic alternatives to the procedures that supposedly guarantee the validity and reliability of so called objective measurement in empiricist research" (p. 103).

In certain forms of hermeneutic inquiry, the validation of interpretations is further substantiated with reference to related texts or readings (Martin, 1994, p. 265). This may take the form of using different but parallel texts in order to elucidate the meaning of the original text, or a 'part-whole' approach in which the interpretation of part of a text is verified in terms of an understanding of the whole (*ibid.*). In a later section, it will be seen that it is this approach that characterises the 'dream series method' in Jungian research.

6.1.3. The hermeneutics of amplification

The term 'amplification' was introduced by Jung in 'The Tavistock Lectures' of 1935 (Jung, 1935a), and refers to an interpretive procedure which involves understanding images by elucidating the personal and archetypal context within which they are embedded. However, the emergence of this method in Jung's works may be traced to Symbols of Transformation (Jung, 1912/1952), in which he interpreted a series of fantasy images by drawing parallels to mythic and religious symbols. In a paper of 1914, he defined his method as 'constructive', and described it as a process of elucidating symbolic material by "paralleling with other typical formations ... From the comparative analysis of many systems the typical formations can be discovered (Jung, 1914, p. 187). In his important paper of 1916, 'The Structure of the Unconscious', Jung described his interpretive approach as hermeneutic (Jung, 1916, p. 287), and he explained that:

"The essential character of hermeneutics ... consists in making successive additions of other analogies to the analogy given in the symbol: in the first place of subjective analogies produced at random by the patient, and then of objective analogies found by the analyst in the course of erudite research. This procedure widens and enriches the initial symbol, and the final outcome is an infinitely complex and varied picture, in which certain 'lines' of psychological development stand out as possibilities that are at once individual and collective" (*ibid.*).

By the time of the Tavistock Lectures, Jung had refined his method of amplification, and described it in the following terms:

"I adopt the method of the philologist ... and apply a logical principle called amplification. It is simply that of seeking the parallels. For instance, in the case of a very rare word which you have never come across before, you try to find parallel text passages, parallel applications perhaps, where that word also occurs, and then you try to put the formula you have established from the knowledge of other texts into the new text. If you make the new text a readable whole, you say, 'Now we can read it'. This is how we learned to read hieroglyphics and cuneiform inscriptions and that is how we can read dreams" (Jung, 1935a, p. 83).

It must be noted that the method of amplification essentially grew out of Jung's dissatisfaction with

the interpretive approach of classical psychoanalysis. In particular, Freud's causal explanations of images and symptoms, and his almost habitual insistence on supplying images with a sexual meaning, came into sharp conflict with Jung's understanding of the mythic (i.e. archetypal) grounding of psychological life (cf. Frey-Rohn, 1974, p. 261). As Jung saw it, the psychoanalytic method of interpretation reduced the symbol - defined as "the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown thing" - to a sign, i.e. a known denotation (Jung, 1921, p. 474, original emphasis). Essentially, the symbol is always 'plurivocal', rather than 'univocal', and thus cannot be reduced to a definitive meaning (Welman, 1995). Accordingly, Jung made a key distinction between the method of free association, as formulated by Freud, and his method of amplification (Jung, 1935b, p. 8). He thought of free association as an 'analytical-reductive' approach because it is essentially concerned with the resolution of images into memory components or underlying instinctual processes, and he regarded this as a suitable method only for bringing personal motives and repressed memories to light (*ibid.*). Jung insisted that free association "breaks down at the point where ... symbols can no longer be reduced to personal reminiscences or aspirations, that is, when the images of the collective unconscious begin to appear" (Jung, 1917/43, p. 80). In other words, he regarded free association as an acceptable route to the uncovering of personal complexes; but when it comes to archetypal material, interpretation must go beyond purely personal (ontogenetic) associations. Then, a 'synthetic' (Jung, 1935b., p. 8) rather than a 'reductive' approach is called for:

"...certain kinds of psychic material mean next to nothing if simply broken down, but display a wealth of meaning if, instead of being broken down, that meaning is reinforced and extended by all the conscious means at our disposal - by the so-called method of amplification. The images or symbols of the collective unconscious yield their distinctive values only when subjected to a synthetic mode of treatment" (*ibid.*).

Or expressed more passionately:

"When we trace a poem of Goethe's to his mother-complex, when we seek to explain Napoleon as a case of masculine-protest, or St. Francis as a case of sexual repression, a sense of profound dissatisfaction comes over us. The explanation is insufficient and does not do justice to the reality and meaning of things. What becomes of beauty, greatness, and holiness? These are vital realities without which human existence would be superlatively stupid. What is the right answer to the

problem of terrible sufferings and conflicts? The true answer should strike a chord that at least reminds us of the magnitude of the suffering" (Jung, 1928/31b, p. 367).

In this light, Jung noted that amplification is centrally concerned with keeping the symbol 'alive' by accepting that a vital part of its meaning always remains concealed. As soon as the meaning of an image becomes 'known', it loses its symbolic status:

"The symbol is alive so long as it is pregnant with meaning. But once its meaning has been borne out of it, once that expression is found which formulates the things sought, expected, or divined even better than the hitherto accepted symbol, then the symbol is dead, i.e. it possesses only an historical significance" (Jung, 1921, p. 474, original emphasis).

Ultimately, Jung's motive for amplification was inextricably tied up with the quest for meaning; for him it was not simply a methodological or epistemological issue, but an ontological one. By restoring to the image something of its authentic complexity and meaningful opacity, amplification seeks no less than a recollection of the poetic ground of psychical reality. It is a method which leads to gnosis, in so far as it draws the subject, or interpreter, into the imaginative process itself, enabling him or her to 'dream the myth onward' (cf. Philipson, 1963, p. 65; Stein, 1992, p. 306). As Stein comments:

"Interpretation of archetypal images, whether these be mythical figures and stories, or theological dogmas and teachings, or the productions of fantasy and dream, is a translation of the meaning that was first expressed by the image, as a metaphorical self-portrait of an unconscious core of meaning, into a language system which is effective hermeneutically for contemporary persons" (*ibid.*).

With reference to Jung's major treatises on alchemical and mythical symbolism, which demonstrate most convincingly the amplification of archetypal themes, Steele (1982) advances the following considerations:

"As examples of textual interpretation ... Jung's analyses are exceptional ... the parallels he draws with the symbolic arts - mythology, mysticism, gnosticism,

alchemy - and Christianity are nearly overwhelming². There is in his hermeneutics a concern for the old texts and a willingness to explore in detail the symbolic worlds they create ... Jung's textual analyses succeeded in demonstrating that there are detailed correspondences between the fantasies of modern individuals and ancient texts. Reading Jung's works, one learns a great deal about our symbolic heritage and his great success is that he brings the mystical into the realm of modern comprehension by treating it as a psychic reality, an attempt by humans to come to an understanding of their own being. Analytical psychology is a synthesis of ancient wisdom and modern critical consciousness. Jung's analyses do not intrude on the texts he is analysing, but rather renew those works for the modern reader" (p. 342).

Drawing on Ricoeur's (1970) distinction between a 'school of suspicion' and a 'school of reminiscence' in contemporary hermeneutics, Jadot (1984, p. 111) similarly argues that Jung's hermeneutics may rightly be called 'reminiscent' or 'instaurative': his was a project aimed at "remythisation" or, as Durand (1964) has put it, "a recall to the essential order" (p. 106). In contradistinction, Freud's method of free association has been thought of as a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', or a 'reductive' hermeneutic, in so far as it essentially aims to demystify or 'demythologise' the image by arriving at a more-or-less definitive understanding of its meaning (*ibid.*, 1984, p. 111)³.

6.1.4. The amplification of dreams

Brooke (1991, p. 39) points out that Jung adopted a hermeneutic approach and method to understanding a wide range of phenomena, including symptoms, behaviour, the therapeutic setting,

² This is without doubt a distinguishing feature of Jung's works. Steele mentions Jung's hermeneutic exploration of Christian and his extensive studies in alchemy, but mention may also be made of his amplification of the theme of sacrifice (Jung, 1912/52; 1942/54), his commentary on Job (Jung, 1952), and his analysis of the archetypal foundations to the transference (Jung, 1946).

³ It must be noted that Freud's approach to interpretation is nonetheless aimed at elucidating the meaning of texts, and is thus hermeneutic rather than scientific. Ricoeur (1970) argues that Freud's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is similar to that of Marx and Nietzsche, the common thread being that all of these theorists sought to decipher the 'illusion of consciousness'. On the other hand, the doctrine of 'instaurative hermeneutics' may be identified with the work of, inter alia, Jung, Cassirer and Bachelard (Jadot, 1984).

and human relationships. It was however with particular regard to his approach to dream material that Jung refined the method of amplification. He stated:

"I handle the dream as if it were a text which I do not understand properly, say a Latin, or a Greek, or a Sanskrit text, where certain words are unknown to me or the text is fragmentary, and I merely supply the ordinary method any philologist would apply in reading such a text. My idea is that the dream does not conceal; we simply do not understand its language. The assumption that the dream wants to conceal is a mere anthropomorphic idea" (Jung, 1935a, pp. 82-3).

Consistent with his distinction between the personal and the archetypal dimensions of psychological life, Jung approached the amplification of dreams on two levels. These need only be briefly summarised here, but are considered in detail by Mattoon (1978). First, interpretation may proceed by way of establishing the subjects's own associations to particular dream images. In Jung's method, this proceeds in a more controlled fashion than in Freudian free association; the emphasis is on 'staying with the image' through a process of 'circumambulation' rather than tracking a linear course away from the image (cf. Welman, 1995). Second, amplification involves developing an understanding of the archetypal dimensions of the image by drawing parallels between the image under consideration and similar thematic motifs in myth, alchemy, religion, etc.

It must be noted that 'personal' and 'archetypal' amplification are essentially complementary, rather than alternative, methods. For as previously noted, all imaginal experience ultimately has an archetypal grounding, but the manifestation of archetypal imagery always occurs in particular contexts and has a specific meaning for the individual involved. Thus ideally both forms of amplification should be articulated in order to elucidate the particular meaning of dream images, and Jung insisted that no single dream could be understood without a thorough knowledge of the conscious situation of the dreamer. However, he maintained that an exception to this rule was when the clinician or researcher has available a series of dreams. For then:

"...the meaning gradually unfolds more or less of its own accord. The series is the context which the dreamer himself supplies. It is as if not one text but many lay before us, throwing light from all sides on the unknown terms, so that a reading of all the texts is sufficient to elucidate the difficult passages in each individual one" (Jung, CW12, pp. 45-6).

When considering a dream series, certain typical symbols are thus identified and their development across the series is observed; "in this way it is possible to establish certain continuities or modulations of one and the same figure" (Jung, 1936/37, p. 53). Brooke (1991) points out that in this sense "the series is in effect the text in which the 'obscure' passage (the dream) is situated" (p. 40). This principle will prove to be an important foundation in the method adopted in this study.

It is pertinent to comment that Jungian writers do not always seem to follow the intention of Jung's hermeneutics. In particular, considerable controversy has arisen over the extent to which analytical psychologists themselves are guilty of assigning relatively fixed meanings to images (e.g. sea = unconscious), thereby treating symbols as if they were predetermined signs (cf. Brooke, 1991; Gordon, 1968; Miller, 1991; Samuels, 1995; Wollman, 1982). A plausible comment is that this represents methodological abuse of Jung's method of amplification (Brooke, 1991, p. 20); it may be that familiarity with particularly common images (such as water) leads to a certain degree of lassitude in interpretation, so that it is simply assumed that similar images arising in similar contexts may be afforded comparable meanings. Nevertheless, the point is that considerable caution must be exercised in applying generalised interpretations to specific images.

A final point for consideration is that if Jungian hermeneutics is to be truly 'instaurative' rather than 'reductive', then an approach to interpretation must be adopted which does not simply relate the meaning of images to interiorised locations in the mind. On the contrary, amplification must be directed towards a recovery of images as existential possibilities in the lived world (cf. Brooke, 1991, pp. 33ff.). In other words, interpretation should endeavour to reveal those personal and archetypal metaphors which shape our being-in-the-world, and which indicate emergent possibilities of Being.

6.2. Subjects and Procedure

Before proceeding to a consideration of methodological procedures, it is pertinent to briefly comment on the nature and scope of the research project that was associated with this thesis. In 1987, a pilot study was undertaken which involved the collection of dream reports from a terminally ill cancer patient (Welman, 1988); this study was subsequently reported in The Journal of Analytical Psychology (Welman & Faber, 1992). Having established the feasibility of investigating dream reports as a means of understanding the psychological meaning and impact of death, an

extended project was initiated in 1989, and the research component was completed four years later. During this period, the project developed into a collaborative effort with two hospice organisations⁴ and a hospital oncology unit⁵. Although the emphasis of the project was on the collection of research material, the present author served as a voluntary consultant to the staff of these organisations, as well as a counsellor for the patients and families involved in the project.

6.2.1. Subjects

Over the five year duration of the project, 40 subjects were identified for possible inclusion in the study by the author, hospice and hospital staff. All subjects were terminally ill, this being defined as a condition in which, according to medical opinion, death was likely to occur within one year from the time of referral; the subjects were all aware of their prognosis. An initial screening interview was conducted with each of the 40 subjects by the author, and 28 were finally selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- willingness to participate in the study;
- absence of serious psychopathology (psychotic disorders, organic mental syndromes, etc.)⁶;
- not in individual psychotherapy at the time of the study, as the research relationship was by nature therapeutic (see below);
- fluency in the English language.

During the course of the study, it transpired that the family of one subject objected to the research, and the subject was consequently excluded from the project (although by mutual agreement a

⁴ St. Luke's Hospice in Cape Town, and Grahamstown Hospice.

⁵ Settler's Hospital in Grahamstown.

⁶ This was an exclusion criterion owing firstly to the possibility that dream-work could exacerbate psychological disturbance in persons with fragile ego boundaries, and secondly to the likelihood that such disorders may have had a significant impact on dream imagery (Welman & Faber, 1992).

supportive relationship was maintained until his death). Six subjects reported no dreams during their participation in the study. Thus dream material was finally collected from a total of 21 subjects. Of these, 17 were suffering from cancer, two had advanced Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease (emphysema), and two were in the final stages of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). All of the subjects involved in the study had died by the time of writing this thesis. The demographic and diagnostic details of the subjects are recorded in Appendix A.

6.2.2. Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects prior to their participation in the study⁷. Subjects were informed that the researcher was interested in exploring dream content during terminal illness. In an attempt to obviate the problem of perceived demand, i.e. subjects offering responses based on their expectations of the researcher's desired findings, no indication was given of the theoretical approach, nor of anticipated findings. It was explained to the subjects that the study would in no way interfere with or substitute their regular treatment regimes, and it was emphasised that there would be no adverse consequences so far as their treatment was concerned should they at any stage decide to withdraw from the project. Anonymity was ensured so as to maintain confidentiality.

6.2.3. Recording of dreams and relationship with subjects

Subjects were requested to record their dreams either in writing or on audio tape. Dream material was collected during meetings with the researcher. Each subject was visited at least once weekly, either at home, at hospice or in hospital. During these meetings, reported dreams were briefly discussed in terms of subjects' impressions, and personal associations were elicited. Inevitably, the meetings assumed the proportions of a therapeutic relationship, in so far as an environment for the discussion of feelings and concerns was facilitated. In the pilot study (Welman & Faber, 1992), the subject involved had specifically requested that his dream material not be discussed with him, but

⁷ The study was also approved by the ethics committee of the University of Cape Town, under whose auspices the project was initiated. In 1991, the project was transferred to Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

many other subjects did request an 'interpretation' of their dreams, and in some cases it was deemed ethically appropriate to offer tentative suggestions as to emergent themes in the dream material (cf. Chapter Eight).

6.3. Method of Analysis

As previously noted, the purpose of this study was to establish and understand symbolic themes that occurred in the dreams of dying subjects, rather than to focus on particular cases or dream images. A method of data analysis, which combined established principles of thematic analysis with the method of amplification, was developed for this purpose. It essentially involved (a) the identification of common themes from the dream material; (b) the elucidation of each theme by way of the method of amplification; and (c) the distillation of concise themes from the amplificatory analysis.

6.3.1. Identification of initial themes

The identification of themes from the dreams recorded was guided by the principles of thematic analysis as outlined by Parker (1977), Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Ritchie and Spencer (1994). These authors pointed out that material collected through qualitative methods is inevitably unstructured and unwieldy to begin with, and that the initial task of analysis is thus to provide coherence and structure to the data by sifting, charting and sorting material according to key themes. The first step in this process was that of familiarisation with the material. This may be termed a 'discovery phase', which Taylor and Bogdan (1984, p. 136) describe as a task of 'reading and re-reading the data', the aim being to gain a sense of emerging patterns in the material. The term 'reading', as it appears in hermeneutic methods, clearly refers to more than a mere perusal of one's research material. It involves "immersion in the data" (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994, p. 178), and this includes listening to tapes, studying observational notes, recording emerging possibilities of interpretation, and so on. Giorgi (1975) explains that in 'reading' the researcher is present to the data "by means of imaginative variation" (p. 74). Thus reading the data allowed for the disclosure of certain images and motifs which recurred in the recorded dreams, and this in turn enabled the identification of specific themes.

A theme was defined as a collection of images and motifs which were deemed to be related, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, conspicuous images of death allowed for the identification of death as an initial theme. On the other hand, the theme of the *temenos* emerged from images which have to do with sacred or divine places, but here the connections between images was far more implicit than in the case of the theme of death. This example illustrates a fundamental principle of hermeneutics, namely that the analysis of material is guided by a specific 'forestructure' which the researcher brings to bear (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994, p. 180). For instance, a Jungian researcher would be inclined to identify from images of circles and squares a theme of 'mandala images', whereas this category may be of little interest to a behaviourist. Thus the selection of themes is influenced by theoretical orientation, research aims, issues raised by subjects themselves, and so on (*ibid.*). Devising a thematic framework is therefore not simply a mechanical process; it:

"... involves both logical and intuitive thinking. It involves making judgements about meaning, about the relevance and importance of issues, and about implicit connections between ideas" (*ibid.*).

This means that there are no absolute guidelines as to what constitutes a 'theme', and the researcher ultimately relies on his or her own judgement and acumen in this regard. So far as the present study is concerned, the identification of themes was in part the outcome of an intuitive sense of the data, and in part the product of the theoretical position reflected in previous chapters; from the outset, attention was directed towards the categorisation of images to do with death, dying, wholeness, transcendence, etc. In addition, the identification of themes was to some extent guided by related studies in the area, particularly the work of Gordon (1978), Herzog (1983), and von Franz (1986). These studies alerted the author to certain thematic possibilities pertaining to symbolic representations of death and dying.

It is important to note that the selection of themes was therefore not bound by empirical criteria, at least not in a quantitative sense. In other words, themes were not selected on the basis of the number of dream images belonging to a specific category, as might be the case with a scientifically oriented content analysis (e.g. Hall & van der Castle, 1966). Given the parameters of this study, the sense of a common meaning to certain images was deemed to be more important than empirical generality. This leads of course to the question of the validity of those themes which were identified. In this regard, it must be recalled from an earlier discussion that the criteria for validity in hermeneutic research differ markedly from those in positivist science. In a hermeneutically based thematic analysis, validity does not rest upon the question of whether other researchers would

identify the same themes from the same data, nor upon the statistical importance of images making up a theme. Rather, validity has to do more with the extent to which the identified themes are useful in understanding the phenomenon that is being investigated. Ultimately, the evaluation of validity comes down to whether the reader finds the identified themes useful for further reflection; this is part of the social enterprise of hermeneutics (Brooke, personal communication, 1995).

Through constantly refining and modifying the thematic framework, a number of 'initial themes' (e.g. descent, light, water, journeys) were distilled from the data. The term 'initial theme' has been adopted here to distinguish those themes that emerged prior to amplification from the themes that evolved following an amplificatory analysis of the initial themes. The latter have been termed 'concise themes' (see below).

6.3.2. Amplification of initial themes

Each of the initial themes identified was subject to the procedure of amplification as outlined above. Relevant mythical, alchemical and religious symbolism was drawn upon, and numerous texts were consulted for this. The aim was to elucidate the archetypal context or grounding of each theme. Personal associations elicited from subjects were drawn upon as part of the process of amplification, but the primary aim was to understand the archetypal meanings associated with the emergent themes. For this reason, the personal associations of individual subjects were consulted only to reinforce archetypal amplifications, or when no mythical context could be forwarded to understand certain dream images. Essentially, this constitutes a variation of the 'dream series' method, the images and motifs constituting each initial theme forming an interpretive matrix within which the meaning of any one image included in a particular theme could be elucidated⁸. The actual application of this approach will become evident in the following chapter.

⁸ I am indebted to Robert Romanyshyn and Veronica Goodchild for clarifying the parameters and validity of this method.

^{3/}6.4.3. Identification of concise themes

Having amplified each of the initial themes, the data was again reviewed, or 're-read', so as to further process and simplify it. This amounted to a process of 'convergence' (Parker, 1977, p. 19), or a distilling of 'concise themes' from the initial themes. The term 'concise themes' thus refers to an attempt to reduce the initial themes to more compressed categories (*ibid.*). To this end, concise themes are more heavily informed by one's theoretical framework than are initial themes. For instance, 'The Feminine' as a concise theme refers to the 'collapsing' of a number of initial themes (e.g. earth, water, female figures) which, when read from a Jungian perspective, pertain to the concept of the archetypal Feminine. Thus the aim of identifying concise themes was essentially to lend a conceptual focus to the data.

^{4/}6.5. Summary

The methodological approach adopted in this study is essentially hermeneutic. It involves using Jung's method of amplification as an interpretive basis for elucidating the imaginative concomitants of the dying process, with the data consisting of dream reports of dying persons. The interpretive process will be facilitated by two levels of thematic analysis: first, the identification and amplification of 'initial' themes, and second the identification of a smaller number of 'concise' themes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the study will be presented in a way which essentially follows the stages involved in the process of elucidation, as outlined in Chapter Six. In Section 7.1. the initial themes are described and amplified; a brief description of the central images and motifs making up each theme is followed by a discussion of its amplificatory context. In Section 7.2. the concise themes are identified and defined.

Before proceeding, it is pertinent to advance a few comments regarding the presentation of material. As mentioned in Chapter Six, some dreams either did not yield archetypal or personal associations, or revealed a meaning which did not associate with any of the identified themes. Although this material is not reflected in the amplification of themes, its exclusion does not mean that the dreams in question were not meaningful or significant in their own right; it is simply that the confines of the present dissertation do not allow for a consideration of all of the dream images that were identified, and it would be overly laborious to make specific reference to those images that are not included in the analysis. Complete transcriptions of all dreams reported by the subjects are however included in Appendix B. Where relevant, specific dreams and personal associations have been drawn upon in order to substantiate or illustrate certain interpretations.

It must also be noted that the intention here is not to offer a comprehensive analysis of each theme, for that is neither possible nor necessary. Rather, the essential purpose of this analysis is to highlight salient trends to emerge from the data by following the hermeneutic procedure outlined in the previous chapter. Thus there are of course many possible interpretations and amplificatory parallels which will not be addressed in this study. Owing to the fact that dream images usually have multiple symbolic connotations (cf. Chapter Five), the reader will also find that a particular image may be associated with more than one theme. A final introductory comment serves to reinforce the principle of thematic analysis outlined in Chapter Six, namely that there are no objective 'rules' as to what constitutes a theme; this means that the identification of themes is

ultimately based on a combination of conceptual orientation as well as personal judgement. The question of the validity of the themes identified in this analysis is debated in Chapter Eight.

7.1. The Identification and Amplification of Initial Themes

As noted in Chapter Six, data was collected from 28 subjects (cf. Appendix A for demographic and diagnostic details). A total of 108 dreams were recorded. The longest dream series recorded by a subject consisted of 15 dreams; the shortest consisted of two dreams. Twenty initial themes were identified from this data. For heuristic purposes, some of these have been divided into sub-themes. The 20 initial themes to emerge from the data are¹:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Death and dying | 11. Descent |
| 2. Bodily metamorphosis | 12. Water |
| 3. Malfunctioning Machinery | 13. Fire |
| 4. Chaos | 14. Light |
| 5. Loss/separation | 15. Darkness |
| 6. Animal motifs | 16. Mandala images |
| 7. Vegetation | 17. The <i>temenos</i> (sacred place) |
| 8. Earth | 18. Colour symbolism |
| 9. The journey | 19. Human figures |
| 10. Ascent | 20. Opposites |

1. Death and dying

The first theme emerged from dreams in which there are clearly defined, conspicuous images of death or dying (or the possibility of death or dying). This is the case with 17 dreams (B4, D1, D5, F1, G3, G5, I4, K1, K4, L1, L2, L4, L5, L8, N1, S1, T2)², which were reported by nine subjects.

¹ The presentation of themes follows the order in which they were identified during the process of elucidation, rather than being listed according to theoretical or clinical importance.

² Details in parentheses refer to the dream reports provided in Appendix Two. Participants were coded alphabetically and dreams numerically. Thus #A1 refers to dream #1 reported by participant A, and so on.

Excluded from this theme are dreams in which the subject encounters a particular figure who is known to be dead; this motif is included elsewhere. Three of the dreams included in the theme of death and dying involve funerary motifs: performing a ritual for the dead (B4), attending the funeral of an unknown person (D1), and being at the grave of a spouse (S1). One subject dreamed of receiving news that a group of his friends had been killed in an automobile accident (T2). In two dreams (G5, I4), the dreamer was in heaven and realised that s/he had died³. In another dream, the subject heard her physician pronouncing that nothing could be done to save her life - she was 'in the hands of God' (K1). Another subject dreamed that she was carried into hospital, and knew that she would die there (K4). The inevitability of death is also evident in Dream #G3, in which the subject was in an aircraft that was about to crash; she realised that all of the passengers would be killed.

The remaining dreams linked to this theme reflect an association between death and aggression or hostility⁴. This connection is evident in four dreams reported by one subject, a 44 year old man dying of AIDS. In one dream, he was being dismembered by cannibals, who ate his body parts (L1). In another, he was bitten twice by a highly venomous spider and realised rather dispassionately that he would die (L2). In a following dream (L4), he was stung repeatedly by bees and again realised that he would die as a result of this. In the fourth dream (L5), he was attacked by a group of men who doused him with petrol and wanted to set him alight; he realised that he was about to die and sensed great sadness. The last dream of his series does however deviate from this pattern; there, he was holding a white dove and knew that this was a sign that he was 'ready to die' (L8). Another subject dreamed that she was being tortured and killed by a group of priests (D5). Aggression is also prominent in dream #F1, in which the dreamer is 'ripped apart' by a pack of wild dogs; the dream includes vivid images of blood. Finally, the link between aggression and death is evident in the case of a 58 year old man dying of cancer, who dreamed that he was a soldier and was shot and 'blown up' by the enemy (N1).

³ Other dreams too include motifs of a 'beyond' or an 'afterlife', and these are incorporated into other themes, such as that of the journey and of ascent; they are not included in this theme because they do not involve death as an overt feature.

⁴ Themes of hostility and anger are also evident in dreams F5, Q2 and R2 (all discussed below) and dream #G2. These dreams are not included in the present discussion because they do not have overt connotations with death and dying.

Amplification of theme #1

Dreams in which the dream ego dies, or is faced directly with the possibility of death, may in the first instance be interpreted as indicators of the encounter with death as a literal possibility. This interpretation is supported by the fact that with only one exception (dream #N1), all of the subjects who reported dreams in which they themselves were in threat of death associated the dreams in question with the reality of their illness and the inevitability of death. Following a different but not incompatible line of reasoning, it may be argued that the theme of death and dying is also symbolic of the surrender or loss of the ego. In other words, we may treat images of death and destruction as metaphors for sacrifice and the renunciation of egohood. This amplification has been well established in previous chapters and needs little discussion at this point. We may rest with Herzog's comment that "inner crises of transformation are often foreshadowed by dreams in which the [subject] is confronted by death, either directly or in the form of an archaic image. Such an experience of dying is potentially an expression of the full reality of life" (Herzog, 1983, p. 136). The association between dying and the possibility of rebirth or renewal is particularly evident in dream #K4. The subject, a 53 year old woman suffering from lymphatic cancer, dreamed that she was being carried into hospital on a stretcher, and realised in the dream that she was "on her last legs"; she "would not be coming out again". As she was being wheeled down a passage, she passed another woman, who was giving birth. In our discussion of the dream, she related that she saw the co-incidence of these motifs as an indication that her death was simply part of a "bigger cycle" of death and birth in the universe, and this was a comforting reality for her.

Extending these considerations, it is possible that dreams in which figures other than the dream ego die are also reflective of the loss of relationships and ego-investments that must be faced during the dying process. For example, a participant who dreamed that she came upon the corpse of her husband lying in a grave (S1) associated this dream with the loss of years of love and companionship as a result of her own impending death. Another possibility, mentioned by Coolidge and Fish (1983/84), is that the death of other characters in the dreams of the dying may indicate unresolved feelings on the part of the dreamer regarding his or her own death (cf. Chapter Five). In the present study, direct support for this hypothesis was however evident in only one case. The subject who dreamed that she was attending the funeral of an unknown person (dream #D1) was highly ambivalent towards death at the time of the dream, and fluctuated between optimism, despair and denial. That the dream reflects unresolved feelings towards death is further indicated by the

dreamer's inappropriate behaviour at the funeral - laughing and making jokes (cf. Appendix B). As previously noted, themes of hostility or aggression in the dreams of dying persons may be indicative of unresolved hostility or anger (*ibid.*; cf. Chapter Five).

2. Bodily metamorphosis

The theme of bodily metamorphosis emerged from 12 dreams and refers to explicit images and motifs of bodily destruction, decay, or transmutation. There is thus some overlap between this theme and that of death and dying. Seven dreams involve the destruction or violation of the dreamer's body: being impaled on a sundial (D5), being ripped apart by wild dogs (F1), the dreamer slashing his body with a knife (F5), being dismembered by cannibals (L1), a vivid image of two lumps on the dreamer's back as a result of being bitten by a poisonous spider (L2), the dreamer's body "swollen and angry" from multiple bee stings (L4), and being blown to pieces during combat (N1). Another four dreams involve the motif of bodily decay or degeneration. Two of these dreams feature images of skeletons; in the first (F4), the dreamer unearthed a skull and a skeleton in his garden, and in the second he was on a aircraft but discovered that all of the other passengers were skeletons (H2). One participant dreamed of human organs and severed limbs discarded on a rubbish dump (I1). The motif of bodily decay is also evident in a dream in which the central image is that of rotting animal carcasses (G1). A further motif contributing to the theme of bodily metamorphosis is that of the renewal or 'preparation' of the body as identified in dream #B1, in which the dreamer is bathed and anointed by an oriental maid.

Amplification of theme #2

Images of bodily metamorphosis may be interpreted on a number of levels. For the purposes of this discussion, particular emphasis is given to the symbolic associations of this theme with (a) death and dying and (b) transformation.

Images of bodily destruction or decay may in the first instance reflect subjects' anxiety about the loss or degeneration of physical capacities. As previously indicated (cf. Chapter Three), such concerns however are usually connected to a more pervasive horror of death and self-dissolution.

Thus Whitmont (1969) contends that "fear of cessation ... is based upon ego actualisation through and as a body" (p. 245). Herzog (1983, pp. 52ff) argues that motifs of bodily decay or annihilation evoke and reflect the destructive face of death - here death is revealed not as a transcending power but as a catastrophe, so that one is confronted with its 'reductive', literal implications. In ancient death liturgy, this is particularly evident in the personification of death as a skeleton. In Eastern myth, for instance, the god of death Shiva is typically portrayed as a skeleton, and his abode is said to be littered with the skulls of the dead (*ibid.*, p. 52). Osiris is represented in similar form in some Egyptian funerary texts (Budge, 1923; Edinger, 1985; Neumann, 1954). In Western thanatology, the *danse macabre* ('dance of death') tradition, which flourished in Europe during the late Middle Ages, similarly popularised the dramatic representation of death as a decaying corpse or skeleton (cf. Stannard, 1977).

Broadly speaking, images and motifs of bodily destruction and annihilation may thus be taken as symbolic indications of the literal reality of death (cf. Welman & Faber, 1992), and may therefore reflect the dreamers' anxieties regarding the anticipation of death as the annihilation of the body. At the same time, the dream images associated with this theme may also be symbolic of profound psychological transformation. For as with images of death, the suffering, degradation and transmutation of the body may be interpreted as archetypal metaphors of sacrifice and renewal (cf. von Franz, 1986, pp. 90ff.). In the alchemical *opus*, which is itself symbolic of individuation, it is for instance said that the 'old body' (the embodied ego) must be subject to torture and destruction so that it can be transformed into a 'higher' or 'subtle' body, which in Jungian terms is indicative of the self (Edinger, 1985, pp. 147ff.; Jung, 1945/54, p. 329)⁵. This process is expressed through the alchemical operations of *mortificatio* ('killing') and *putrefactio* ('rotting'), and in many classic texts these operations are represented or designated by the figure of a skeleton (Edinger, 1985, p. 148).

Images of dismemberment, as in dream #L1, have a particularly close mythic correspondence with possibilities of transformation and rebirth. This connection features prominently in the myth of Osiris, the Egyptian god of death, who is killed and dismembered by Set and reconstituted into an

⁵ As one Paracelsian text put it:

"Putrefaction is of so great efficacy that it blots out the old nature and transmutes everything into another new nature, and bears another new fruit. All living things die in it, all dead things decay, and then all these dead things regain life. Putrefaction takes away the acidity from all corrosive spirits of salt, renders them soft and sweet" (Paracelsus, quoted by Edinger, 1985, p. 149).

immortal form through the healing powers of Isis (cf. Budge, 1923; von Franz, 1986). A striking allusion to this motif is evident in dream #11, which was reported by a 68 year old man dying of cancer:

I had a dream about human organs that somebody seemed to have discarded on a rubbish dump. There were limbs and bodily parts lying all over the place, and flies were swarming around them. It was a terrible scene, but in the middle of it there was a woman who was rummaging through the pieces like a scavenger. I asked her what she was doing, but she said that we had to join them all back together again.

This dream seems to reflect the idea that even in the context of death and destruction there is the potential for new life; indeed, what is perhaps indicated is the potential for a reconstitution of 'old' parts to construct a 'new body', the *corpus subtile* of alchemy and the self of Jungian psychology. In other words, images of dismemberment appear to capture the need for a dissolution or sacrifice of the ego-centred personality as a prelude to the emergence of a more encompassing whole which is experienced as the eternal and immutable dimension of psychical life (cf. Edinger, 1985, pp. 147ff.; Herzog, 1983, p. 158). The dream also alludes to the vital role of the archetypal Feminine in bringing about transformation, but this theme is discussed elsewhere (cf. Chapter Eight).

The suffering and torture of the body as a necessary path to transformation is also evident in dream #D5. Here, the dreamer was impaled on a sundial by a group of priests; she asked why she was being tortured, but was told that all persons had to be sacrificed to the sun. She was then spun around on the wheel while a priest had intercourse with her. These symbolic events seem to be a clear portrayal of sacrifice, grounded in the suffering and death of the body, as a preparation for wholeness and transcendence, symbolised by the union with the priest (see below).

Extending the amplifications developed above, it may be seen that motifs of bodily mutilation and destruction might point to the actual experience of transformation (cf. Jung, 1944/52, p. 21). In this regard, Jung pointed out that what transformation and rebirth entails in practice is the capacity to tolerate painful, extreme, and often contradictory emotions (*ibid.*). We may understand that this comes about through opening oneself to deliteralised and hence profoundly ambiguous possibilities of existence. Drawing on the Dionysus myth, Savitz (1990, p. 48) for instance associates the image of dismemberment with the terrifying reality of the liminal realm, where the emergence of the self is not experienced as a resting place or a place of resolution, but as the fragmentation and destruction of the inner world. In other words, we may be dealing here with the regressive

dimension of the death image (cf. Chapter Four). Jung (1945/54) noted that even such turmoil may however lead to profound resolution. With reference to the torment of the Gnostic Sophia, he wrote that:

"The sufferings that befell her took the form of various emotions - sadness, fear, bewilderment, confusion, longing; now she laughed and now she wept. From these affects ... arose the entire created world" (*ibid.*, pp. 334-5).

Case studies of dying persons support the notion that the ending of life occasions powerful untamed emotions, but that it is also by working through such emotional turmoil that possibilities for transformation and transcendence - a resolution of opposites - manifest themselves (cf. Fortier, 1972; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981). The hypothesis that these affective extremes may be symbolised in dream life through the suffering of the body is simply indicative of the fact that emotional suffering ultimately calls forth from the body, rather than from a disembodied, rational mind. Moreover, it is through such suffering that we are ultimately called or forced to return to the body, from which Cartesian thought has driven us. As Sardello (1983) comments:

" ... our body is our individual home. The sense of death belongs to the imagination of the ... body, for, paradoxically, the sense of death is the necessity required to experience [the body] as alive. This realisation is neither morbid nor dark because it is an awareness of completeness" (p. 162).

It is also important to note, in this context especially, that images of the degradation or destruction of the body may emerge in individual life as intermediary symbols in the process of coming to terms with the 'unnamed horror' of death (Herzog, 1983, pp. 40ff.). Faced with images of the unmitigated destructiveness of death, one is somehow forced to become connected to it, and this opens the way for an experience of death that is not simply negative. This argument is demonstrated with relevant case material in the following chapter.

An interesting motif occurs in dream #B1, in which the dreamer was washed and anointed by an oriental maid, and then dressed in white. Again, there are many possible amplificatory angles to this dream, some of which will be highlighted in the discussion of other initial themes; but in the context of the dreamer's life-threatening illness, this dream may at one level be interpreted as an allusion to the ritual preparation of the body for death, as described in funerary texts from the ancient and Middle Ages (cf. Budge, 1923; Larue, 1975; Stannard, 1977; von Franz, 1986). These

rituals appear to have given expression to the mythic connections between death and rebirth: they were intended to preserve the corpse so that it could arise intact on a day of resurrection, and in Egyptian tradition the washing and anointing of the body was deemed a prerequisite to post-mortal union with Osiris (Budge, 1923; von Franz, 1986). In terms of this amplification, the dream may be interpreted as both a symbolic anticipation of death, and as an indication of the potential for psychological renewal and resurrection. This claim is supported by the motif of immersion in water and the symbolism of whiteness, which both allude to rebirth and transformation (see below).

3. Malfunctioning Machinery

In six dreams, the theme of machinery forms a central focus. Five of these dreams involve machinery that malfunctions in some way. In dream #C2, the subject was driving his car down a long tunnel; he attempted to stop the car but discovered that the brakes did not work. The same subject also dreamed that he was a computer that was malfunctioning, but no spare parts were available for repair (C4). The theme of malfunctioning machinery is also clearly evident in dream #F3, in which defective traffic lights had led to chaos at a busy intersection; the dreamer tried unsuccessfully to negotiate his way through this. In another case, a subject dreamed that she was in an aircraft that was about to crash because the engines had failed (G3). Another subject dreamed that her car would not start; a mechanic informed her that the wiring in the engine was burned out and that it would be too expensive to repair the damage (S2). The sixth dream (T1) is more complex and will be related below.

Amplification of theme #3

The machine, prone to breakdown and capable of repair, is a common metaphor for the body in post-Enlightenment thought (cf. Bottomley, 1979; Romanyshyn, 1982). In the present context, dreams of defective machinery may similarly be indicative of the deterioration or 'failure' of bodily functioning, and thus an indication of the inevitability of death. This reasoning is supported by the fact that in two cases the subjects themselves associated their dreams with the course of their illnesses. The dream of defective traffic lights (F3) was reported by a man who had heard two days prior to the dream that the treatment he had been receiving for bone cancer was proving

unsuccessful; he took the dream to be a reflection both of the negative prognosis and of his own feelings of frustration and helplessness. The second dream, involving the car that has burned out electrical circuits (S2), was remembered by a 55 year old woman dying of an inoperable brain tumour. She similarly associated the dream with her actual physical condition, commenting that "I think the car engine represents my brain - it's like the wires or circuits of my brain are being destroyed by the tumour. It can't be repaired ... there's no getting away from it". A interesting variation to this theme occurs in a dream reported by a man dying of AIDS (T1). In the dream he was watching a stricken oil tanker struggling into harbour; the entire hull was ablaze and cracked, and the ship seemed to be in obvious danger of sinking. But the superstructure was intact, and an onlooker told him that even when the ship sank the superstructure would simply break off and would continue to float. In this case, it is reasonable to think of the hull as symbolic of the dreamer's body, or the embodied ego, which must face death and destruction; but the dream also indicates that there is a part that is seemingly indestructible. Perhaps the superstructure of the tanker is thus symbolic of the self. This interpretation is somewhat speculative, but as will be discussed in the following chapter, the dream had a profound poetic significance for the subject concerned.

4. Chaos

Although only three dreams involved prominent motifs of disorder or confusion, it seemed appropriate to identify a theme of 'chaos' because of the significance afforded to this motif in Jung's writings and in alchemical symbolism, as outlined below. Nonetheless, the amplifications advanced for this theme are tentative. In one dream, the subject was in the middle of a chaotic situation in which humans and animals were "roaming around aimlessly" in groups of six (E2). Another dream involved chaos on a racetrack, with horses and their handlers running around in confusion (H1). The third dream, which has already been mentioned with regard to the theme of malfunctioning machinery, involves chaos at a busy intersection due to defective traffic lights (F3).

Amplification of theme #4

It may be speculated that, in the context of dying, dreams of chaos are indicative both of bodily

destruction and of the weakening of ego boundaries. This is particularly so with regard to an illness such as cancer, which essentially involves the disorderly proliferation of malignant cells, i.e. bodily chaos (cf. Sabini & Maffly, 1981). Indeed, the subject who dreamed of chaos at a traffic intersection (F3) associated this image not only with his feelings of helplessness (as reported above), but also with the uninhibited advance of the cancer ("I would think that the cars driving around aimlessly shows what's going on inside of me. Things just happening randomly rather than for a purpose ... It's the collapse of order ... carnal anarchy"). Further amplification of these associations emerges from alchemical symbolism, where the 'original chaos' (*massa confusa*) is one of the many names given to the *prima materia*, the elusive 'substance' that forms the basis of the *opus* and which is ultimately transformed into the equally elusive 'Philosopher's Stone'. In Jungian terms, the *prima materia* is thus indicative of the 'original self', i.e. a condition of undifferentiated and chaotic wholeness (Edinger, 1985, pp. 9ff.). Images of chaos may therefore be seen to reveal a movement towards the self in its primitive condition, referring to the manifestation of disparate potentialities in their original, unbounded form (Jung, 1944/52, pp. 317ff.). As conceptualised in previous chapters, this is also equivalent to death as a regressive, pre-personal state of boundaryless fusion. One alchemical text, the treatise of Komarios, gives expression to this symbolic equation by referring to the *prima materia* as Hades, the realm of death (*ibid.*, p. 319).

The line of interpretation developed above is perhaps particularly relevant to dream #E2, in which humans and animals are pictured as "wandering around aimlessly" in groups of six. Here we may speculate that the 'mixing' of humans and animals reflects the collapse of customary ego boundaries, so that conscious (human) and unconscious (animal) merge chaotically. This interpretation is also supported by the observation that the number six is often interpreted as signifying the conjunction of or tension between opposites (von Franz, 1986, p. 95).

5. Loss/ Separation

Four dreams involving the theme of loss or separation were reported. One subject dreamed that she had lost all of her important papers, including her identity document (A1). Another subject dreamed that she was carrying in her handbag a roll of film which contained the most important scenes of her life; when she opened her handbag, the film ignited and was destroyed (J1).

Two subjects reported dreams in which loss in the form of separation from family members or loved ones is an overt and central theme. In the first, a subject dreamed that she had to separate from

her husband and children (K2). In the second case, the dreamer was at a family gathering and had to bid farewell to each person present (R1).

Amplification of theme #5

In the context of the present study, the theme of loss and separation may in the first instance be seen as indicative of feelings of loss associated with the dying process. For example, in response to dream #J1 (the destruction of film containing scenes from the dreamer's life) the subject, a 53 year old woman dying of pancreatic cancer, reported the following associations:

"It was a really scary dream. It felt as if my whole life was going up in a flash of smoke, and nothing was left of it. I woke up feeling absolutely desperate to get my life back".

Her dream seems to reveal the anticipated loss of the ego and its investments in personal identity and history. Similarly, the dreams involving separation from family members appear to reflect the inevitable loss of significant relationships that must be faced during the dying process (cf. Coolidge & Fish, 1983/84). The subject who dreamed of having to say farewell to people at a family gathering (R1) was a 67 year old man who died a few weeks later from complications associated with bowel cancer; he saw this dream as indeed indicating that death was near and that he should ensure to "say a proper goodbye" to his family, particularly his children, a task which he conceded that he had been avoiding.

On the other hand, dream #K2 lends itself to a slightly different interpretation in view of the dreamer's personal situation (she could offer no associations to the dream). The subject, Anne, was a 53 year old woman who was the mother of two daughters aged 16 and 14. She was suffering from a primary cancer of the lymph nodes. She was aware of the fact that the cancer was spreading rapidly, and had therefore been attempting to spend as much time as possible with her husband and children. She also devoted a great deal of attention to planning various contingencies which could be put into operation following her death; she felt that this was necessary to ensure that her family would cope without her. Anne clearly experienced both anxiety and guilt about 'letting go', and had indicated prior to the dream that these thoughts and emotions troubled her almost constantly. Because of her need to do so much for her family before her death, she however

had little time for herself and was constantly exhausted. In fact, she seemed to be living very little of her own life. In the dream, Anne had to part from her husband and children in order to follow an old man into the basement of an ancient cathedral, where she was made to enter a fire from which she emerged in a younger form; the separation from her family was associated with "awful" feelings of loneliness and isolation.

It is reasonable to assume that Anne's dream is an allegory of sacrifice as a necessary prelude to transformation and renewal. It points to the potential for transformation and rebirth through the element of fire (see below), but also seemed to indicate that for this potential to be realised she had to allow herself to 'disengage' from her over-involved relationships - for only then could a space be created for reflection, recollection and transformation. But this also meant being faced with her existential aloneness, which is an inevitable part of the acceptance of death as a possibility of personal existence.

6. Animal motifs

Animal motifs form another theme in the dreams studied, manifesting in nine images: a bull (E3), a dolphin (E4), a black dog (F1), two helpful dogs (G4), horses (H1), two black widow spiders (L2), a swarm of bees surrounding a large queen bee (L4), and a dove (L8). There is also the previously reported dream of a "jumble" of humans mixing with animals (E2).

Amplification of theme #6

For the most part, Jung tended to treat animal imagery as symbolic of the relatively primitive, 'instinctual' dimensions of psychological life, i.e. as indicative of unconscious potentialities that are constellated but not yet brought into the light of reflective consciousness (e.g. Jung, 1912/52, pp. 261, 327). In this sense, it may be thought that psychical qualities captured in the form of animal images tend to be those that are lived out in the form of 'projections'. As previously indicated, considerable caution must however be exercised in applying general 'rules' to specific contexts (cf. Chapter Five), and the following amplifications are thus intended to elucidate certain broad possibilities rather than arriving at definitive (and hence reductive) interpretations.

(a) Dogs

There is a strong mythic association between dogs and death, and Herzog (1983, pp. 46ff.) demonstrates that the dog appears in human history as a relatively archaic variation of the 'death-demon'. In Greek and Teutonic myth the hounds Cerberus and Garmr respectively are the guardians to the underworld, while Shiva, the near-Eastern god of death, manifests in his destructive form as Lord of the Dogs (*ibid.*, pp. 69f.). The dog is also the principal animal motif associated with Hecate, mistress of the night road, of fate, and of the dead (Neumann, 1963, p. 170). In many European traditions too, it is believed that death is announced by a black dog (Von Franz, 1986, p. 69). Von Franz proposes that in the context of dying dream images of dogs may thus serve as symbolic anticipations of death (*ibid.*), and it would seem that this is particularly so as regards the destructive or devouring aspects of death, i.e. its literal connotations (cf. Herzog, 1983, pp. 46ff.; Jung, 1912/52, p. 369). As previously established, these amplificatory parallels are particularly relevant to dream #F1, in which the dreamer, a man dying of bone cancer, is attacked by a pack of fierce dogs, and is then mauled by a large black dog.

As argued in an earlier analysis, we must not however lose sight of the important connotations with transformation that are revealed in motifs of bodily destruction. In this sense, the dog may also be an agent of transformation or even of healing (Campbell, 1974, p. 89). In alchemical texts the transformative 'spirit' (Hermes or Mercurius), is for example often represented by the figure of a dog (Jung, 1943/48, p. 232n.; 1955-56, pp. 146ff.), and in Egyptian myth it is Anubis, the dog-headed jackal, who facilitates the resurrection of the dead (Budge, 1923; von Franz, 1986). These 'positive' aspects of the dog motif are perhaps evident in the dream of a 49 year old woman who was dying of breast cancer, in which she is lost in a forest and guided out by two dogs (G4). It is possible that the striking differences between the two dreams considered with regard to this motif reflect a different stance of the ego towards the reality of death and transformation, but this possibility must remain essentially speculative.

(b) The horse

The symbol of the horse, which appears in dream #H1, is commonly associated with death. It is portrayed in classical myth as the harbinger of death, and is usually the animal which carries the

soul of the deceased into the Beyond (Herzog, 1983, p. 68). For example, early Greek myth described the souls of the dead being fetched by the Valkyries, depicted as horsewomen, and Greek folk songs speak of Charon as riding on a horse. The Teutonic goddess of death, Hel, also rides on a three-legged horse (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 281f.). While numerous other amplifications could be added to the horse-motif (e.g. its connotations with sexuality), its connection in the above-mentioned dream with chaos (horses break free from their handlers and run around wildly) supports its interpretation as essentially a death-related image. As seen in Chapter Five, Jung interpreted a similar image as a manifestation of an instinctual drive towards deintegration and dissolution, and in this sense the dream in question may also be seen as symbolic of the death instinct in its regressive form, meaning an innate propensity towards boundaryless chaos and fusion. Additional support for this interpretation comes by way of a strong symbolic association between the horse and the death-related aspects of the Mother archetype. Some mythic texts represent Hecate, the goddess of the underworld, with the head of a horse, and Demeter, the Great Mother, changes herself into a mare while escaping from Kronos (Jung, 1912/52, p. 275 & n). This association serves to highlight an important connection between death and the Feminine archetype, a theme that is discussed in a later section.

(c) Spiders, bees and the white dove

As these images emerge in three dreams reported by the same subject, it is pertinent to consider them as part of a single dream series so that we may observe the development of any specific themes emergent from the analysis. The dreams were reported by John, a 44 year-old man in the final stages of AIDS; his case is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

In the first dream (L2), he discovered in the moonlight two black widow spiders in a large web. Excited by this discovery, he called a group of friends to witness the spectacle. While trying to crawl under the web to get a closer view he was however bitten twice by the larger of the two spiders. Two swollen areas appeared on his back, and he realised that the spiders are so venomous that he would almost certainly die. At one level, this dream pertains to the theme of death and dying (see above), but it is also significant that the image of a spider in its web has been seen to have symbolic connotations with the archetypal motif of the devouring Mother (Baynes, 1940, p. 756; Neumann, 1963, p. 177). This connection is reinforced with reference to John's own associations to the dream: he commented that it must have been the female spider - "larger and

more venomous" - that bit him, adding that the female black widow spider habitually kills the male after mating and that the spiders had been mating when he first discovered them in his dream. In this sense, the dream image may also allude to the mythical association between the Feminine archetype and the 'deadly' *hierosgamus* (cf. Jung, 1912/52, pp. 353, 369, 389).

A continuation of these themes seems to be expressed in dream #L4. Here, John came across a beehive and prodded a stick into it to see what would happen. A swarm of bees emerged and attacked him, but he was not concerned about this until he noticed that the bees had been surrounding and protecting the queen bee; then he realised with horror that they would sting him to death because he had "interfered" with the queen. This dream has been included in the theme of death and dying owing to the overt indication of the possibility of death, but it may be noted that bees are also symbolically associated with the Feminine archetype (Jung, 1941, p. 185n). In this sense, the theme of the deadly and destructive aspects of the Feminine is again evident. Yet it must also be noted that there has been some movement in this theme over the two dreams (L2 & L4), which were reported approximately two weeks apart. For whereas the spider is mythically associated with the more primitive, devouring aspects of the Mother, the bee, as an industrious worker and an agent in pollination, has on the other hand been interpreted in association to the potential for transformation and rebirth that is the province of the more creative aspects of the Feminine (Henderson & Oakes, 1963/90, p. 99; cf. Chapter Eight). In Orphic tradition, bees also symbolise the immortal soul, which 'swarms' together in a divine unity (Circlot, 1962, pp. 23-4).

Further development and movement is evident when we consider dream #L8, which John reported shortly before his death. Here, he was holding a beautiful dove which he knew, in the dream, to be a symbol of peace. He realised that this was an indication that he was "ready to die", and he noted that the dream left him with a sense of being "at one" with himself. At an archetypal level of analysis, it is pertinent to note that the bird is a common metaphor for death; according to Sophoclean tradition, for example, birds sing the melodies of Hades, and are the helpers or harbingers of death (Herzog, 1983, pp. 60ff.). An interesting point, in view of the Feminine connotations of spiders and bees, is the fact that the dove is the bird of Astarte, the goddess of love, and is also associated with the mythical figure of Sophia, the embodiment of Feminine wisdom (cf Chapter Eight). Henderson and Oakes (1963/90, p. 60) add that in mythology the bird is frequently the conductor of souls to the beyond, and is associated with the mysteries of initiation in shamanic rituals. This reflects Jung's interpretation that the image of the dove, as it manifests in mythic and religious literature, symbolises mediation between the ego and the self (Jung, 1912/52, p. 348). In this light, it may be argued that there is a progressive movement across

John's dreams, from the primitive, destructive aspects of death to its connotations with transformation and transcendence. In the following chapter, it will be seen that this movement was indeed associated with significant shifts in his conscious experience of dying.

(d) The bull and the dolphin

The final two animal images to be considered are those of the bull and the dolphin. Because they were reported in different dreams by the same subject, they may also be considered in the same context. In this case, the subject was Grace, a 71 year old woman who was in the terminal stages of bowel cancer. In the first dream (E3), she encountered a playful bull in a meadow; together they headed off towards an unknown destination. Grace saw this dream as "a positive sign"; for her the bull was "a figure of "strength and courage". With some hesitation she associated the bull with her deceased husband, who had always been a "pillar of strength" for her - she had fondly called him "a bull" because his astrological sign was Taurus. In this sense, the dream image appears to incarnate the positive qualities of the Masculine archetype (cf. Chapter Eight), which for Grace had been invested in the figure of her husband. In support of this interpretation, we find that the bull is a traditional image of masculinity and fecundity. In ancient myth, it is associated with the masculine sky gods, signifying the animating or fertilising principle which operates in conjunction with the feminine earth goddesses (Eliade, 1958, p. 90; Neumann, 1963, p. 141n). In astrology, the house of Taurus moreover signifies the coming of spring and is thus similarly associated with fertility (Jung, 1912/52, p. 103; 1976b, p. 39). Hence the image of the bull may, in this case, be associated with strength and courage on the one hand, and with rebirth and renewal on the other hand. In Grace's dream the bull actually seems to serve the role of a guide or *psychopomp*, and this too is an important function of the Masculine element (cf. Chapter Eight).

In the second dream (E4), Grace found herself in a large swimming pool; a dolphin leaped out of the water and seemed to smile at her, as if it was beckoning her to follow it under the water. If we go along for the present with the 'standard' interpretation of water as being symbolic of the unconscious (see below), then we may also interpret the dolphin image as a metaphor for a benevolent and propitious tendency emergent from the unconscious (possibly the self?). Again, the animal seems to be portrayed as a *psychopomp* that will assist in the initiation of the ego into the 'underworld' (under the water). This interpretation may be supported by the fact that the dolphin appears as a figure of salvation in numerous ancient legends (cf. Circlot, 1962, pp. 84f.).

7. Vegetation

Seven dreams have motifs associated with vegetation. In three of these, this is as a setting or context for the dream, namely a green field (B2), a meadow (E3), and a forest with tall trees (G4). In one case, a radiant flower formed the central focus of the dream (C7), while the image of a young flower seller is similarly prominent in another dream (F8). In two dreams, the motif of vegetation clearly forms the dominant emphasis of the dream and seems to hold some message of importance for the participant. In the first (R3), the dreamer entered a room where a Christmas party was being held, and was struck by the fact that a large Christmas tree was lying across the banquet table; he wondered aloud how people were supposed to eat with the tree in the way, but was told that the tree was in fact the whole point of the celebration. In the second (L7), the dreamer - John, whose animal dreams have been amplified in the previous section - was wandering through the *veldt*, which had been ravaged by drought and by fire. He was contemplating this scene of devastation when he came across a farmer preparing to plough the land; the dreamer found this incongruous and remarked that "there is not much left", but was told that "it will all grow again in the spring, when the rains come".

Amplification of theme #7

The theme of vegetation has strong symbolic connotations with death, rebirth and transformation. Thus von Franz (1986) has highlighted the common occurrence of images of vegetation in the dreams of the dying, and has related these symbols to processes of death and renewal/rebirth. Eliade (1958, pp. 306ff.) has similarly documented the significance of vegetation motifs in ancient rituals of death and fertility. He points out that trees are particularly common symbols of inexhaustible life because of their consistent growth and self-renewal. Jung also wrote extensively of the symbolic meaning of trees, including their archetypal connotations with rebirth and immortality (e.g. Jung, 1944/52, p. 348n; 1945/54, p. 272). Here we may think of the Tree of Life in both the Cabbala (Jung, 1945/54, p. 311f) and in Christian tradition (Circlot, 1962, p. 347). Moreover, trees have also been described as metaphors for the protective and regenerative properties of the Feminine archetype (Jung, 1945/54, p. 272; see below). These aspects are perhaps applicable to dream #G4, in which the dreamer was lost in a forest, and went to sleep under a tall tree; this may allude both to the maternal qualities of the tree (sheltering and

protective), as well as to its connotations with death (sleep). The Christmas tree, as in dream #R3, may similarly be associated with the possibility of rebirth; this connection is accentuated by the reference to an act of 'celebration' surrounding the tree (see above).

Flowers too have a persuasive archetypal connection with death, transformation and immortality. In Indian myth, Tara, the goddess of death and rebirth, appears holding a lotus blossom, and the lotus flower in Egyptian legend is similarly connected with the promise of eternal life (Neumann, 1963, p. 325). In Jungian literature, flowers are thus commonly amplified as symbols of the self (e.g. Hannah, 1981; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992). This theme is particularly evident in Jung's analysis of the motif of the Golden Flower in Far Eastern myth (Jung, 1929; cf. Wilhelm, 1931/62), and in his appreciation of the alchemical meaning of the flower (Jung, 1944/52, p. 79). With reference to its manifestation in dreams, he described the flower as:

" ... a numinous emanation from the unconscious, showing the dreamer, who as modern man has been robbed of security and of participation in the things that lead to man's salvation, the historical place where he can meet friends and brothers of like mind, where he can find the seed that wants to sprout in him too" (*ibid.*, p. 79).

Extending this theme, Jaffe (1978) comments that "flowers point away from earthly suffering to the state of purity and redemption and thus bring consolation" (p. 83). As pointed out elsewhere (Welman & Faber, 1992), the archetypal connotations between flowers and death/transformation are enacted - but seldom reflected upon - in contemporary rituals too; here we may think of the common practice of marking death and other transitional phases (e.g. birth and marriage) with a gift of flowers.

The amplifications outlined above are particularly relevant to dream #L7, as described above, which appears to offer a striking allegory of death and rebirth expressed through the metaphor of vegetation. A detailed consideration of this dream and its conscious impact on the subject is offered in the next chapter. The significance of the young flower-seller in dream #F8 will similarly be furthered in a later discussion.

8. Earth

Closely associated with the theme of vegetation are motifs pertaining to the earth, which occur in seven dreams. In the first, the dreamer is walking in a deep trench that angles down into the ground (A2), while more dramatic imagery associated with the earth is also evident in dream #F4, in which the dreamer uncovered in his garden a skeleton that attempted to pull him into the earth. This theme may also be identified in those dreams involving the burial of bodies in the ground (D1, S1). Allusions to the earth are also evident in dreams in which a subject was told to undertake a journey to centre of earth (F11), and in which the earth had been blackened by fire (L7). Although motifs of ascension are considered as a separate theme, dream #G5, in which the dreamer explicitly 'leaves the earth behind', may be included in a discussion of earth symbolism.

Amplification of theme #8

Any treatise on the death metaphor must afford particular prominence to earth symbolism. The earth is literally and metaphorically the ground of our existence (cf. Brooke, 1991, pp. 91f.; Heidegger, 1935/36, pp. 171f.); it is that from which life originates, to which it returns, and from which it is once again reborn (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 412, 476). In modern times, we continue with the practice of returning the dead to the earth, perhaps with the conscious or unconscious hope that they too will one day rise again from her womb. Romanyshyn (1989) reminds us that it is also through the technological marvel of departing from the earth and travelling to the celestial spheres that modern Westerners enact the dream of ultimately escaping death. Jung (1944/52) taught that the significance of the earth as a metaphor for the contingencies of human existence is its reminder that "mortal men must stick to the earth and are subject to its laws" (p. 114), and Herzog (1983) delivers a similar comment:

"Consider the meaning behind the image of Death as the Devouring Earth! The first thing that it brings home to man is the terrifying insecurity of the basis of his life - the ground on which he treads. The firm earth ... was originally taken for granted and accepted as the pre-existent and enduring background of life, but the awareness of death calls these assumptions into question. The image of the gaping jaws opening in the earth itself gives form to the sense of insecurity which arises

when a man realises that all life stands poised on the brink of death, and at the same time this image makes man consciously aware of the earth ... Man becomes aware of the earth in a way that shatters the blind, unthinking insecurity in which he lived before ... Yet when the first paralysing horror has been overcome a new development takes place; turning from the present fear of the engulfing earth man 'looks back' and becomes aware of what the earth had meant to him when he was still unconscious of it ... So man becomes conscious, for the first time, of the earth as that which gives life" (pp. 99-100).

We find that the earth is therefore a powerful metaphor for the conditions, limitations and possibilities of human existence, and it may be seen to indicate an awakening to the possibility of Being through the death experience. Mythically, the earth thus has strong connotations with death as a physical and as a figurative reality, and this is given expression in the image of the devouring earth (as in dream #F4 - see above). As Herzog (*ibid.*, pp. 40ff.) points out, one of the earliest images afforded to death in human history was in fact that of a Hider in the earth. The etymological roots of Calypso, the death-goddess encountered by Odysseus, means 'to hide in the earth', and in Germanic myth the death mistress Frau Holle was similarly said to dwell in the depths of the earth. In addition, the motif of earth also points to a connection with psychological origins (Jaffe, 1978, p. 91). A well developed variant of this theme is that of the *nekylia*, the descent into the underworld, which is symbolic of the sacrifice of the ego and a return to one's primordial origins, from which possibilities for transformation and renewal come (cf. Chapter Three). In this regard, earth motifs may also be related to the archetypal Feminine and its transformative capacities. This connection has been extensively documented by Eliade (1958) and need only be briefly commented upon here.

From the earliest times, the earth has been glorified as Feminine, i.e. as that which gives birth to all beings, nurtures and shelters them, and receives them back. The identification of the ploughed earth or a crevice in the earth (cf. dream #A2) with the archetypal Mother was particularly common in early civilisations and is preserved in European folklore (Eliade, 1958, p. 259; Jung, 1912/52, p. 373). In these terms, imagery of the earth is one of the foremost symbols of the Great Mother, the primordial form of the archetypal Feminine (cf. Chapter Eight). The earth metaphor lends particular expression to the bipolar propensities of this archetype, being associated on the one hand with nurturance and permanence (cf. Eliade, 1958, p. 240), and on the other hand with death and devourment (Neumann, 1963, p. 149). Thus as Jaffe (1978) points out, the extreme polarity of the Feminine finds its sharpest expression in the image of the earth goddess, who encompasses

light and darkness, life and death. Jung (1912/52) too commented that to enter the earth is to return to the primordial womb of the Mother, to lose all that has been gained in the course of ego-development, but at the same time it is a mythopoeic reality that "everything that comes from the earth is endowed with life, and everything that goes back into the earth is given new life" (p. 253). The connection between death and rebirth, as grounded in the image of the earth, is particularly prominent in dream #L7, which has been introduced with regard to the motif of vegetation; these aspects will be commented on in more detail in a later discussion (cf. Chapter Eight).

9. The journey

In all, 18 dreams involve the archetypal motif of 'the journey'. Vague or distant allusions to this theme may be discerned in dreams involving walking down a long road (F10), hiking in nature (L2), and crossing a bridge (O2) or a lagoon (D4). Allusions to this theme are also evident in dreams involving travelling through a tunnel (C2, N2) or a passage (K4, Q5). More explicit imagery associated with the journey motif is evident in dreams involving sailing on a passenger liner (T3), being in a foreign or 'otherworldly' place (I4, G5, O1, Q7, S4), travelling to another town (H2, O3), and returning to a town where the dreamer had previously lived (G3). Dream #F11, in which the dreamer is instructed to undertake a journey to the centre of the earth, may be included in this theme.

Amplification of theme #9

Bachelard (1983) offers the incisive comment that "a poet ... thinks of death as a journey" (p. 80), and in mythical texts death is often described as a journey to the 'beyond' (Biallas, 1986; Burland, 1974; Holroyd, 1976; von Franz, 1986). Ancient funerary practices of burying people with gifts, special clothes, food, or a coin for Charon the ferryman of the dead, reflect this archetypal motif. In some belief systems, the idea of a 'journey of the dead' (Herzog, 1983, p. 190) has been systematised into complex eschatological mythologies; the Tibetan and Egyptian 'Books of the Dead', and their European counterpart, the *Ars Moriendi* ('Art of Dying') represent for instance detailed instructions to the dying person concerning the journey of the posthumous soul to its final 'resting place' (Grof & Halifax, 1977, pp. 158ff.). As noted previously, the journey motif is also

prominent in near-death experiences (cf. Chapter Four). In her analysis of mythical imagery in the dreams of the dying, von Franz (1986) identified numerous variations of the journey motif, and interpreted this theme as being symbolic of "impending death" (p. 64).

These comments serve to amplify the theme of the journey as it emerges in the present study. In two dreams, the association between death and the motif of the journey to the beyond is fairly clear. In the first (I4), a man dying of cancer dreamed three days before his death that he was taken by an unknown person "to a beautiful place, very high up in the clouds somewhere, which was heaven". Another subject dreamed that she travelled in a space shuttle to a "strange but enchanting place", which she similarly assumed to be heaven (G5). In other cases, the thanatological implications of images of journeys become evident when the dreams are amplified with reference to both their archetypal context (as outlined above) and the personal associations of the dreamers. Thus in dream #G3, the subject was aboard an aircraft that was certain to crash, and this bears an obvious allusion to her confrontation with death; but the dream becomes even more significant when we consider the possible meaning of the subject's destination in the dream, Cape Town. First, it must be noted that the subject had been born in Cape Town, and she stated that though she had moved away from there many years previously, she always regarded that city as "home". Second, it is common practice in South Africa to refer to Cape Town as the 'Mother City' because it was the point of arrival for the first European settlers. Taking these amplifications together, it would seem that the dream in question alludes to a return to psychological origins, and may thus be taken, at least at one level, as a symbolic anticipation of death.

A 55 year old woman dying of a brain tumour dreamed of travelling to America (S4). Again, this destination may be symbolically related to death and to the 'completion' of individuation at different levels of amplification. America, the dreamer's destination, lies in the West, and this is also the direction in which the 'beyond' is said to be located in many mythical accounts (Biallas, 1986; Burland, 1974; von Franz, 1986). Moreover, the subject associated America with an idealised vision of "a land of opportunity and harmony", contrasting this with her view of South Africa as "a place of despair, of hopelessness". In this light it may be speculated that the dream, reported some weeks before her death, may have anticipated the transition from ego-centred existence to a more 'harmonious' state of being, i.e. the self.

The journey across water, which occurs in two dreams (D4, T3), is another motif that has strong symbolic allusions to death. Perhaps the most well known amplification in this regard is that of the crossing of the Styx, the river of death in Greek myth, beyond which is said to lie the Elysian Fields

and the Islands of the Blessed. An interesting allusion to this motif appears in dream #D4, in which the dreamer had to cross a wide river to meet with a group of Israeli soldiers. She was a Jewish woman, and associated this dream with the vision of the Promised Land offered to Moses. In this light, it would not be going too far to interpret this dream too as being indicative of a 'return' of the ego to the self.

A 72 year old man dying of bowel cancer reported two dreams involving the journey motif in which symbolic allusions to death may be inferred. In the first (O1), he was in a foreign place that was very cold, with lots of snow and ice, and this may possibly be interpreted as an allusion to the 'coldness' of death (cf. Jung, 1973, pp. 256-7). In the second dream (O2), he was crossing a bridge to where his young granddaughter waited at the other side. This again could be an allegory of the journey or crossing to the beyond; in Persian myth, for example, the deceased person is met at the Chinvat Bridge and accompanied to the 'other side' by a beautiful young woman who is said to be his celestial 'alter ego' (von Franz, 1986, p. 50). Moreover, the image of the dreamer's granddaughter may, at an archetypal level, be seen as an image of the archetype of the child, which itself heralds renewal and rebirth (see below).

Two participants reported dreams involving travelling through a tunnel (C2, N2). As previously noted, the passage through a dark tunnel is a commonly reported aspect of near-death experiences (cf. Chapter Four), and is also a prominent symbol in Eastern myths of death (Holck, 1980). Von Franz (1986) similarly reports that the journey through a tunnel seems to occur fairly regularly in the dreams of the dying. Finally, the journey motif also appears in dream #F8, in which an old, blind man instructed the dreamer to travel to the centre of the earth. This is a classical allusion to the image of the *nekylia*, the journey to the underworld. The dream is discussed more fully in a later section.

While the focus of this analysis has thus far been on the symbolic connections between the theme of the journey and the reality of death, it must be noted that in a broader sense the archetype of the journey may be related to liminality and transformation, i.e. to the figurative dimensions of death and dying. Thus in shamanic experience and initiation rites the journey motif typically represents the transition from one spiritual or social status to another (cf. Grof & Halifax, 1977, pp. 158ff.), and Jung (1912/52, pp. 303f.) similarly described the image of the journey as being associated with transformative moments in the course of individuation.

10. Ascent

The theme of ascent is closely related to that of the journey, but may be considered separately as it has specific archetypal connotations not dealt with in the foregoing analysis. As a theme, 'ascent' emerges from nine dreams involving the separation and ascension of the dreamer's 'body double' (C1), flying in an aircraft (G3, H2), departing from the earth in a space-shuttle (G5), going up in a lift (M4), travelling upwards on an escalator (R3), climbing a mountain (F11), and flying without mechanical aid (N3). Ascent is also an implicit theme in dream #14, in which the dreamer is in a place "high up in the clouds".

Amplification of theme #10

The symbolism of ascension features prominently in the mythical and religious history of humanity, where it is commonly associated with the attainment of a 'higher' mode of being, usually involving 'elevation' from the profane and human realm to the sacred and divine (Circlot, 1962; Eliade, 1958; Grof & Halifax, 1977). In these contexts, ascension is also commonly associated with death as a state of transcendent wholeness, i.e. with the self. In shamanic rites, for instance, the initiate is said to travel to the abode of the gods, enduring in the process a symbolic death and rebirth (Biallas, 1986; von Franz, 1975). Similar imagery emerges in the Eastern Taittiriya Samhita, which shows the ritual initiate climbing a staircase; upon reaching the top he shouts 'I have reached heaven, the gods; I have become immortal!' (Eliade, 1958, p. 104). Here ascendance is equated with a symbolic death and with concomitant knowledge of the divine, i.e. gnosis. Near-death experiences, too, typically encompass the experience of ascent (cf. Chapter Four), and von Franz (1986) has found this theme to be fairly common in the dreams and visions of the dying.

In the present study, the connotations between this theme and death is particularly evident in those dreams involving the ascent or journey to a 'heavenly abode', but the amplificatory context established here may be seen to be relevant to all of those dreams involving the theme of ascension in one form or another. An interesting ascension dream which may be seen as a symbolic anticipation of death is #C1, in which the participant dreamed that he had two bodies which fitted together; one of them slowly lifted out of and floated away from the other one. This may allude to the separation of the 'soul' or 'spirit' from the physical body, which is a common motif of death

in various thanatological texts - for example, the Tibetan Book of the Dead (Evans-Wentz, 1960) and the Egyptian Book of the Dead (Budge, 1923) - as well as in South American, Karelian and Eastern myth (Holck, 1980; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992). With reference to this motif, Jung (1912/52) wrote that "soul and spirit must be separated from the body, and this is equivalent to death" (p. 124).

In addition to the foregoing amplifications, Jung related ascension symbolism to the alchemical process of *separatio*, which describes the transformation of the mortal body into an immortal essence or 'subtle body' (*ibid.*, p. 263n; cf. Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986). In these terms, ascension motifs express the experience of rebirth and renewal that comes through the transcendence of the finite ego (Jung, 1943/48, p. 220; 1944/52, pp. 153f.). A not incompatible interpretation is that images of ascent refer to the creative 'sublimation' of instinctual impulses into a 'higher' form (Jung, 1944/52, pp. 54ff), meaning that imaginal potentials that have been lived out as blind instinct (i.e. in the form of 'projections') become experienced as symbolic possibilities. In other words, ascension may be a metaphor for the symbolic process itself, which, as we have already seen, is closely associated with the emergence of the self and with the experience of death (cf. Chapter Four). In these terms, ascent may serve as a metaphor for emerging consciousness.

11. Descent

The motif of descent occurs in six dreams: driving a car down a long dark tunnel (C2), a journey to the centre of the earth (F11), descending down a staircase (K2, P1), riding down an escalator (R3), and people rafting down a very high waterfall (S3).

Amplification of theme #11

The theme of descent bears a close symbolic correspondence to that of ascent, and in many senses the two themes are really representative of different aspects of the same psychological processes. Jung (1935a) contended that images of descent reflect the "introversion of the conscious mind into the deeper layers of the unconscious psyche" (p. 38), but it is important that this process not be interpreted simply as a solipsistic 'turning within' at the expense of the experiential world. Rather,

the theme of descent - or the *nekylia* to the underworld - is, as we have previously seen, symbolic of the immersion of the ego in the imaginal psyche, i.e. a 'deepening' of psychological experience (cf. Chapter Three). Perhaps one difference between ascension and descent is that whereas the latter metaphor points to the depths of the soul (cf. Hillman, 1979), images of ascension may be inferred as symbolic of the heights of the 'spirit' - i.e. descent points to the transformative suffering of the embodied soul, ascension to the illuminating light of the intellect (cf. Jung, 1946, p. 244; 1955-56, pp.46ff.). The interaction of these two movements is perhaps evident in dream #R3, in which the dreamer repetitively travels up and down on an escalator. This image calls to mind Jung's comment, with reference to the alchemical *opus*, that one aspect of the evolution of the self is "the ascent and the descent" of the ego, the purpose of which "is to unite the powers of Above and Below" (1946, pp. 217-8).

12. Water

The motif of water is evident in seven dreams. In three of these, it has overtly pleasant connotations: being bathed and anointed in sweet-smelling water (B1), floating peacefully in the ocean (S5), and frolicking in a swimming pool with a dolphin (E4). In one case the dreamer has to cross a lagoon (D4). Another subject dreamed that he was sailing on an ocean liner and felt "mesmerised" by the sea (T3). A woman dying of stomach cancer dreamed that she was swimming in a pool of stagnant water (Q1). The final motif in this theme consisted of a "great flood" (H4).

Amplification of theme #12

Bachelard (1983) thinks of death as "the tragic summons of the waters" (p. 81), and comments that "the imagination of ... death finds in the matter of water a particularly powerful and natural material image ... water truly holds death in its substance" (*ibid.*, p. 89). Or again: "... water is the universe of death ... Near it everything leans towards death. Water communicates with all the powers of night and death" (*ibid.*, p. 90). In support of this, it may be noted that von Franz (1986) found numerous instances of water symbolism in the dreams of the dying, and that in mythical contexts too water has numerous symbolic connotations with death. For example, the passage of the posthumous soul across water has already been noted with regard to the theme of the journey,

and in Classical Greek thought Hades, lord of the dead, is also lord of the underworld rivers Acheron and Kojoytos. In Egyptian death liturgy, Osiris similarly has close connotations with water (*ibid.*, p. 85). The Norns, the spinners of Fate in Nordic legend, are said to rise out of the spring of living water, knowing both Life and Death (Herzog, 1983, p. 97), and in Germanic tradition the entrance to Hel is through a lake, pond or well (*ibid.*, p. 119).

The association of water with death is further evident if we think of alchemical symbolism, in which water is the prime element in the operation of *solutio* (dissolution), which implies the reduction of differentiated matter into its original chaotic or undifferentiated state, the *prima materia*. Indeed, in many texts the entire *opus* is summarised by the phrase 'dissolve and coagulate' (cf. Edinger, 1985; Jung, 1944/52; Read, 1937). In these terms, Jung appreciated that water is "one of the commonest typifications of the unconscious" (Jung, 1955-56, p. 272) or, put in similar terms, it is "the favourite symbol for the unconscious, the mother of all that lives" (Jung, 1940, pp. 177-8).

Dreams involving the immersion of the subject in water may thus be interpreted as indicative of the 'dissolution' of the ego and its 'return' to the primordial state of psychic wholeness. In this regard, it must however be noted that water is a transforming element itself, and has close symbolic connotations with psychological renewal and rebirth; as Edinger (1985) writes, "the *solutio* has a twofold effect: it causes one form to disappear and a new regenerated form to emerge" (p. 51). An indication of this connection emerges in dream #B1. Here the dreamer was bathed and anointed with sweet-smelling water by an Oriental maid; following this, she was dressed in white, symbolising renewal and rebirth (see below). Apart from alluding to a ritualistic preparation of the body for death (see above), this dream bears a resemblance to the image in the Rosarium Philosophorum in which the King and Queen are immersed in the alchemical bath; Jung (1946) interpreted this motif as "a return to the dark initial state, to the amniotic fluid of the gravid uterus" (p. 241). He also likened the image to the mythical 'night-sea journey', which refers to the descent of the heroic ego into the maternal matrix, i.e. the self (*ibid.*, p. 245). In another place, he similarly wrote that:

"All living things rise, like the sun, from water, and sink into it again at evening. Born of springs, rivers, lakes and seas, man at death comes to the waters of the Styx ... Those black waters of death are the water of life, for death with its cold embrace is the maternal womb, just as the sea devours the sun but brings it forth again" (Jung, 1912/52, p. 218).

Water as an element of renewal and rebirth is thus also closely associated with the transformative potential of the archetypal Feminine, which is discussed in detail in the following chapter. In this regard, Jung maintained that "water represents the maternal depths and the place of rebirth" (*ibid.*, p. 389). Bachelard (1983) similarly asserts that "death in calm water has maternal features ... Here, water mixes its ambivalent images of birth and death" (p. 89). Edinger (1985, p. 54) points out that the symbolic connections between water, death and the maternal element clearly emerge in the mythic figures of seductive mermaids or water nymphs who lure men to their deaths (see below).

So far as water symbolism is concerned, there is thus sufficient support to propose that it ultimately points to a loosening of ego boundaries. Following this reasoning, its different manifestations in the dreams under present consideration may be seen to reveal different facets of the experience of death and dying, but this line of amplification will have to be held over for the following chapter.

13. Fire

Although the motif of fire appears in only three dreams (F11, K2, L5) it has been included as a separate theme because its psychological connotations are closely related those of water, and in the alchemical tradition the two elements were often treated as equivalent (cf. Bachelard, 1983; Baynes, 1940; Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986).

Amplification of theme #14

Like water, fire is a baptismal element (Jung, 1912/52, p. 200), and is thus typically associated with change and transformation. But whereas water, in its density, is associated with the depths of the maternal or Feminine psyche, fire, which transmutes substances to smoke and vapour, has closer connections with the transformative propensities of the Masculine spirit (cf. Bachelard, 1983, pp. 94ff.). Jung (1912/52, p. 165) pointed out that a Persian name for fire was *Nairyosagha*, meaning 'masculine word', and the Sanskrit word for fire is *agnis*, personified as Agni, the god of fire and mediator of divine revelation. Fire is also closely associated with the motif of sacrifice, for it is the element that transforms the sacrificial object and carries it to the gods (Jung, 1942/54, pp.

204f.). Psychologically, this implies a process of 'overcoming' one's unconsciousness, i.e. a sacrifice of regressive desires or of a one-sided egoism, so that images are revealed in their 'divine' form. Fire thus correlates with the motif of ascension. As Jung wrote:

"Speech and fire-making represent primitive man's victory over his brutish unconsciousness and subsequently became powerful magical devices for overcoming the ever-present 'daemonic' forces lurking in the unconscious ... The preparation of fire is an immemorial custom ... The anamnesis of fire-making is on a level with the recollection of the ancestors among primitives and of the gods at a more civilised stage ... It has, in fact, the functional value of a paradigm, and its purpose is to show us how we should act when the libido gets blocked" (Jung, 1912/52, pp. 169-70).

In these terms, fire symbolises the Promethean emergence of consciousness from a condition of symbolic darkness; it is the 'conversion' from primitive instinct to transcendent spirit. It has also been thought to symbolise the actual experience of transformation, in the sense of referring to the intense ('fiery') affects that must be endured if individuation is to proceed consciously and meaningfully (Jung, 1955-56, pp. 46f.; 1958, p. 338). In alchemy, this is expressed through the 'testing' of substances through fire (*calinatio*), which is in turn pivotal in the transformation of the profane *prima materia* into the sacred and immortal *lapis* (Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986). In religious and mythical symbolism fire is similarly a purgatorial or purifying element which facilitates the separation and emergence of the sacred and eternal (the immortal soul) from the fugitive and transient (Baynes, 1940; Edinger, 1985; Rohde, 1925; von Franz, 1986).

The transformative connotations of fire are evident in dream #K2, in which the dreamer was made to enter a fire and emerged in a younger form, but the sacred properties of fire are also alluded to in dream #F11, in which an old man, whom the subject interpreted as a figure of wisdom, was tending a fire in a cave; he proceeded to instruct the dreamer as to a quest which needed to be undertaken to the centre of the earth (see above). In dream #L5, the dreamer was attacked by a group of men who evidently wished to set him on fire; he realised that he was about to die and would never see his mother again, and felt overwhelming sadness at this. This may indicate something of the separation and sacrifice that is entailed during the dying process.

14. Light

Five dreams were recorded in which the phenomenon of light appears: a light at the end of a dark tunnel (C2); a bright round light that is eclipsed (F13); lights twinkling in the windows of houses (G3); an image of a very bright light (G6); and 'beings of light' (I4).

Amplification of theme #14

For the most part, Jung related the symbolism of light to the manifestation of the self (e.g. Jung, 1929; 1938/54; 1943/48). Thus he proposed that the image of light refers to "a knowledge not of the ego but of the self" (Jung, 1943/48, p. 248, emphasis added). In these terms the experience or image of light is a symbolic portrayal of the emergence of gnosis, i.e. of the "spiritual man" (Jung, 1937, p. 370; 1938/54, p. 94). Other Jungian authors similarly see light as a symbol of transcendence and of emerging consciousness (Edinger, 1972; 1985; Jaffe, 1971b; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992)⁶.

These interpretations emerge from and are supported by a strong mythic tradition (cf. Kalweit, 1988). In religious symbolism, light typically symbolises the experience or attainment of 'divine' knowledge that transcends rational comprehension. Thus light is associated with gnosis or Logos in Gnosticism (Jaffe, 1978), with divine knowledge in the Jewish Torah and the mysteries of the Cabbala (Shoham, 1990), and with a state of perfect enlightenment (*dharma-kaya*) in Eastern sources (Evans-Wentz, 1960; Wilhelm, 1931/62). It is moreover commonly assumed in these traditions that this form of knowledge is attainable only with the ultimate transcendence of the ego-bound personality, i.e. with death. In Egyptian myth, for example, the *ba* ('soul image') is an immortal being of light which separates from the dying person, and its hieroglyph is a star (Jaffe, 1978, p. 65). In Persian and Islamic tradition, light is a symbol of sudden illumination and in the context of death is associated with resurrection and rebirth (Jaffe, 1978; von Franz, 1986). The Upanishadic Atman, which equates with the Jungian self, is similarly described as expressing itself

⁶ In this regard, it may be noted that light-experiences have also been recalled during hypnosis, in Autogenic Training, and following the abreaction of traumatic memories in therapy (Kalweit, 1988).

as an inner light. In alchemical texts, light is again indicative of emerging consciousness, particularly in its association with the spirit Mercurius, the mediator of the *opus* (Jung, 1943/48, pp. 235f); the Rosarium has Hermes/Mercurius saying: "I illuminate the air with my light ... I take away the darkness of the night" (*ibid.*, p. 236n).

The metaphoric connection between light and transcendence (i.e. death/ the self) is further supported by the fact that light has been treated as symbolic of the hope for eternal life (Jaffe, 1978; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992), and connections between the phenomenon of light and images of the 'beyond' abound in mythical and religious texts. In the Tibetan Book of the Dead, for instance, the after-death (*bardo*) realm is described as the 'Primordial Light' (Evans-Wentz, 1960; Grof & Halifax, 1977; Jaffe, 1978), and in the Cabbala references are similarly made to the 'radiance' of the eternal soul (Jaffe, 1978, p. 71). These connotations are perhaps evident in dream #14, in which the dreamer was taken to a beautiful place - presumably heaven - where she encountered "beings of light", whom she presumed to be angels.

The dream of a bright light at the end of a dark tunnel shows a particularly close correspondence to death symbolism, for as we have previously noted the passage through a dark tunnel towards light is a characteristic feature of near-death experiences (cf. Chapter Four). It is noteworthy that the subject who dreamed of a bright light (G6) - no other images were reported in her dream - could offer no associations to this dream, but insisted that it had left her with a feeling of "absolute peace and harmony"; she died in her sleep the following night.

An exception to these amplifications is of course dream #F13, in which the subject witnessed a bright round light, which he knew to represent life, being eclipsed by a dark circle, which he knew to be an image of death. This imagery alludes to archetypal representations of death as the extinction of the light of ego-consciousness, which leads to the darkness of the night (cf. Jung, 1929, pp. 25f.). This dream receives further attention in Chapter Eight.

So far as the theme of light is concerned, we are therefore dealing with a number of possible implications that have been linked to death in previous chapters, namely (a) the transcendence of the ego and the emergence of the self; (b) the potential for gnosis; (c) emerging consciousness; and (d) life after death as a mythopoeic possibility.

15. Darkness

Eight dreams involve the theme of darkness. Two of these have been mentioned already with regard to the motif of light - the dark tunnel (C2) and the dark shadow that eclipses the circle of light (F13). The other motifs making up this theme are: a dark forest (G4), a dark basement (K2), a darkened room (P1), a dark corridor (P4), a dark and sinister place (Q2), and being surrounded by darkness (Q6).

Amplification of theme #15

Darkness has a number of archetypal connotations with death. The passage through a dark tunnel (C2) has already received attention, and the same amplifications may be applied to the dream involving a dark corridor (P4). In dream #F13 the association of darkness with death is explicit, as noted above.

Jung amplified the image of darkness in terms of its associations with the unconscious (e.g. 1912/52, p. 341; 1942, p. 170). He thus interpreted darkness as referring to "the abysmal depths of human nature" (Jung, 1955-56, pp. 167-8), and in some places associated this motif with regressive propensities in the psyche (e.g. Jung, 1912/52, pp. 408f.). It is in this sense that darkness may be equated with the extinction (rather than the transcendence) of ego-consciousness; it implies a 'return' to a primitive condition, to the original chaos or *prima materia* of psychical existence (Jung, 1942, p. 170). However, it must also be remembered that without darkness there could be no light, meaning that death and darkness are the screens against which the light of transcendent consciousness is ultimately illuminated. Thus entering the realm of darkness may also point to the ultimate potential for renewal and rebirth (cf. Jung, 1912/52, p. 167); this is possibly the symbolic meaning of those dream images involving a conjunction of light and darkness (C2, F13, P4). Darkness, through its association with the night and the moon, also has strong symbolic connotations with the primordial and transformative mysteries of the Feminine (cf. Neumann, 1963; Welman & Faber, 1992). This theme is explored in Chapter Eight.

16. Mandala/ quaternity images

The Sanskrit term *mandala* ('magical circle'), which Jung employed frequently in his writings, refers to geometric figures of roundness, and may also be applied to quaternity images (i.e. figures that are divisible by four). In the present study, 13 dreams were identified as containing mandala images. Circular motifs appear in six of these: dancing in a circle (C6), a sundial (D5), a rotating silver ring (E5), the drawing of a circle on the ground (F11), a bright round light (F13), and a circular area (Q7). Quaternity motifs are evident in images to do with squares (B3, M2, U1), four angels (K5) and the image of Christ in four parts (F12), while one dream (E5) contains the motif of the figure eight. In addition, the image of a bright flower (C7) may also be classified as a mandala symbol (cf. Jung, 1944/52; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992).

Amplification of theme #16

So much as been written in Jungian literature about mandala symbols that the archetypal connotations of this theme need little explanation. As Jung described it, mandala images typically anticipate the integration or coming to consciousness of the self, i.e. the attainment of psychological unity and wholeness (e.g. Jung, 1912/52, pp. 207f.; 1944/52, pp. 98ff; 1945/54, p. 253). While mandalas are thus typically seen to symbolise the mediation of opposites and the *telos* or completion of individuation (cf. Chapter Three), it must also be noted that they frequently appear to manifest as a compensatory image of wholeness and stability in the context of psychological crisis and upheaval (Brooke, 1991; Redfearn, 1985). Their ubiquitous appearance in the dreams and visions of the dying (e.g. Fortier, 1972; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992; Wheelwright, 1981) may thus be interpreted as an indication of the attainment of wholeness and integration on the one hand, and as a possible indication of the threat of chaos and disintegration on the other hand. Either way, the association of mandala images with the condition of death is evident.

A dream that may be briefly commented on is that of the two girls dancing in a circle (C6). This image alludes to the *mandala nrithya*, the 'dance of the mandala' (Jung, 1929, p. 23), and it is noteworthy that dancing itself has symbolic links with death⁷. For instance, it is told that during

⁷ The motif of dancing is also prominent in dream #P3.

the Great Maro Dance (a round dance at the beginning of time) the first death occurred, resulting in a never-ending cycle of death and birth (Jung & Kerenyi, 1985; Welman & Faber, 1992). It is also interesting to note that the sundial in dream #D5 - on which the dreamer is sacrificed - may be related to the motif of the sun-wheel, which Jung described as being amongst the most archaic mandala forms (Jung, 1933, pp. 321f.). The fact that the dreamer is then spun around on the sundial is perhaps also significant, for Jung (1955-56, p. 494) interpreted the image of the rotating mandala as being symbolic of the actual surrender of the ego to the self. This symbolism is also evident in dream #E5, which was reported by a 71 year old woman dying of bowel cancer. It involves a fairly unusual combination of geometric metaphors:

A strange type of dream. A circle with a square over it, and inside of it the figure eight. The circle rotates slowly around. A lot of people seem to be watching this event. The circle turns out to be a big silver ring.

In this dream we find a specific allusion to the 'squaring of the circle', which is a common motif of the alchemical *opus*. According to Jung (1944/52, p. 124), it refers to the deintegration of the original chaotic unity (*prima materia*) into its primal elements, and their synthesis again into a higher unity. The figure eight represents a variation of this motif. It stands for unity and completion (*ibid.*, p. 162), and in alchemy it signifies entry into a new order of being (Jung, 1955-56, p. 401).

As with mandala imagery, quaternary motifs are typically associated with the archetype of the self, and hence stand as symbols of the ultimate goal of the *opus* of individuation. The dream (B3) reported by a woman dying of cancer reveals a classical quaternary motif in the form of a 'magic square' that was fitted over her by a group of strange people; it appeared that the purpose of the square was to determine if people were telling the truth about themselves. From the perspective of the ego, experience of the self often takes the form of moral or ethical reflection and judgement (cf. Chapters Three & Four). The dream is moreover reminiscent of the 'judgement of the dead', which features prominently in eschatological literature. In Egyptian myth, for example, the soul of the deceased is weighed against a feather to determine its ultimate fate (Budge, 1923; Burland, 1974), and in Persian myth the deceased has to cross the Chinvat Bridge to the Beyond. For evil persons the bridge is as thin as a hair, and they fall into the world of demons; the pure of heart manage to cross safely (von Franz, 1986). Perhaps an allusion to this 'testing' of the ego is also evident in dream #Q6, in which the dreamer was walking along a narrow ledge, certain that she must not fall but unable to see because she was surrounded by darkness; her deceased father appeared to assist her safely across.

Dream #F12 also warrants comment. It was reported by a 57 year old man suffering from bone cancer, whose case is discussed in the following chapter. It involved an image of Christ in four parts, and the dreamer was faced with the task of piecing these parts together. Both the quaternity motif and the image of Christ may be interpreted as symbolic allusions to the self (cf. Jung, 1942/48; 1942/54; 1951), but as Edinger (1972) points out it is perhaps more correct to think of the Christ motif as symbolic of the development of ego-consciousness through the symbolic process. In that case, the dreamer's task - to piece together the four parts of Christ - may be associated with the appropriation of disparate possibilities of the self, which as previously noted is a theme of an emergent ego (cf. Chapter Four). The dream may also allude to the motif of the dismembered and reconstituted god, such as Osiris, thus symbolically capturing the drama of sacrifice, death and renewal in a cogent image (see above).

17. Sacred space/ place (*temenos*)

Another initial theme to emerge from the data is that of the *temenos*, the sacred place or space (Jung, 1944/52, p. 54n). This theme may be discerned from 11 images, occurring in nine dreams: in the form of a dark forest (G4), a mountain, cave and labyrinth (F11), a chapel (J2), an ancient cathedral (K2), a "heavenly city" (T5), the desert (M1, M3), a church (M1), and a town square that must be defended (U1).

Amplification of theme #17

The archetype of the *temenos* is evident throughout human history in the construction of protected and sacred areas, which are usually delineated from profane ground (Campbell, 1974; Eliade, 1958). From the earliest appearances of sacred caves and burial grounds, Eliade (1958) contends, this archetype has been "copied and copied again with the erection of every new altar, temple or sanctuary" (p. 372). Amongst images of the *temenos*, Jung included the temple or church (Jung, 1944/52, p. 106), the garden (*ibid.*, p. 118), the magic circle or square (*ibid.*, pp. 81, 131), the sacred precinct (Jung, 1912/52, p. 364; 1929, p. 24), and the castle or city (Jung, 1950, p. 361). The justification for including other images, from the dreams listed above, in this theme is outlined below.

Central to the motif of the *temenos* is its association with transformation (Campbell, 1974; Eliade, 1958). This association in turn highlights a thematic connection between the *temenos* and the self, which has previously been described as a protected 'space' which allows for the gathering and integration of disparate potentialities of psychological life (cf. Chapter Four). But in addition to this, the *temenos* may also be related to the protective and transformative aspects of the Feminine archetype (Jung, 1944/52, p. 186; Neumann, 1963, p. 46). This theme is explored in Chapter Eight.

While these general comments serve as amplificatory parallels for all of the dreams noted in connection to this theme, it is pertinent to draw attention to some of the particular variations which have emerged in this study. Turning first to dream #F11, involving a labyrinth set within a mountain cave, we find that the spiral or labyrinth represents one of the earliest attempts to present a dynamic-topographical map of the underworld (Deedes, 1935; Herzog, 1983), and was at the centre of Egyptian and Mesopotamian funerary rites (Deedes, 1935; Purce, 1990). Apart from this the labyrinth also emerges as a sacred place of transformation in ancient initiation rites and shamanic practices (Neumann, 1963; Purce, 1990). Caves too have an archaic relationship to death, being among the earliest of burial places, as well as places of worship and spiritual transformation (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Circlot, 1962). Neumann (1963, pp. 46ff.) has moreover elaborated the image of the cave as among those motifs of shelter and containment associated with the primordial elements of the Feminine archetype (cf. Chapter Eight). Continuing with this dream, it may be noted that the mountain too assumes the significance of a *temenos*: mythical traditions have commonly afforded sacred status to mountains, which by virtue of their height have been presumed as the dwelling places of the gods⁸, or the meeting places between the gods and mortals (Eliade, 1958, pp. 89ff). The association in the dream between the mountain, cave, and labyrinth on the one hand, and the possibility of transformation and transcendence on the other hand, is further reinforced when we recall from a previous discussion that it is in these sacred places that the dreamer encounters the figure of a Wise Old Man, tending a fire; and it is this figure who instructs the dreamer as to the quest that he must undertake, a journey to the centre of the earth.

An interesting *temenos* image is that of the desert. It manifests in two dreams of a young man who was dying of cancer of the oesophagus. In the first dream (M1), he was lost in a desert, surrounded only by sand, when he suddenly came across a church. In the second dream, he was again wandering in the desert and entered a black tent, from which he emerged dressed all in white.

⁸ For instance, Mt. Meru (Hinduism), Mt. Haraberezaiti (Persian), and Mt. Tabor (Hebrew).

As it appears in religious literature, the desert is a strong metaphor for the experience of suffering or alienation (Jung, 1934/54, p. 35). Typically, the wanderer has been cast out in the desert (e.g. Ishmael, the Israelites), and Edinger (1972, p. 46f.) has described this image as being symbolic of a condition of ego-self alienation. It speaks of despair, misery and loss of meaning, but, as noted in an earlier discussion, alienation is also a necessary route to restoration of the ego-self axis (cf. Chapter Four). In religious motifs, this is symbolised by a divine source which offers sustenance to the wanderer - for instance, the Israelites in the wilderness are fed by manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4), and Elijah is fed by ravens during his sojourn in the wilderness (Kings 17:2-6). In the dreams under consideration, both the church, and the tent where transformation occurs, may be seen as symbolic indications of the potential for renewal and rebirth that emerges out of alienation experiences.

In a similar way, the dream of entering a dark forest (G5) may be included in this theme because in myth and fairy-tale the forest is typically associated with magic, enchantment and transformation; as Jung (1943/48) explained, the forest "is the container of the unknown and mysterious", and is thus an "an appropriate synonym for the unconscious" (p. 194). On the other hand, the image of the town square that must be defended (U1) may be interpreted as a metaphor for the task of creating and maintaining a space within which the self can emerge (cf. Chapter Four).

18. Colour Symbolism

Because of the psychological significance that Jungian theorists often give to specific colours (see below), it was decided to include as a theme those colours which are mentioned on more than one occasion in the dream reports. The most commonly occurring colours in this regard are green (B2, D2, Q3), white (B1, B3, F11, F15, M3, P4, U2) and black (D1, F1, L2, L6, P4, Q2, Q4, R2).

Amplification of theme #18

The manifestation of particular colours in dreams is embedded within an archetypal and mythical history, but as Circlot (1962) points out the interpretation of colour symbolism must be approached cautiously because the meanings associated with specific colours perhaps show more individual and

cultural variation than is the case with other archetypal symbols. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into a discussion of these issues, and the following considerations serve merely to highlight possible associations of particular colours in the context of the dreams of the dying.

Jung (1955-56) asserted that the colour green has a "spermatic, procreative quality", and he associated it with rebirth, regeneration and resurrection (pp. 113, 289); it "holds out the promise of future harvests" (*ibid.*, p. 432). The connection between 'greenness' and rebirth is further substantiated with reference to its association with vegetation motifs, as for instance in dreams B2 and Q3. In alchemy, green is associated with Mercurius or Hermes, and thus symbolises "the life-spirit itself" (Jung, 1944/52, p. 91; 1955-56, p. 113). This interpretation extends to early Christian literature, in which green is described as the colour of the Holy Ghost (Jung, 1955-56, p. 113). An Egyptian hymn to Osiris similarly states that "the world waxes green through him" (Frazer, 1934, p. 113). Dream #D2, involving the motif of a 'green man' who dwells in the underworld is perhaps relevant to these amplifications (see below). On the other hand, green also has a Feminine significance, pertaining to nature and to the goddess Venus (Circlot, 1962, p. 54; Jung, 1955-56, pp. 116n, 288).

As is still evident in contemporary life, white has archetypal connotations with purity (virginity), renewal and rebirth (Jung, 1976b, p. 90). In alchemical texts, it is commonly associated with the *albedo*, the white or foliated earth, which is in turn symbolic of the self (Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986). It is also associated with the incorruptible body which is purified through fire (Edinger, 1985, p. 40). In addition, white has symbolic connotations with the Feminine, being associated with virginity and with the moon (Jung, 1955-56, p. 131n). However, whiteness also has strong mythic associations with death, in so far as it is related to the experience of transcendent wholeness. As Jaffe (1978) explains:

"... colour, in its manifoldness and diversity, means life. White, on the other hand, is non-life, death or the beyond ... People who have been close to death say that they have felt as if all the concrete details of their lives, indeed all their feelings and attachments, had dissolved or been withdrawn from them, and instead their whole existence - inward and outward - had been gathered together in one spiritual unity - in a quintessence, as it were, of their earthly fate ... This condition, when all fullness is concentrated in the instant, might well be symbolised by the fusion of all colours in whiteness or white light" (p. 82).

The connection between death, as transcendent wholeness, and the colour white is most evident in dream #F12, in the form of an image of a 'white wedding cake'; for as noted below, the wedding motif is indicative of a *hierosgamos* or union of opposites, and is thus related to the possibility of death. Dreams in which the subject or other figures are specifically dressed in white, particularly in a ritualistic context, may similarly be interpreted as allegories of rebirth and renewal (e.g. dreams B1, B3, M3, U2).

The colour black is frequently linked to death. It is both the colour of the alchemical *nigredo*, pertaining to decay and suffering (Jung, 1955-56, p. 350), and is traditionally the colour of grief and mourning. Jaffe (1978) makes the interesting observation that black and white may serve as metaphors for different attitudes or perspectives towards death itself, the one grounded in the concerns of the ego and the other giving expression to the reality of the self:

"To some people the colour of mourning is white; to others it is black. This is no contradiction: it merely symbolises another aspect. Black stresses the viewpoint of this world towards death - mourning, farewell, perhaps guilt - whereas white points to the other world, to the dissolution of all earth-bound feelings after the manifold aspects of life have vanished. White is the colour of the shroud practically all over the world and it is the favourite colour for funeral wreaths even where black is the colour of mourning. White flowers point away from earthly suffering to the state of purity and redemption and thus bring consolation" (p. 83).

These comments help us to appreciate the possible meaning of dream #P4:

A strange scene of black and white. There is a long and wide passage, the left half of which is white, while the right side is black. I am walking on the right side, struggling to see where I am going, but a strange voice tells me to move over to the left side, that everything is happening on the left. I am uncertain about this but the voice tells me to trust and to have faith.

This was the last dream reported by a 63 year old woman dying of lymphatic cancer. It is significant because at that time she was suffering both physically and emotionally, and in this context the dream appears to indicate that the side of death which she was experiencing was balanced by another dimension which she was not consciously aware of. A similar motif appears in dream #M3 (already described with regard to the theme of the *temenos*), in which the dreamer

entered a black tent in the desert; some form of ritual was performed and he emerged from the tent dressed in white. The subject was a 31 year old man dying of cancer of the oesophagus. He had been very bitter at the premature ending to his life, particularly as he felt that he could have been cured had his condition been diagnosed timeously. As his final weeks approached he realised however that his bitterness was only preventing him from appreciating what was left of life. With this, he began to spend many hours reflecting on his past and recalling numerous positive moments; this seemed in turn to bring him into a living relationship with the present. In this light, it may be tentatively suggested that the black tent in the dream reflects something of his initial experience of death, being associated with loss, anger and grief. His emergence from the tent dressed in white may on the other hand be an indication of a 'new' attitude emerging from his "period of dark despair", as he later referred to it. This interpretation is supported by the image of the desert, which we have seen to be indicative of the potential for healing that comes through experiences of alienation and suffering (see above).

19. Human figures

Human figures form a composite theme that emerges from a number of dreams involving the appearance of persons who are known or unknown to the dreamer. Again, caution must be exercised in drawing archetypal interpretations from these figures, particularly in those cases where they are persons familiar to the dreamer. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to amplify certain broad interpretive possibilities surrounding the motifs of (a) being called or collected, (b) the sinister stranger, (c) female figures, (d) male figures, and (e) the lover/ the *coniunctio*.

(a) Being called

A number of dreams involve encounters with figures who are in reality deceased (B2, J2, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q10). Encounters with 'the dead' feature prominently in the dreams, visions and fantasies of dying persons (Jaffe, 1978; von Franz, 1986; Welman & Faber, 1992), and are also commonly reported in the context of near-death experiences (cf. Chapter Three). Amplifying these experiences with historical and mythological material, Holck (1980) notes that this is also a common theme in ancient death-related rituals and in Eastern thanatology. In essence, the dreams included

in this theme may therefore be seen as anticipations of death, or as an unconscious preparation for death through symbolic allusions to the 'other world', the land of the dead (cf. Jaffe, 1978; Welman & Faber, 1992). This is particularly so for those dreams in which the subject is explicitly 'called' or 'collected' by already deceased figures (C3, H3). To this motif may be added images in which the subject is 'collected' by 'otherworldly' figures, such as angels (K5) and figures in white robes (U2).

At an archetypal level of amplification, the figures in these dreams may be understood in terms of the motif of the *psychopompos* ('leader of souls'), which is elaborated elsewhere. The question that must be raised here concerns the 'reality' of the deceased figures, particularly regarding those dreams in which they are known to the subjects (cf. Jaffe, 1978; Mogenson, 1991; Welman & Faber, 1992). This issue is taken further in Chapter Eight, but for now it will suffice to again appeal to the concept of psychical reality. In other words, it is important from a psychological perspective to avoid simplistic metaphysical assertions concerning the 'realness' of dream images of the dead; but as will be seen in the following chapter, it is equally important not to simply greet these dreams with a rationalistic stance, which detracts from their poetic value - for they do seem to offer important messages of comfort to dying persons. In this regard, it may also be noted that many of the subjects understood these dreams as preparations for death or as indications of life after death. This theme too is discussed in Chapter Eight.

(b) The sinister stranger

In four dreams, a sinister figure is encountered who is either vaguely threatening (Q2), or with whom the dreamer engages in an active struggle (L5, R2, T4). In dream #Q2, the dreamer was being followed by a sinister figure dressed in black, who did not speak and whose face was never visible. In another dream (R2), the subject had to wrestle with a black man; he was told that if he lost the match he would be put to death, but he could not recall if there was an outcome to the contest in the dream. Another subject dreamed that he was engaged in a fierce battle with an unknown man (T4); here too the outcome was not evident. In dream #L5, the dreamer was attacked by a group of right-wing militants, who wanted to set him on fire.

In the context of the present study, it is reasonable to assume that these dreams reflect something of the approach of death and the way in which this was perceived by the subjects involved. In

myth, the personification of death often takes the form of a sinister or shadowy figure (Herzog, 1983; von Franz, 1986), and similar imagery has been observed in the dreams of the dying (Edinger, 1972; von Franz, 1986). The personification of death as a sinister stranger is particularly evident in dreams Q2 and R2, where the association of blackness with death (see above) is pertinent. As noted with regard to the motif of fire, dream #L5 has connotations both with death and with transformation.

(c) Female figures⁹

Of the dreams recorded in this study, 11 contained female characters not familiar to the dreamer in everyday life: a strange woman who leads the dreamer into a circular area (A2); an oriental maid who bathes and anoints the dreamer (B1); two young girls dancing (C2); an old woman in possession of a secret (F10); a receptionist in heaven (G5); an air hostess on an aircraft carrying skeletons (H2); the Queen of England (I3); a triad of seductive women (L6); a woman weaving (P1); and a woman collecting dismembered body parts (I1). For the purposes of this discussion, dream #I2, in which the dreamer was having sex with a woman who initially appeared to be a stranger but later proved to be his sister, is included in this theme.

At an archetypal level of interpretation, female figures may be taken as symbolic of the Feminine archetype. The nature, functions and significance of the Feminine receives extensive attention in the following chapter and need not be elaborated on at this point, but it may be noted that there is a strong poetic association between death and the Feminine. In both mythical tradition and in the dreams, visions, and fantasies of the dying death is often personified in a feminine form (Herzog, 1983; Sullivan, 1989; von Franz, 1986). Considering the female motifs identified in this study, connotations with death may be discerned as follows:

- The image of the young flower-seller (F5) may be related to death in so far as flowers have already been shown to have strong thematic connotations with death and with the archetype of wholeness.

⁹ Female figures known to the dreamer (e.g. wife, daughter) have not been included in this analysis, as the emphasis of the study is on the elucidation of archetypal themes. It is recognised that the distinction between 'personal' and 'archetypal' images is somewhat spurious (cf. Chapter Five), but it would make for too cumbersome an analysis to include a consideration of all of the human figures emerging from the data. The same principle applies to the theme of male dream figures.

- The hostess on the aircraft carrying skeletons (H2), and the receptionist in heaven (G5) both appear in the context of conspicuous death-related imagery.
- In dream #12, the dreamer had sexual intercourse with a woman who turned out to be his sister. This bears a strong allusion to the mythic motif of the sister-lover, which is in turn linked to themes of death and transcendence (see below).
- In dream #L6, the dreamer encountered "three sexy women", all dressed in black, who were behaving seductively and singing a song to him; the chorus of the song was "Now you've got a ride ... You've got a taxi". This motif may be interpreted as an allusion to the Sirens, the seductive servants and messengers of Persphone, who lure men to their deaths (Herzog, 1983, p. 105). A similar allusion is that of the enchanted Elves and Nixies belonging to the underworld; as Herzog writes, "the distinguishing mark of these figures is their beguiling, unearthly beauty by which they lure men and arouse their love" (*ibid.*, p. 105). In this dream, the association between the alluring feminine figures and death is further emphasised by their black garments. The subject himself associated the chorus of their song with the need to "pay the ferryman for the journey to the other side".
- A subject dying of lymphatic cancer dreamed shortly before her death that she was in an old house and descended down a spiral staircase which led through a number of levels; in a dark room she discovered an old woman sitting and weaving a huge cloth (P1). The descent down the spiral staircase may be associated with the theme of the *nekylia* (see above). The figure of the old woman may be amplified by recourse to the Greek motif of the Moirai and the Germanic Norns, the Spinners of Fate, who are personifications of human destiny and thus of death. In this regard, Herzog (*ibid.*, p. 96) also notes that Frau Holle, the Teutonic death-mistress, was often represented with a distaff or spinning wheel and was called 'the Spinner'.

In other dreams, the Feminine appears primarily in the context of themes of transformation and renewal. In one case, a subject dreamed that he was travelling on a road and met an old woman who suggested that he join her as she was in possession of a great secret (F10). Later in the dream she informed him that she would be the midwife during his birth. Here we have a clear allusion to the potential for rebirth and renewal offered through contact with the Feminine (cf. Chapter Eight). Another striking example of this theme occurs in dream #11, reported by a 68 year-old man. He

dreamed that he was at a dumping ground, where human limbs had been discarded; in the midst of this "terrible scene" a woman was collecting body parts, and informed him that they had to be put back together. As previously noted, this seems to be a classical allegory of the role of the Feminine in rebirth and renewal, with the female figure representing a symbolic allusion to Isis, the Egyptian goddess who reconstitutes the dismembered Osiris.

An image which merits specific attention is that of two large violins, which formed the central feature of dream #C5. Strictly speaking this image does not form part of the theme of human figures, but it is appropriate to amplify it in the present context because, as has been reported elsewhere (Welman & Faber, 1991; Welman, 1995), it may be amplified to reveal themes pertaining both to death and to the Feminine. In the first instance, Neumann (1963) has shown that in several ancient religions 'violin figures' were artefacts used to symbolise the Primitive Goddess or Great Mother. With reference to Cycladean idols, for example, he posits that "the cello like shape ... is so striking that one is tempted to investigate the feminine form of many musical instruments and relate its symbolism to [the archetypal Feminine]" (p. 113n). Further amplification moreover reveals an allusion to the myth of Demeter and her daughter, Perspehone, who tend to appear together in mythic texts; this is supported by the fact that in Syrian artefacts two female figures appear, representing the Goddess and a younger girl, presumably her daughter (*ibid.*). Kerényi (1985) similarly makes reference to "the double figure of Demeter and the Kore" (p. 110). In addition, primitive violin figures were often placed in tombs as a "representation of a death goddess ... they symbolise a reduction to the spiritual essentials of the realm of the dead and the spirits" (Neumann, 1963, pp. 112-3).

(d) Male figures

Male figures not familiar to the dreamer appear in 13 dreams: a green man who dwells under the ground (D2); an old man in a temple (D3); a man who assists the dreamer to cross a lagoon (D4); a priest (D5); a blind old man (F11); a figure who guides the dreamer on a journey to heaven (I4); a strange man who urges the dreamer into a fire, from which she emerges renewed (K2); a farmer (L7); a masked lover (P3); an opponent (R2); a sinister stranger (Q2); an opponent (R2); a mechanic (S2).

Images of the male stranger as a personification of death (R2, Q2) have already received attention,

and in this section emphasis will be given to the male figure as a *psychopompos*, a guide to the underworld and a figure who traditionally heralds death - e.g. Hermes-Mercurius and Toth (Jaffe, 1978, pp. 108ff.). The clearest allusion to this motif occurs in dream #I4, in which the dreamer was taken to heaven by an unknown man. In dream #F8, the male stranger appears as a blind old man who dwells in a cave, where he tends a fire; he instructs the dreamer to undertake a quest to the centre of the earth. Here we find a clear allusion to the motif of the 'blind seer' who, like Hermes, serves as a guide to the 'inner world' and to the self. A figure of wisdom is also evident in dream #L7, in which a farmer reassures the dreamer that the landscape, which has been devastated by fire and drought, will bear vegetation again. The import of this dream for the subject concerned is discussed in the following chapter. In dream #K2, the male figure again serves the role of a guide in the context of transformation, being the one who leads the dreamer into a fire from which she emerges renewed. Even the figure of the mechanic, in dream #S2, may be interpreted as a source of wisdom, for it is he who informs the dreamer that her car engine - which the subject saw as a symbolic reference to her body (see above) - was 'beyond repair'.

The role of the Masculine is striking in four consecutive dreams reported by a 60 year-old woman dying of emphysema. The image of the green man who lives under the ground and behaves in a seductive manner towards the dreamer (D2) has already been elucidated as a Hermetic figure. The subject dreamed a few days later of being in a temple and participating in a ritual in which an old man touched her on the head and recited an ancient chant which was in Hebrew (D3); in his hand was a caduceus¹⁰, traditionally associated with healing and often depicted as the emblem of modern medicine (cf. Circlot, 1962, pp 35ff). The dreamer however had a poor prognosis and this image did not seem to intimate a literal healing, but rather the potential for psychological healing, which in Jungian terms is associated with a restoration of the ego-self axis (cf. Chapter Four). This interpretation is given substance both through the image of the temple as a *temenos*, and through the archetypal association of the caduceus with the winged Mercurius or Hermes, the mediator to the underworld (cf. Jung, 1938/40, p. 98n). The third dream, which has been discussed with reference to the motif of the journey, is that in which the dreamer has the task of crossing a lagoon to reach the 'Promised Land' (D4); here the strange man who assists the dreamer may similarly be interpreted as a *psychopompos*. The fourth dream (D5) is that of being sacrificed on a sundial by a priest; the dreamer and the priest then engage in sexual intercourse. This dream has previously been amplified with regard to its symbolic allusions to sacrifice, death and the self, and in the following section attention will be given to the image of the *coniunctio* in this dream.

¹⁰ A staff with two serpents entwined around it, capped by two wings or a winged helmet.

(e) The lover/ *coniunctio*

This category includes those dreams in which there is explicit or implicit sexual union between the dreamer and another figure (D5, F5, I2, P3). Images of deceased parents holding hands in a circular area (Q7), deceased parents appearing together and being "very much in love", and the motif of a wedding (F15), may also be included in this theme, for reasons which will be outlined below.

In Jungian terms, sexual union, as an archetypal motif, is symbolic of the *coniunctio* or union of opposites, and may thus be taken as a metaphor for death and transcendence (Jung, 1946, pp. 247ff.; cf. Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986). In this regard, it may be noted that the personification of death as a lover has a long history in myth, art and literature (Freud, 1925; Greenberger, 1966; Herzog, 1983), and Greenberger (1965) points out that a number of expressions in common use today reveal a tendency to eroticise death - we speak, for example, of 'the kiss of death', of 'surrendering to death', and of 'embracing death'. In an empirical study, Greenberger also elicited numerous *Liebestod* ('love-death') themes in Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) protocols of seriously ill female cancer sufferers. Von Franz (1986) has similarly drawn attention to the common manifestation of themes of sexual union and marriage in the dreams of the dying.

In the present study, the symbolic association between death and sexual union is prominent in two dreams. In dream #D5, the dreamer, who was being sacrificed on a sun-dial, engaged in sexual intercourse with a priest who was orchestrating the sacrificial process. As discussed in an earlier section, the dream has richly symbolic connotations with sacrifice, death and renewal, and the theme of the *coniunctio* must be amplified in this context. Dream #I2 similarly reveals the association between sexual union and death. The subject, a 68 year old man suffering from cancer, dreamed that he was having sex with a strange woman, who later turned out to be his sister. Here it is productive to interpret the incest motif symbolically rather than literally; it is a classical symbol of the *coniunctio*, i.e. the self, and has strong connotations with death and rebirth (Jung, 1912/52; 1946; Plaut, 1984). The theme of incest is in fact a prominent feature in Egyptian death liturgy, where Isis and Osiris are described as lovers (von Franz, 1986, pp. 54-5).

In dream #P3, the dreamer is at a masked ball with a man who is a stranger but also her lover. She dances with him and anticipates that they will make love at midnight, when she will see his face. As previously noted, dancing is mythically associated with death and rebirth, and Herzog (1983, p. 79) has demonstrated that the term 'mask' is etymologically linked to the Greek *larve*, referring

to the hidden spirits of the underworld, and to *Latona*, a lesser-known goddess of death (p. 79). Moreover, the 'mask of death' is a common feature in folklore and initiation rituals (*ibid.*). Given these amplifications, the masked stranger may be a personification of death, which is to be 'revealed' at midnight. This is also significant, for midnight is a time of liminality, the completion of one cycle and the beginning of a new one. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, midnight is the hour associated with the judgement of the dead in the underworld (Budge, 1923; Neumann, 1963).

Another motif which may be included in this discussion although it does not specifically involve a human figure is that of the wedding cake (F14), which also points to union and fusion, i.e. a *coniunctio*. In myth there is a traditional association between weddings and death, and the ancient Greeks believed that the dead enter the bridal chamber of Persphone (Herzog, 1983; von Franz, 1986). For a similar reason, two dreams in which the subjects' deceased parents appeared holding hands in a circular area (Q7) and being "very much in love" (J2) may be included as an allusion to the theme of the *coniunctio* (cf. Chapter Eight).

20. Opposites

A number of dreams involve the manifestation and conjunction of opposites. This theme emerges from the following motifs:

- light/dark: a dark tunnel with a bright light at the end (C2); a bright light eclipsed by a dark shadow (F13); a fire burning in a dark basement (K2).
- black/white: a passage divided into two halves, one side black and the other white (P4); a white dreamer arm wrestling with a black man (R2); a black tent and white clothes (M3);
- left/right: a passage divided into two halves, being told to move across from the right side to the left side (P4).
- the *coniunctio* of male/female: all of the dreams discussed with regard to the theme of the lover/*coniunctio* may be included in this motif. To this may be added the image of a female spider mating with a male (L2).

- ascent/descent: going up and down on an escalator (R3).

Amplification of theme #20:

Most of the images included in this theme have already been amplified in connection to previous themes, and a brief comment regarding the significance of the motif of opposites will suffice.

Tension, conflict and interaction between opposing elements or forces forms a central theme in mythical and alchemical literature (Edinger, 1985; Samuels, 1985a; von Franz, 1986), and this theme has also been shown to occupy a prominent place in the dreams and artistic productions of the dying (Edinger, 1972; Eldred, 1982; Gordon, 1978; von Franz, 1986). We have also seen that Jung devoted substantial attention to the principle of opposition in his theory of personality (cf. Chapter Four). In a broad sense, it is valid to say that motifs of opposition and of the transcendence or union of opposites represent different facets of the symbolic process as the grounding to individuation (cf. Edinger, 1985, pp. 183ff.). Where there is tension there is also the potential for wholeness and renewal, and in this sense motifs of opposition or conflict may also indicate the potential for transcendence and for creative development. In these terms, the theme of opposition may point on the one hand to the disintegration of existing structures, and on the other hand to emerging consciousness.

As has emerged in the course of this chapter, many of the motifs listed above (e.g. light/dark, black/white) may also be seen, in this particular context, as allusions to the struggle between life and death. More is said about this possibility in the following chapter.

7.2. The Identification and Amplification of Concise Themes

As described in Chapter Six, the next stage of analysis was to conduct several readings of the amplificatory material outlined above. The focus in this instance was to reduce, through a process of 'convergence', the initial themes to a smaller number of core or concise themes. This exercise yielded five themes - death, transformation, the self, the Feminine and the Masculine. As with the identification of initial themes, these were not the only possible themes that could be identified, and

more so than with the initial themes, the identification of concise themes explicitly reflects the theoretical context and aims of this study. The intention of this section is only to list these themes and to show how they were derived; an evaluation of their significance is offered in Chapter Eight.

1. Death

By far the most prominent theme to emerge from the amplificatory analysis is that of death. To varying degrees, nearly all of the initial themes have been shown to have connotations with death, either in the form of overt images of death and dying (theme 1), or in more symbolic fashion. For instance, the themes of bodily metamorphosis (theme 2) and mechanical failure (theme 3) have been interpreted as metaphoric indications of the death of the body. Images of loss and separation (theme 5) have also been understood as indications of the dying process. For some themes, it has emerged that symbolic allusions to death may point to a tension between possibilities of literal destruction on the one hand, and psychological death and transformation on the other hand. This is particularly true for the themes of death and dying (theme 1), bodily metamorphosis (theme 2), and chaos (theme 4), as well as for certain animal motifs - particularly the dog (theme 6), images involving the destruction and renewal of vegetation (theme 7), and the metaphor of earth (theme 8). By drawing on mythic and religious amplifications, it has also been shown that the themes of the journey (theme 9), ascent (theme 10), and descent (theme 11) have strong symbolic connotations with the meaning of death. Likewise, the motif of immersion in water (theme 12) is a classical poetic metaphor for death. Fire (theme 13) is less obviously connected to death, but may be indicative of sacrifice, i.e. dying. The phenomena of light (theme 14) and darkness (theme 15) are also commonly associated with death. Certain colours (theme 18) - particularly black, white and green - are mythically connected to death. In some dreams, death appears in personified form, as a sinister or benevolent stranger (theme 19).

It should be noted that many of the images associated with death also appear in mythic and religious context with an eschatological meaning, i.e. associated with the possibility of post-mortal existence. In some instances this connection is implicit, but the following initial themes have been more clearly implicated in this regard: bodily metamorphosis (theme 2), vegetation (theme 7), the journey (theme 9), ascent (theme 10), light (theme 14), and mandala images (theme 16).

2. Transformation

It is significant that with the possible exception of the theme of mechanical failure (theme 3), all of the themes included in the identification of death as a concise theme involve archetypal images and motifs that also serve as metaphors for aspects of psychological transformation and development. The renunciation of the ego, i.e. sacrifice, is for instance indicated in the themes of dying (theme 1), bodily metamorphosis (theme 2), loss and separation (theme 5), and fire (theme 13). The possibility of emerging consciousness has been indicated with particular regard to the themes of ascent (theme 10), fire (theme 13), light (theme 14), the *temenos* (theme 17), and opposition (theme 20). The potential for psychological rebirth or renewal emerges primarily from the themes of death and dying (theme 1), bodily metamorphosis (theme 2), vegetation (theme 7), earth (theme 8), the journey (theme 9), ascent (theme 10), descent (theme 11), water (theme 12), fire (theme 13), light (theme 14), the colours white and green (theme 18), and the *coniunctio* (themes 19 & 20). On the other hand, the possibility of regression is indicated for the most part in the themes of chaos (theme 4), descent (theme 11), water (theme 12), and darkness (theme 15). The motif of the journey (theme 9) has been described as symbolic of the individuation process in its entirety.

3. The self

As a concise theme, the self emerges from those initial themes which have been shown through amplification to be associated with wholeness, transcendence, non-differentiation, fusion or union. Images of transcendent wholeness, union and integration have been associated most strongly with the themes of ascent (theme 10), light (theme 14), mandala images (theme 16), the *temenos* (theme 17), and the *coniunctio* (themes 19 & 20). Certain vegetation images, particularly flowers (theme 7) have also been amplified with regard to the potential for wholeness. On the other hand, the concise theme of the self also includes images of chaos (theme 4), dissolution in water (theme 12), and darkness (theme 15); these motifs have been associated with an extinction, as opposed to a mature and creative transcendence, of ego-consciousness, and thus appear to point to the primitive, regressive face of the self (cf. Chapter Four). More is said about this distinction in Chapter Eight.

4. The Feminine

The theme of the Feminine incorporates both female figures (theme 19), and images and motifs which have through amplification been related to the Feminine archetype. In this regard, it has been shown that certain animal symbols (theme 6) - specifically the spider, the bee, the horse and the dove - have strong mythical connotations with the Feminine. The themes of vegetation (theme 7), earth (theme 8) and water (theme 12) have been associated with the primordial mysteries of birth and death as the realm of the Feminine. Darkness too has symbolic connotations with the Feminine world (theme 15). The cave as a variant of the *temenos* (theme 17) has been included in this theme. The variations and functions of the Feminine archetype are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

5. The Masculine

The Masculine, as a concise theme, includes in the first instance male dream figures (theme 19). However, the analysis of initial themes has also revealed numerous images which are symbolically related to this archetype. Here we may recall the amplificatory contexts developed around the themes of fire (theme 13) and light (theme 14). Certain animal motifs - e.g. the bull - have also been associated with the Masculine archetype (theme 6). As for the Feminine, the theme of the Masculine and its significance in the dying process receives attention in Chapter Eight.

7.3. Summary

A hermeneutically grounded thematic analysis of 108 dreams reported by dying persons revealed 20 initial themes. Each of these themes was in turn analysed by way of Jung's method of amplification. This exercise yielded five concise themes, these being (a) death, (b) transformation (sacrifice, emerging consciousness, regression, individuation), (c) the self (d) the Feminine, and (e) the Masculine.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the central implications to emerge from the thematic analysis of dreams, reported in Chapter Seven, are considered in terms of four related issues. First, do the images and motifs that manifest in the dreams of the dying support the hypothesis that dreams afford a poetic or imaginative grounding to the dying process? In this regard, attention must also be given to the tension between literalism and metaphor within the dream images themselves. Second, what significance may be attributed to the concise themes that have been identified? This question will be addressed with regard to (a) the self, death and transformation, (b) the Feminine and (c) the Masculine. Third, we consider some of the clinical implications and uses of dreams in the dying process. Finally, a critical evaluation of the validity of the study is offered, and directions for further research are considered. Where relevant, case material from the present study is used to support and to illustrate points of discussion.

As there are numerous and diverse issues that are raised in this chapter, it is useful at the outset to offer a brief synopsis of the findings of the study and their central implications, for the remaining sections are essentially structured according to these parameters.

8.1. A Synopsis of Findings

The initial and the concise themes that have emerged from the analysis of dream material lend support to the hypothesis that the approach of literal death is expressed through images and symbols that are indicative of death as a metaphoric reality. In particular, the identification of images of wholeness, transcendence and union on the one hand, and images of sacrifice, transformation and renewal on the other hand, suggests that the theoretical parameters of death and dying, established in Chapter Four, are indeed applicable to the concrete actuality of death. Ultimately, these findings imply that the dying process affords the potential for transformation and

renewal through contact with the self, i.e. restitution of the ego-self axis (cf. Edinger, 1972; Fortier, 1972). In this regard, it may be argued that while images of wholeness and transcendence in the dreams of the dying point to the psychological reality of death itself, those associated with change, loss, transformation, and renewal are essentially indicative of potentialities and experiences that are bound up with the process of dying, or with conscious sacrifice.

A key clinical implication of these findings is that the process of dying must then be seen to herald opportunities for insight, change and development that are perhaps not evident in everyday living (cf. Baker & Wheelwright, 1982; Gordon, 1978; Welman & Faber, 1992). As is argued below, these opportunities may be seen as the poetic concomitants of the death instinct. But it will also be seen that, in the context of a fragile ego, the death instinct may operate as a regressive force which must be resisted, perhaps even with heroic strength and courage. This argument will be demonstrated with relevant case material (cf. the case of Ruth, below).

In Chapters Three and Four, it was emphasised that if the poetic possibilities associated with the self are to be actualised in contingent life, a correspondingly poetic comportment - a 'sacrificial attitude' - is demanded on the part of the ego. So far as this hypothesis is concerned, it will be seen that some dreams appear to indicate with compelling certainty the need for a 'new' attitude on the part of the dreamer. Given these considerations, it will also be argued that while the capacity for resolution and healing may be indicated by images of selfhood, the clinical significance of the Feminine and the Masculine in the dying process may be to reveal and to orchestrate those qualities that are necessary for the embodiment of poetic hospitality towards an emerging self.

8.2. The Metaphoric Grounding of Death and Dying

The present study has sought to bring to bear a poetic perspective on the problem of death and dying in two ways. First, the psychology of Jung has been adopted to develop an ontological understanding of death as a fundamental condition of human existence, and to facilitate an existential appreciation of sacrifice as a poetic response to the possibility of death. Second, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that the encounter with death as a literal contingency of existence, i.e. the process of actually dying, is grounded in an imaginative context that is revealed in dreams, and that unfolds as a mythopoetic perspective to the ending of life.

It is pertinent to recapitulate the central issues underlying these endeavours. On the one hand, we have said that a literal, positivist approach to thanatology inevitably conceals the existential significance of death, and leaves the process of dying bereft of meaning. But on the other hand, a poetics of death that does not address the concrete actuality of the destruction of life remains abstract and ungrounded, perhaps to the point of irrelevance for the dying person. It has been suggested that what is required is a meaningful articulation of the literal and the metaphoric meanings of death, i.e. gnosis. An attempt has been made to demonstrate that, in the virtual absence of meaningful socio-cultural models in modern existence, a gnosis of death may ultimately be founded on the symbolic discourse and the archetypal heritage of dreams.

Since antiquity, dreams have been known to reveal what one is and will be, and the conditions that tie personal freedom to the necessity and laws of natural life (Foucault, 1986, p. 47). The results of this study indicate that the encounter with death, as reflected in dream imagery, occurs essentially at two levels of meaning. On the one hand, the literal implications of death are revealed in images of destruction, annihilation, and loss. These images appear to lend expression to the meaning of death as seen from the perspective of the modern ego; for in these terms, death appears as a catastrophe, as the ultimate condition of earthly suffering and as a painful reminder of the limits of personal freedom. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that the dying process is also shaped by images and motifs that allude to the imaginative possibilities of death - here we may think particularly of symbolic intimations of wholeness, transcendence, transformation and renewal. Moreover, it has emerged that these seemingly ambivalent meanings tend to be reflected in dreams as coincident possibilities of the image of death. Foucault (1986) points to a similar conclusion in commenting that the theme of mortality as it appears in dreams shows on the one hand "death which in its most inauthentic form is but the brutal and bloody interruption of life" (p. 54), and on the other hand reveals death with another face:

"Death then carries the meaning of reconciliation, and the dream in which this death figures is then the most fundamental of all: it no longer speaks of life interrupted, but of the fulfilment of existence, showing forth the moment in which life reaches its fullness in a world about to close in ... in announcing death, the dream exhibits the fullness of Being which existence has now attained" (*ibid.*, p. 55).

These reflections lead to the important recognition that beyond the purely literal implications of death, i.e. the loss of life and the destruction of the body, there is an imaginative drama that deliteralises and 'de-rationalises' the meaning of death and the experience of dying. Or, to put it

differently, it seems that the meaning of death is seldom 'only literal' from the perspective of the imaginal psyche. This argument both supports previous research undertaken by analytical psychologists (cf. Chapter Five), and lends substance to Jung's assertion that the encounter with death occurs at two levels of reality: that of rational ('nothing but') consciousness, and that of the imagination (i.e. psychical reality). From the perspective of the former, and particularly in the context of Western rationalism, the image of death tends to be treated literally and iconoclastically - death is seen to be 'no more' than 'the end', and it is therefore feared, avoided and denied. But it is clear that the psyche also meets death imaginatively, and in these terms death is envisioned not simply as an ending but as a numinous and penetrating mystery that defies rational or scientific explication.

In poetic thanatology, there has perhaps been a tendency to deride the literal side of death owing to a desire to pursue the meaning of death as a basic metaphor for the emergence of Being (cf. Chapter One). It must be emphasised, however, that in the final analysis both dimensions, the literal and the figurative, are valid and meaningful. They form ambivalent poles of the image of death, but the one is essentially meaningless without the other (cf. Sardello, 1974). If the literal meaning only is lived out, then death will be treated simply as an object of horror and fear, and the tasks of dying, as discussed below, will be impeded as a result of this attitude. If the figurative meaning only is embraced, without due recognition of the literal demands of natural life, then it is likely that an ungrounded and inauthentic spirit of Romanticism will be brought to bear on the problem of death and dying. On the clinician's part, this may translate into an insensitivity to the genuine fear, anger and bereavement that are felt by those confronted with the loss of life.

Taking these considerations together with the results of the study, it may be argued that the necessary tension or balance between the literal and the figurative meanings of death is maintained through archetypal symbols which manifest spontaneously in the presence of death. In other words, the imaginative faculties of the psyche are such that the dying person is confronted, in his or her dreams, with the very tension that makes death meaningful. This tension, which will shortly be illustrated with reference to selected case material, may also be seen to ground the possibility of a gnosis of death. In this light, it would seem that a fundamental task of dying concerns the integration and consolidation of the ambivalent possibilities of death, which on the one hand evokes the deepest possible sense of loss and catastrophe, and on the other hand occasions the ecstatic transcendence of finite existence. This task demands that one is able and willing to live - and to die - in a world of profound paradox, in which the boundaries between life and death, creation and destruction, meaning and despair, appear to give way to a 'burning cauldron', as Savitz (1990) puts

it. Given the tension within the image of death there is always the risk of a painful suspension between the extremes of nihilistic despair on the one hand, and ungrounded aspiration on the other hand. But as Sardello (1974) comments, avoiding this risk means simply that "we are condemned to understanding our own death and the death of others as a technical problem of how to dispose of corpses in the rubbish heap" (p. 65).

It is therefore clear that the consolidation of the conflicting messages of death is not a task that can be undertaken simply by rational means. Nor, it would seem, is it a task that can be accomplished by individual resources alone. In this regard, we owe to Jung the recognition that when personal means are exhausted, when one willingly or unwillingly stands before the dark Abyss that is death, then archetypal symbols emerge which serve as imaginative points of orientation and resolution, i.e. as sources of gnosis. This may be further appreciated by considering the role of the self in the dreams of the dying.

8.3. The Self, Death and Transformation

The prominent manifestation of images of wholeness in the dreams of the dying points to the anticipation of death as a *coniunctio*, which in conceptual terms is equivalent to the Jungian self. As noted in the previous chapter, support has also been obtained for the hypothesis that death may mean evolved states of transcendent integration on the one hand (manifested in images and motifs of transcendence, 'higher' states of union, integration of opposites, etc.), and regressive states of pre-personal fusion and union on the other hand (reflected in images of unbounded chaos, dissolution, etc.). Further research is needed in order to establish the personal contingencies associated with the manifestation of each of these ambivalent potentialities, but the case material to be introduced in this chapter will to some extent bear out the notion that this ultimately seems to depend on the stability, strength and position of the ego *vis-a-vis* the self. Either way, the dream material presented in Chapter Seven indicates an unconscious preparation for death that is bound up with the functions and potentials of the self. This theme may be elaborated with reference to the notion of the death instinct and its connection to the self.

8.3.1. The role of the death instinct in the process of dying

In some dreams, there are clear indications of a tension or conflict between life and death. For instance, the dream of Tim, a 57 year old man dying of bone cancer - his case is briefly outlined in a later section - illustrates in a striking way the tension between a desire for life and an innate 'wish' for death:

There was a bright round light, it looked like full moon, but brighter. I knew that the light represented life. Then a dark round circle moved over it, so that it was like a solar eclipse. I knew that was death. In my dream I was trying to keep these two circles apart by concentrating very hard, but then a voice said 'that is the way of all things', and this made me feel a little better. I stopped struggling and let the two merge (F13).

Another example of the struggle between life and death, and the eventual surrender of the ego to its inevitable fate, comes from the dream of Janice, a 55 year old woman suffering from a malignant brain tumor. It was reported a few days before she died:

I dreamed that I was swimming in the ocean, which is unusual because I always keep to shallow water. I was actually enjoying myself, and swam out a far distance from the shore. People seemed to be waving to me and telling me to come back because I was going out too far, and I became scared, thinking that I might drown or get swept out to sea. I started to swim back but a current seemed to be pulling me out. I battled on for a bit, but didn't make much progress, and then I thought how nice it was that I could swim so far out without being afraid. I saw the shore in the distance but it seemed far away. I lay back in the water and let myself drift, further and further away. It was a wonderful feeling (S5).

Both of these dreams appear to anticipate death, but both may also be seen to reveal an initial resistance to death giving way to peaceful surrender. It is significant that in both of the dreams considered above death is portrayed not simply as an objective event, but as a relentless force. At a conceptual level of analysis, this may be seen to support the hypothesis that there is ultimately an innate striving towards death, i.e. a death instinct, to which the ego must accede. Gordon (1978, p. 45ff.) discerned a similar theme in the Rorschach protocols of dying persons, and

concluded that:

"the wish for life and the wish for death do co-exist in the psyche, and ... their predominance, relative to one another, is likely to vary according to (a) the state of mental health on the one hand, and (b) the actual nearness to death on the other" (*ibid.*, p. 57).

As previously argued, the death instinct serves as a dynamic force throughout life; provided that the ego is sufficiently differentiated from the self, it may operate as a poetic calling towards transformation, healing and wholeness. Therefore, if there is indeed a confluence of the literal and the figurative meanings of death during the dying process - i.e. if dying does entail not only the death of the body but the surrender of the ego to the self - it may also be expected that the death instinct will be a particularly powerful and significant force towards the end of life. In short, the encounter with death as a concrete actuality may be seen to 'trigger' the death instinct, which may then operate so as to prepare the psyche for death. The existential implication of this is that at the end of life there is a need to accept the inexorable calling of fate and to accede to the emergence of the self, for, as Tim's dream tells us, 'that is the way of all things'. This theme is also apparent in Janice's dream, in the form of the ocean current which pulls her further and further away from the shore (symbolic of the world of the ego?).

It is feasible to conclude that a central purpose of the death instinct towards the end of life is that of initiating the dying person into the psychological reality of death. It must be recalled from previous chapters that what 'initiation' into death entails is, essentially, an awakening to imaginative existence, i.e. the incarnation of the self as a fertile space within which symbolic experiences can be rehearsed. In these terms, the death instinct is oriented towards the emergence and the integration of previously abandoned or disavowed potentialities of psychological life. For instance, it may be argued that the theme of the Feminine, as it has been identified in this study, reflects in part the emergence of Eros - the capacity for relatedness and for 'soul' (see below) - which is typically disavowed in the Logos dominated climate of Western culture. Perhaps dreams of returning to places that are meaningful to the dreamer similarly reflect a need, at the end of life, to reflect on and to recollect forgotten aspects of one's personal history, so that the unique story of one's life may be seen and appropriated. At the very least, these images appear to offer a point of reflection from which the past may be brought into living relationship with the present; for let us remember that this too is a function of the self. But the self is even more than this: as a fertile 'nothingness' or 'emptiness' it means incarnating the totality of the world in the 'inner space' of

the imagination (Segal, 1989, p. 119), so that the ontological unity between person and world can be restored. The manifestation of motifs of integration, wholeness and rebirth during the dying process may therefore indicate the potential for a mode of being in which habitual indifference gives way to an emerging hospitality, so that the world itself becomes transformed from a profane and godless place to a temple.

Simon, a man dying of cancer, communicated something of the nature of this transformation to me. A few weeks before he died he insisted that he be taken for a last drive around the suburbs which had been a part of his life for over thirty years. *En route*, he commented to his wife that it was a good thing that flowers and trees had finally been planted alongside the road, for it lent a beauty to the area which was previously lacking. To his great surprise, his wife informed him that the same trees and flowers which he was now so enthusiastic about had been there for as long as she could remember, and that Simon himself must have driven passed them each day on his way to work. As Simon related, he then realised "the value of dying" - it had forced him to disengage from those concerns (career, money, and so on) which had dominated his life, and this in turn had freed him to discover a new beauty in the world. This emerging hospitality seemed to have been anticipated, and perhaps orchestrated, in two dreams which he reported shortly before this episode. In the first (N2) he was the commander of an army defending a city, and took up a position so as to defend the town square; he realised that if it could be protected, the city itself would be saved. As noted in the previous chapter, the town square may be interpreted as a *temenos*, or symbol of the self, but the emphasis on the role of dream ego in defending and protecting this space is particularly important: it reinforces the idea that it is the task of the ego to host the self in consciousness. Indeed, this may be seen as a key task of conscious dying.

The second dream (N3), which followed a few days later, reflected a transcendence of ego boundaries and a concomitant 'expansion' and 'depth' of vision; in this sense it anticipated Simon's awakening to the world which occurred during his drive into the suburbs some days later:

This was a very powerful dream. I was flying - not in an aeroplane or with a mechanical aid, but on my own, my body being free to move about in the sky as if I were a bird. I didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular, but the dream was incredibly vivid. All the scenery seemed so rich, as I have never experienced before. And I was incredibly aware of everything, even the smallest details of the landscape. It was like the whole world was part of me ... It's almost impossible to explain.

Simon's case lends support to the idea that the incarnation of the self, i.e. of death, is associated with transformation and an opening of vision (cf. Chapter Four). In this regard, Gordon (1978, pp. 49f.) points out that in literature death is often associated with the experience of expanding spaciousness, and she comments that it is feasible to think that the imminence of death might affect profoundly one's experience of space and time.

8.3.2. The self and the mediation of death

The significance in the dying process of the self, and of the death instinct, goes beyond the considerations outlined above. For in serving as a space in which symbolic experiences can be rehearsed, the self may be seen to also play a vital role in the task of coming to terms with the ambivalent meanings of death that have been outlined above. Essentially, we are dealing here with the capacity to tolerate the tensions and polarities associated with dying, and to reach some degree of meaningful resolution through the symbolic process.

Jung (1929) wrote of the manifestation of the self as implying a fertile 'detachment' from things, i.e. the 'withdrawal of projections' (cf. Chapter Four), and he suggested that "this attitude ... is a natural preparation for death" (p. 46). What the incarnation of the self entails is a pivotal shift in one's conscious orientation from one-sidedness (sterile literalism or ungrounded aspiration) to metaphoric depth, and it allows for seemingly insoluble problems to be experienced and resolved in an imaginative light. As Jung wrote:

"What, on a lower level, had led to the wildest conflicts and to panicky outbursts of emotion, from the higher level of personality now [looks] like a storm in the valley seen from the mountain top. This does not mean that the storm is robbed of its reality, but instead of being in it one is above it ... One certainly does feel the affect and is shaken and tormented by it, yet at the same time one is aware of a higher consciousness looking on which prevents one from becoming identical with the affect, a consciousness which ... can say, 'I know that I suffer'" (*ibid.*, p. 15, original emphasis).

This imaginative capacity, mediated through the self, would seem to be the key to poetic dying. For in the context of dying, one is called to the ultimate sacrifice, that of life itself, but the

archetypal consolation is that with this tormenting necessity comes an awakening to opportunities for healing, redemption and meaning. Then, one's unresolved pain can perhaps be transformed into meaningful suffering, an acceptance of both the burden and the redemption of fate. These possibilities are perhaps seldom realised in a culture that has placed the cure of symptoms above the healing of the soul (cf. Sardello, 1983), but they appear to emerge as poetic truths in certain of the dreams recorded in this study, and these truths must be attributed to the capacity of the self to integrate and 'hold' the disparate voices of death. This theme is particularly evident in the dream of John, a 44 year old man who was dying of AIDS. It is worth quoting in full:

I was walking in the *veldt*. Everything was dry, probably from the drought. In another part the bush seemed to have been burned black by a fire. The ground itself was scorched black. It was a scene of absolute devastation, almost surrealistic. I walked on, feeling that perhaps the world had ended - had there been some kind of holocaust or ecological disaster? I felt a deep inner emptiness and utter despair. Then I came across a farmer sitting on a tractor, ready to plough the fields. I found this highly incongruous. "There's not a hell of a lot left, is there?" I asked, but he carried on chugging across the land, saying that "it will all grow again in the spring, when the rains come". (L7).

Von Franz (1986, p. 78) reports a very similar dream obtained from a dying patient - the dreamer is walking in a wood which had been completely destroyed by a fire, leaving only black coal and ashes. In the midst of this he discovers a boulder that shows no trace of the fire. Von Franz interpreted this dream as symbolic of death and rebirth, and John's dream readily lends itself to a compatible meaning. It contains a number of significant images which have been discussed in the previous chapter, and it is not necessary to again consider these in any detail. Essentially, the dream presents an allegory of death and resurrection, as reflected through the image of the devastated land that will bear vegetation once more. The black ground that has been burned may be amplified with reference to the alchemical operation of *melanosis* (blackening), which is in turn associated with *putrefactio* and *mortificatio*, the decay or destruction of the body that is a necessary prelude to resurrection (cf. Edinger, 1985; von Franz, 1986).

In the weeks preceding the dream about the farmer, John had shown great intellectual enthusiasm regarding the possibility of death - for instance, he had expressed the view that death might even be "exciting, like a new adventure", and had gone so far as to suggest that the moment of his death should be filmed and kept as an art exhibit. For this reason, he had thought too that it might be

expedient to artificially induce death when he was close to it. A few days later, I found that his attitude had shifted markedly, and he began to experience deep despair regarding the loss of life. He described death as a destructive and "wicked" reality that would "rob" him of his "right to live", and he felt angry and cheated. In this context, the figure of the farmer seemed to reflect an attitude that was necessary to negotiate the ambivalent images of death that John had been living out, and our discussion of the dream centred around this possibility. In fact, John was deeply moved by the demeanour of the farmer. He saw him as "a man in tune with the ways of nature, one who has the virtue of patience and acceptance", and in this light he appreciated the dream as a "message" that "death is not the end of the world. It is part of an ongoing cycle, to which all of us must submit". Some weeks later, shortly before his death, he related that he had continued to reflect on the dream, which had left him with a sense of "a spiritual purpose to life, and to death" (author's emphasis).

Ultimately, the dream of the farmer and the blackened earth seemed to mediate for John a sense of gnosis of the inextricability of life-in-death and death-in-life, and opened the way for meaningful transformation. Reviewing the case notes after his death, I felt that the figure of the farmer embodied the 'middle way' of which Jung spoke, a liminal space where the play of opposites can be viewed meaningfully rather than being lived out in extreme form. Of course, there were still moments of deep despair, anger and idealisation in John's experience of dying, but these were relatively transient compared to a more enduring sense of resolution. This shift may be indicated by the final dream in his series, reported some three weeks before his death, in which he was holding a beautiful dove which he knew to be "a sign of peace" and an indication that he was "ready to die" (L8).

John's case illustrates that in some cases the self emerges as the voice of intuitive wisdom, i.e. as the bearer of gnosis, and facilitates a meaningful transition from a purely ego-centred position to one that is respondent to the mythic patterns that shape and determine the limits of natural life. Yet as has been consistently emphasised, the potentialities of the self can be actualised only if there is a corresponding willingness to listen to and to contemplate the gnosis of the ages, and this is a function of the ego.

8.3.3. Dreams as indicators of death

The focus of this discussion has been thus far on dreams which bring to light the metaphoric meaning of death, and it is this meaning that tends to be negated by rational consciousness. But what about cases where it is the literal reality of death that is denied or concealed? A qualitative impression to emerge during the course of this study was that those dreams in which motifs of destruction and annihilation were prominent tended to occur most usually when the subjects' conscious attitude towards death was such that it was either denied or stoically resisted on the one hand, or greeted with unrealistic enthusiasm on the other hand. In these instances, the dreams concerned appeared to reinforce the inexorability of death and the futility of denial, and brought to light those aspects of death that had been unappreciated or avoided in waking life (cf. Welman & Faber, 1992).

For instance, one subject, Betty, reported a dream in which she walked into a classroom where her physician was discussing her case with a group of medical students. He was indicating to them that she had no hope of recovery and that she was now 'in the hands of God' (K1). At the time of the dream, she had been insistent that a medical cure was still possible, despite the fact that her prognosis was extremely poor. Reflecting on the dream, she realised that her hopes were unrealistic, and that she needed to come to terms with the inexorable approach of death. The case of Joan, a 49 year old woman dying of cancer, is similar. While acknowledging intellectually that she was dying, she had nonetheless shown resistance towards making concrete preparations for her death, such as finalising her will and testament, indicating her preference for funeral arrangements, and so on. Approximately two months before her death, she dreamed that she was on a aircraft that was about to crash; in the dream she knew that she and the other passengers would die, and felt intense regret at not having sorted out her affairs (G3). She took the dream as an indication of the need to make such arrangements.

Further support for these claims comes from the dream-series of Tim, a 57 year old man dying of bone cancer. At the time of our first contact, he was being cared for at home by his wife, with the assistance of hospice volunteers. He had a decimated appearance about him, but I imagined that prior to his illness he had been a fairly imposing figure. Although he displayed little emotion openly, there was an angry demeanour about him, particularly when he spoke about his illness. He acknowledged that he blamed the doctor who had first treated him for not diagnosing his condition timeously, and he confided that he felt "repulsed" by his own physical appearance, to the extent

that he could not bear to look at himself in a mirror. In fact, he had the mirror in his bedroom covered with a blanket. Nonetheless, Tim described his attitude towards death as being "rational and logical", and he was stoically insistent that he would meet death "as a man should, without fear". Declaring himself to be a "devout atheist", he did not think that there was a life after death, and therefore saw no reason to fear death - for him, it was "merely the end". In this context, Tim's initial dreams appeared to reflect his unspoken fear of death. In the first of his series (F1), he was attacked and mauled by a black dog; in the second dream (#F2), a wickedly grinning skeleton attempted to pull him into the ground, evoking terror in him. As amplified in the previous chapter, these images may reflect on the one hand the literal connotations of death, and on the other hand its association with transformation. The point to be made, however, is that the exaggerated emphasis on destruction and annihilation may be seen as a compensatory response to Tim's heroic stance; it might be said that the horror of death, which Tim did not wish to see reflected in his bedroom mirror, was reflected to him instead through the mirror of his dreams. After we had worked with his initial dreams on this level, his attitude to death 'softened' somewhat, and this seemed to open the way for possibilities of meaning and growth (see below).

Ultimately, it may be argued that there is a poetic purpose even to frightening dreams of bodily destruction or annihilation, in which the possibilities of renewal are far from evident. By serving as cogent reminders of the inherent corruptibility of the flesh, they invite reflection as to the ultimate ephemerality and destiny of human existence, and hence call into question the meaning and purpose of one's own place in the world. As Jung (1944/52) commented, images of *putrefaction* always confront us with "the appalling senseless of human life" (p. 83)¹, but it is perhaps only then that we are also reminded of its inherent sacredness. Again, these thoughts indicate a need to distance the meaning of death from Romanticist idealisation. For the person who lives and dies poetically, transformation does not take place in the vacuous realm of intellect, but is grounded in the suffering of the body (cf. Sardello, 1983), and this is supported by the analysis advanced in Chapter Seven. Indeed, the association between the theme of renewal and rebirth on the one hand and dream images of dismemberment, torture, and destruction on the other hand, is perhaps consonant with the discourse of Heidegger, who announces that the divine revelation of Being emerges "in a barren time" (quoted by Segal, 1989, p. 119), a time of despair and suffering.

¹ Here we might think of Hamlet's classical soliloquy with the skull of Yorick:

"To what base uses we may return, Horatio! ... Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 5, sc.1, lines 222ff.).

8.3.4. The self, fate and eternity

Another aspect of the self which must be considered in relation to death concerns the symbolic allusions to post-mortal existence that have been identified in the dreams of the dying. We are dealing here both with images and motifs of rebirth, as well as with more explicit intimations of life after death (e.g. travelling to heaven, being reunited with departed loved ones 'the Beyond'). As noted in Chapter Five, Jung maintained that experience of the self as the 'eternal' aspect of the psyche may lead to a meaningful awareness of the possibility of existence after death, and it was observed that this position is supported by a number of contemporary Jungian writers. In that discussion, it was however also emphasised that a psychological perspective cannot support a literal interpretation of such images, for clearly dreams can offer no indication as to the ultimate or metaphysical possibility of post-mortal existence. As other authors (e.g. Avens, 1982; Jaffe, 1978; Mogenson, 1991; Kellehear, 1990; Weber, 1965; Welman, 1995; Welman & Faber, 1992) have pointed out, metaphysical claims are in any event unnecessary. What counts is an appreciation of the metaphoric claims of images of eternity - i.e. their psychical reality - for it is then that a sense of the eternal is gained within life itself. In this regard, Jung asserted that, as with all symbols, eschatological images must be allowed to emerge as mythic realities which enrich the fabric of existence. He believed that it is necessary for one to gain a sense of one's existence as being both limited and eternal, and he pointed to the immeasurable value of dreams in offering a meaningful gnosis of this tension:

"Leaving aside the rational arguments against any certainty in these matters, we must not forget that for most people it means a great deal to assume that their lives will have an indefinite continuity beyond their present existence. They live more sensibly, feel better, and are more at peace ... in the majority of cases the question of immortality is so urgent, so immediate, and also so ineradicable that we must make an effort to form some sort of view about it. But how? My hypothesis is that we can do so with the aid of hints sent to us from the unconscious - in dreams, for example. Usually we dismiss these hints because we are convinced that the question is not susceptible to answer. In response to this understandable scepticism, I suggest the following considerations. If there is something we cannot know, we must necessarily abandon it as an intellectual problem ... But if an idea about it is offered to me - in dreams or in mythic traditions - I ought to take note of it. I even ought to build up a conception of the basis of such hints, even though it

will for ever remain a hypothesis which I know cannot be proved ... The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperised" (Jung, 1961/83, p. 332).

Jung was suggesting here that a personal 'myth' of eternity affords to existence a quality that is not simply egocentric and transient. For as one becomes aware of one's participation in a wider human drama, life ceases to be merely a series of 'now-moments', and formerly disconnected threads of personal life are revealed as part of a meaningful and intelligible destiny:

"In this way we forge an ego that does not break down when incomprehensible things happen; an ego that endures, that endures the truth, and that is capable of coping with the world and with fate. Then, to experience defeat is also to experience victory. Nothing is disturbed - neither inwardly nor outwardly, for one's own continuity has withstood the current of life and of time. But that can come to pass only when one does not meddle inquisitively with the workings of fate" (*ibid.*, pp. 328-9).

Something of the comportment which Jung refers to in this passage may be reflected in John's dream of the farmer tilling the scorched earth (see above). In particular, the figure of the farmer appeared to lend expression to an attitude that was respectful of the workings of fate and of nature, rather than one that was overly meddlesome.

Apart from these considerations, it must be noted that symbolic intimations of continuing life after death, even though they yield no 'proof' of this possibility, may offer images of consolation and inspiration to the dying (cf. Welman & Faber, 1992). For example, a 49 year old woman dying of cancer dreamed that she travelled on a space shuttle to a "strange but enchanting place" which she presumed to be heaven; there a young woman told her: "here there is only life!" (G5). She had been experiencing a great deal of pain and emotional distress in the weeks leading up to this dream, and saw the dream as a message that her suffering had a purpose: to prepare her for "eternal peace". This understanding appeared to give her courage and endurance in the final days of her life. As another example, an AIDS patient, who had been raised in a strict Catholic tradition and had struggled to reconcile the teachings of the church with his life as a sexually active homosexual, dreamed shortly before his death that he was transported to a "heavenly city" (T5). He experienced

this dream as a sign of divine forgiveness and redemption: as he put it, the "gates of heaven" would not after all be closed to him. Irrespective of whether or not this was 'really' the meaning of the dream, there can be little doubt as to its therapeutic significance for him.

Of course, it may be argued that dreams of eternity are simply 'wish-fulfilling' fantasies that conceal the true horror of death. This argument however ignores the fact that in terms of Jungian theory the question is not whether the dream yields an objective truth, but rather whether it offers a psychological one, i.e. gnosis. As Jung (1961/83) asserted:

"Naturally, one can contend from the start that myths and dreams concerning continuity of life after death are merely compensating fantasies which are inherent in our natures - all life desires eternity. The only argument I can adduce in answer to this is the myth itself" (p. 335).

Writing on the same issue, von Franz (1986) comments that there is little reason to assume that eschatological images are merely defensive in nature. "On the contrary", she argues, "dreams more often depict a completely objective 'natural event' uninfluenced by the wishes of the ego ... in cases where the dreamer has illusions about his approaching death, dreams may even indicate this fact quite brutally and mercilessly" (p. ix). This point has been illustrated in the previous section.

8.4. The Feminine, the Masculine and Death

A significant feature of the analysis undertaken in Chapter Seven is the emergence of the Feminine and the Masculine as concise themes. These themes touch on a number of important areas in analytical psychology which cannot be explored in this discussion, but it is necessary to briefly address their meaning and significance in the process of dying and transformation. To begin with, a clarification of the terms Feminine and Masculine is necessary.

Traditionally, Jungian theory has held that the unconscious compensates for actual gender, to the extent that men have an unconscious feminine component, the *anima*, and women an unconscious masculine component, the *animus* (e.g. Jung, 1936/54; 1938/54). In post-Jungian theory, there has been a significant move away from this conceptualisation, to an understanding of the Feminine and the Masculine as fundamental archetypal propensities within all humans, irrespective of gender

(e.g. Samuels, 1985b; 1990; Sullivan, 1989; Zabriskie, 1990). In these terms, Feminine and Masculine refer essentially to mythic perspectives, or existential possibilities, that have evolved through the course of human history and which are reflected and enacted in the attitudes, habits and thought patterns of contemporary men and women alike. The Feminine implies a constellation of potentialities that are bound up with the 'soul' and its processes; it includes, for example, one's capacities for emotion, intuition, relatedness, connectedness and receptiveness (Samuels, 1985b; Sullivan, 1989). The province of the Masculine, on the other hand, encompasses processes associated with rationality, discriminatory logic, separation and differentiation (Greenfield, 1985; Samuels, 1985b; Sullivan, 1989). The significance of these functions in facilitating psychological growth and development will be clarified in the course of this discussion, but it may be accepted that modern Western society has emphasised and overvalued the Masculine at the expense of the Feminine. The important implication of this imbalance is that for both 'modern man' and 'modern woman', the search for meaning is intimately bound up with the need for a recollection of the Feminine (cf. Sullivan, 1989). But as will be seen, the archetypal perspectives of femininity and masculinity have both positive as well as negative connotations, and a one-sided emphasis on the Feminine is just as debilitating as an exaggerated masculinity. What is ultimately required is a balance between and an integration of the two principles. As will emerge in the course of this discussion, this integration may be a particularly important task of dying.

8.4.1. The Feminine in the context of death and dying

According to Sullivan, each of the archetypal principles outlined above may be distinguished by a 'static' and a 'dynamic' aspect (*ibid.*). Neumann (1963) has made a similar distinction between the 'elementary character' and the 'transformative character' of the Feminine archetype. While such distinctions are never as simple in practice as in theory, it has been shown elsewhere that they nevertheless provide a useful model for understanding the role of the Feminine archetype in the context of death and dying (Welman, 1995; Welman & Faber, 1992). At a later point in this discussion, the same will be shown with regard to the manifestation of the Masculine archetype in the dying process.

As defined by Sullivan (1989), the static Feminine is a conservative tendency that "values Being in an organic, undifferentiated form, where all the components of the whole are equally valued, all elements dependent on all other elements" (p. 17). It is thus a conservative tendency which is concerned with the origin and the ending of existence, and it is consequently associated with the fundamental mysteries of birth and death (Achterberg, 1991; Baring & Cashford, 1991; Neumann, 1963; Welman, 1995; Welman & Faber, 1992). Neumann (1963) similarly defines the elementary character of the Feminine as a propensity to "hold fast everything that springs from it and to surround it like an eternal substance" (p. 25). So far as the dying process is concerned, the static or elementary Feminine may thus be seen to be centrally involved in the initiation of the ego into the reality of death, i.e. the realm of the self (Welman & Faber, 1992). In fact, we find throughout history expressions of the static Feminine, usually in the form of images of the Great Mother or the Primitive Goddess, as the portal to both life and death (Achterberg, 1991; Neumann, 1963; Sullivan, 1989; Welman & Faber, 1992). Nowhere is this more evident than in the so-called 'Mystery religions', which formed a prominent part of religious and social life in ancient Greece (cf. Edinger, 1972; Otto, 1939; Rahner, 1944). As practised at Eleusis, for example, the Mystery religions advocated ritual initiation into the realm of the Mother as a preparation for death. These initiation rites were enacted primarily in the worship of Demeter, the Great Mother who gives and receives life, and it was believed that only those who had been initiated into her mysteries could find fulfilment in the after-life. As Plato expressed it:

" ... those men who established the mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that whoever goes uninitiated and

unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods"².

It would seem from this study that the initiatory function of the Feminine emerges as an archetypal response to the actuality of death. Thus we have identified numerous images which appear to indicate the ego's entrance into the realm of the static Feminine, such as the descent to the underworld, entering a cave, being pulled into the earth, immersion in water, and being in a dark setting (cf. Chapter Seven). Essentially, these images have a dual meaning: they both express the nature of death as a Feminine mystery, and reflect something of the experience of death for the particular subject. In this regard, we have seen that the initiation into death may be experienced as, for example, devouring (F4), destructive (H4), fascinating but dangerous (L2), or containing (S5). The differing emotional connotations of death are partly a function of the position and attitude of the ego (cf. Chapter Four), but they also indicate that, as with all archetypes, there is a 'positive' and a 'negative' face of the static Feminine. In its positive form, it begets, protects and receives back the ego, while in its negative form it devours, engulfs, and destroys (Neumann, 1963; Sullivan, 1989).

While the static Feminine may thus be seen as an essentially conservative principle associated with the reality of death itself, the dynamic Feminine, on the other hand, is centrally involved with the actual process of change and transformation. According to Sullivan (1989, p. 18), it is oriented towards the evolution of new and creative connections and combinations, and it may therefore be seen to play a key role in the experience of rebirth and renewal (Welman & Faber, 1992). Neumann (1963, p. 29) similarly contends that the transformative character of the Feminine moves beyond a devouring or encompassing nature and drives towards motion, change, and transformation; even where it appears as a negative, hostile, and provocative element, "it compels tension, change, and an intensification of the personality. In this way, an extreme exertion of the ego is provoked and its capacity for creative transformation is directly and indirectly 'stimulated'" (*ibid.*, p. 34). We could therefore say that whereas the death-character of the static Feminine emerges as a devouring, engulfing or containing reality, the transformative or dynamic expression of this archetype entices, seduces or inspires the ego to sacrifice or surrender as a path to transformation and renewal through contact with the self. This function of the Feminine seems particularly evident in the dream of the seductive women who serenade the dreamer (L6), and in the image of the dancing girls who enthral and captivate the dream ego (C6). In the negative form of this archetype, the ego is in this

² Plato, Phaedo, 69C. Also quoted by Edinger, 1972, p. 204.

way lured to its destruction, but in its positive aspect the transformative Feminine mediates a creative dialectic between the ego and the self and thus opens the way to an experience of death as a meaningful reality. Theoretically, it may be assumed that this function correlates with the manifestation of the death instinct and is most important under conditions of ego-self alienation (cf. Chapter Four). Thus the concealment of death and the problem of alienation become inseparable from the negation of the Feminine in modern living. This needs to be explored in future research, but an indication of the role of the Feminine in actively bringing about transformation and renewal is evident in the dream of Tim, the stoic man whose case was described above:

I was on my way to X's surgery [his physician] at the clinic. In the entrance foyer there was a girl who was selling flowers. She offered me a bunch but I said, quite forcefully, that I had neither the time nor the inclination to buy any. She seemed unperturbed and offered me a collection of the works of Kalil Gibran. I snorted and said "that's really going to help me, isn't it"? Still she seemed unmoved and looked at me knowingly. She said that I had the time but that I was wasting it, and that if I didn't have the inclination then I needed flowers and Kalil Gibran even more. The conversation seemed to meander around like this for quite some time, with my resolve gradually weakening. In desperation I said that I had to leave because there was an interesting course in applied mathematics which I wanted to attend, but she touched my arm and said, quite sternly: "No! Go to a religious meeting instead" (F8).

The archetypal dimensions of this dream, particularly the symbolic link between flowers and death, have already been elucidated (cf. Chapter Seven), and need not be repeated here. What must be noted is the role of the Feminine not only as a harbinger of death, but as the obstinate advocate of a response to dying that is quite different to the rationalistic stance which had characterised Tim's attitude towards death and dying (witnessed in the dream ego's wish to attend a course on applied mathematics!). The message of the dream is evident: what is required is a poetic and spiritual perspective, not a medical and rationalistic one. As we had, for some time, been dealing with precisely this issue, Tim recalled his dream with some amusement. He saw it as an indication that he should, after all, "submit to the irrational". It emerged that he had been an avid reader of Kalil Gibran during his years as a student, but he had then become caught up in the demands of the business world, progressing to become the financial manager of a large corporation. This had left little time to pursue his once passionate interests in poetry, music and art. The dream seemed to emphasise the need for a renewed engagement with 'inspirational' material. Prior to his death, Tim

did in fact begin to compose poetry once more. His favourite poem, he entitled 'A Love Short but Eternal', and he dedicated it to his wife, to whom he had been married for 31 years. It seems more than coincidental that the goddess associated with flowers is none other than Aphrodite, who is also goddess of love³ (Friedrich, 1978; Sipiora, 1981).

8.4.2. The development of the Feminine: A case illustration

The different manifestations and functions of the Feminine during the dying process may be further illustrated with reference to the case of Peter, a 71 year old man suffering from cancer of the prostate. The case has been described in detail elsewhere (Welman & Faber, 1992), and in this context the discussion will be limited to an analysis of the manifestation and evolution of Feminine symbolism in his dream series. Peter was a retired engineer who lived at home, under the care of a hospice. He recalled dreams infrequently, and had little interest in psychology, mythology or related issues. He was an introverted thinking type and, like Tim, he prided himself on his ability to be rational and logical. His dream series, albeit relatively brief (seven dreams), demonstrates the unfolding of individuation as orchestrated and anticipated through Feminine imagery.

Symbolic indications of the Feminine first appear in the second dream in the series (C2). He was driving in his car when he suddenly found himself passing through a chimney, into a house, and into a dark tunnel. The images of the chimney, house and tunnel all concord with that class of Feminine imagery which Neumann (1963, pp. 30ff.) has termed 'vessel symbolism', referring to their association with containers and conduits. As Neumann sees it, vessel motifs are archetypal metaphors for experiences of containment and shelter on the one hand, and for threats of devourment and destruction on the other hand. They are thus indicative of the elementary (or static) properties of the Feminine. The image of the house, for instance, assumes a paradoxical quality: it represents both life (shelter and containment) and death (house = tomb). In Peter's dream, the connection between the Feminine and death is further reinforced by the motif of travelling down a dark tunnel, which is itself a common metaphor for death (cf. Chapter Seven). However, vessel motifs also reflect something of the transformative nature of the Feminine; the

³ This connection may be further amplified with reference to Giegerich's (1984) observation that in the tale of Faust, the goose that Philemon offers to the homeless gods is the bird of Aphrodite, while the name Philemon means the loving or hospitable one. In this sense, to surrender to Aphrodite is to sacrifice technocratic heroism in favour of a mature hospitality; "any moment to which we abandon ourselves with this loving devotion will find its fulfilment" (*ibid.*, p. 64).

alchemical *vas*, for example, is a container within which the transmutation of elements takes place.

As amplified in the previous chapter, the fifth dream in Peter's series, consisting only of an image of two large violins, may similarly be seen to symbolise the Feminine archetype. But here a more specific form of the Feminine is revealed through the mythic connotations of violin figures with the Primitive Goddess or Great Mother, classically personified in the archetypal figure of Demeter. Neumann considers this dimension of the Feminine to be a more evolved form than that symbolised through vessel motifs; in the Great Mother, the transformative properties of the Feminine, i.e. the propensity towards change and transformation, tend to supersede the conservative, elementary aspects (*ibid.*, p. 34). In the Demeter myth, the emphasis on transformation and renewal is reflected in the climactic transfiguration of Demeter into the figure of Persephone, so that mother and daughter become identical (Jung & Kerenyi, 1985; Welman & Faber, 1992).

Up until this point, Peter's conscious attitude had been characterised by a strong resistance to the possibility of death. This had resulted in his pursuing, for a period of time, various 'alternative' forms of treatment, including faith healing and a variety of herbal compounds. In retrospect, the image of the violins, seemingly innocuous in itself, pointed however to the constellation of archetypal potentialities associated with change, transformation and death (cf. Chapter Seven). For as Kerenyi (1985) comments, the figure of Demeter is intimately associated with the mystery of death and rebirth, and it is she who "points beyond the individual to the universal and eternal" (p. 117). Moreover:

"To enter into the figure of Demeter means to be robbed, raped, to fail to understand, to rage and grieve, but then to get everything back and be born again. And what does all this mean, save to realise the universal principle of life, the fate of everything mortal?" (*ibid.*, p. 123).

Certainly, Peter was captivated by the image in his dream, which was surprising as he had until then expressed strong scepticism towards the significance and value of dreams. That he had 'entered into the figure of Demeter' was further suggested by the fact that his attitude towards death shifted dramatically in the weeks following this dream. He began to speak of death openly, and often speculated as to the possibilities of life after death, and what form this would take. Concomitant with this, he spent much of his time in our sessions speaking of his past, and particularly of his youth when he had travelled the world as a naval cadet. His stories were both enthralling and meaningful, and he would often pause and find some wisdom from them to share

with me. It sometimes felt as if he were a teacher of life, and I his student. Approximately seven weeks before his death, he reported the dream of the young girls dancing on stage:

I dreamed that I was sitting in a theatre and watching a young girl dancing on stage. I felt very close to her, and could communicate with her - not actually by speaking, but in another way altogether - through the mind - like telepathy, I suppose you could say. Then another girl came and joined the first one and they started to dance in a circle. It was actually a very nice dream, and when I woke up I felt good (C6).

The qualitative difference between this dream and those preceding it is self-evident. It is suggestive of meaningful transformation (cf. Chapter Seven), and indicates a further development of the Feminine archetype, which now manifests in human form. It may thus be understood as a classical *anima* figure, which Neumann (1963) describes as "the vehicle *par excellence* of the transformative character" of the Feminine (p. 63). In Peter's dream, the potential for transformation is possibly indicated by the motif of dancing in a circle. For not only is the circle, as a classical mandala image, associated with the emergence of the self, but, as Kerényi (1985) comments, the mysteries of life and death can "be betrayed by dancing more readily than by speaking" (p. 135). Note also that the attitude of the dream ego towards the Feminine was now one of awe and mystery, of an almost spiritual transcendence which permits communication beyond time and space, by 'telepathy'. This too is suggestive of profound transformation.

Peter reported one more dream before he died, involving a radiant flower (C7). As previously amplified (cf. Chapter Seven), this motif may be related to the figure of Sophia, the highest form of the Feminine, representing "a spiritual whole in which all heavenliness and materiality are transcended ... the supreme essence and distillation to which life in this world can be transformed" (Neumann, 1963, p. 325). In so far as the mythical figure of Sophia also represents the unity of Demeter and Persephone (Jung & Kerényi, 1985; Welman & Faber, 1992), a definite thematic evolution of the Feminine may be discerned in the dream series.

Peter's health deteriorated rapidly a few days after reporting the dream of the flower. He began to haemorrhage heavily and was moved from his home to the hospice where he died in his sleep. Looking back, it appeared that he may have had an intuitive sense of finality, for on our last visit, after reporting the final dream, he shook my hand farewell and held it for a few moments, wishing me good luck with the study. In his parting smile and gaze were indicated not anger, regret,

fearfulness or denial, but a comportment of peaceful acceptance. Perhaps this was the state of resolution indicated by the radiant flower, but it is also indicative of the emergence of a more hospitable, or poetic, way of being. It may be suggested that this transformation of Peter's conscious attitude was the central existential implication of the emergence and development of the Feminine in his dream life.

Peters dreams reflect a progressive evolution of the Feminine, from its relatively primitive, static form to its highest, transformative form. This process of development was in turn associated with a profound shift in his conscious attitude towards and his experience of death and dying. It is reasonable to conclude that both the static and the dynamic (or transformative) dimensions of the Feminine mediate the return of the ego to the self, i.e. restoration of the ego-self axis. But whereas the static Feminine, the Great Mother, refers to the return to one's origins as a function of death, the dynamic Feminine appears on the other hand to have a key role to play in the actual process of dying, serving to inspire the ego to participate in the archetypal drama of sacrifice, transformation and renewal. However, these functions of the Feminine ultimately need to be understood in the context of an appreciation of the role of the Masculine in the dying process.

8.4.3. The Masculine and the dying process

The Masculine has traditionally received less attention in Jungian literature than has the Feminine (cf. Allenby, 1985; Greenfield, 1985; Samuels, 1985a; 1985b; Stevens, 1992). Its relationship and potential contribution to death and dying is also not as immediately evident as that of the Feminine, particularly as there is a tendency among analytical psychologists to think that the first half of life is dominated by masculine heroism while the second half is oriented towards a 'return to the Mother' (cf. Chapter Three). However, the results of this study suggest that the Masculine may indeed play a key role in bringing about a meaningful conclusion to life. As with our consideration of the Feminine, the functions of the Masculine may be understood with reference to a static and a dynamic propensity of the archetype.

According to Sullivan (1989, p. 18), the static Masculine refers to an attitude that is oriented towards organisation and the maintenance of order, the systematising of objective and impersonal knowledge, and the codification of rules; government and law are for example the province of the static Masculine. We are therefore dealing firstly with a conservative tendency to impose order and

structure (*Logos*, 'the Word') upon chaos, and secondly with a function that is concerned with the maintenance of boundaries between conscious and unconscious, ego and other (Greenfield, 1985, p. 190). Typically, the action of the static Masculine is one of negation, in the sense of prohibiting regressive movements in the cultural and psychological order (*ibid.*, p. 189). The incest taboo may for instance be thought of as emerging from the perspective of the static Masculine.

The dynamic Masculine on the other hand refers to an intrusive and generative principle which actively pushes towards the differentiation and development of ego-consciousness (Sullivan, 1989, p. 18). Greenfield (1985) sees these qualities as being expressed in Jung's concept of the *animus*, which is "composed of mental elements which are expressed in an active mode" (p. 189, original emphasis). But as previously noted, the processes ascribed to the *animus* need not be limited to the psychology of women only. More broadly, Jung described the Masculine archetype as the procreative *Logos spermaticos* - "the spermatic word" (Jung, 1928b, p. 207) - and its enactment may be witnessed in the innumerable feats of engineering which actively harness the chaotic forces of nature. This function of the Masculine finds mythic expression in the fecundating sky gods who breathe life into inanimate matter, thereby creating a living universe (Eliade, 1958; Greenfield, 1985; Neumann, 1963), but it may also be symbolised by the Hermetic qualities of fire and light (Neumann, 1963), as well as by the bull (Eliade, 1958).

Another mythical variant of the dynamic Masculine is the figure of the hero, whose task is first to separate from the mother and then, later, to undergo a sacrifice in the service of the self (cf. Chapter Three). With the sacrifice of the hero, the way is opened for an awakening to spiritual knowledge (gnosis), classically embodied in the symbol of the 'Wise Old Man' (Greenfield, 1985, pp. 193ff.; cf. Chapter Three). At this level of functioning, the Masculine plays a key role in the ego-self axis, on the one hand operating to ensure the necessary differentiation of the ego from the self, while on the other hand maintaining a comportment that is open to the wisdom and creative flux of the Feminine. As Beebe (1992) comments, "the Wise Old Man stands behind the anima as an archetype of meaning, the masculine purpose and masculine result of this initiatory acceptance and integration of the feminine" (pp. 372-3). In short, the 'Wise Old Man' is an archetypal metaphor for "the process of becoming conscious, in the Socratic sense of seeing one's existence for what it is" (*ibid.*, p. 369).

From these considerations, it may be deduced that the Masculine has a pivotal role to play in the dying process. In the first instance, the static qualities of this archetypal capacity may serve a necessary 'protective' or regulatory function by compensating for the potentially regressive and

destructive power of the primordial Feminine, which as we have seen is typically constellated in the presence of death. This function is all the more necessary in the context of a poorly differentiated ego; here, the Masculine must compensate for the regressive nature of the death instinct so that ego boundaries are maintained. This hypothesis may be demonstrated with reference to the case of Ruth, a 63 year old woman who was dying of chronic lung disease.

Ruth had been hospitalised and bed-ridden for many months when the study began. Before that, she had lived alone following the death of her husband six years previously, surviving on a meagre pension and with some assistance from her children. She had seldom ventured out of her small flat, and her health had progressively deteriorated, leading to her eventual hospitalisation. Ruth presented with a dishevelled appearance, and it was clear that she was in need of almost constant supervision and care. Her mental state alternated between lucid phases - during which she displayed a remarkably sharp wit - and periods of confusion and disorientation. She avoided discussing her emotions, but when she did they would emerge as a cathartic and chaotic torrent. From her history, it became evident that she had very little sense of self; she had spent most of her childhood and early adulthood living in a state of identification with her father, who had been a forceful and dogmatic figure in the family. He had tolerated little or no dissent, and had left Ruth with little room to individuate; the task of separation had also not been made any easier by the fact that she was an only child. Ruth's mother, on the other hand, was a gentle and submissive figure who had lived in ambivalent awe of her husband. It seems that she had instilled in Ruth both a fearful respect for authority figures and a scornful disdain for women. During our sessions, Ruth often intimated that women had little claim to leadership positions, as they were, in her opinion, inferior to men in every way. This attitude suggested that Ruth's own Feminine archetype had remained relatively undeveloped, and might therefore emerge in the dying process in a primitive, destructive form.

Ruth had left home at the age of twenty-four years to marry, and when that marriage had ended after three years - she felt that her husband was "too weak" - she had immediately remarried, this time to a dominant but reserved man. Her marriage was essentially a recapitulation of her relationship with her father; she saw it as her duty to be obedient and respectful, and blamed herself for most of the problems that had occurred during the marriage. When her husband had died, she had become very dependent upon her children.

Ultimately, Ruth had therefore had very little opportunity for ego development, and it seemed that at times she was in danger of being overwhelmed by the unconscious and by her own regressive

inclinations. She would often speak and giggle like a young child, and during the study she came close to death on three occasions after taking what she described as 'accidental' overdoses of benzodiazepines. On another occasion, a nurse discovered her in a confused and disorientated state, trying to set her bedding on fire. In addition, Ruth often refused to eat, and would then have to be fed intravenously. The danger of her ego being destroyed or overwhelmed by the unconscious was reinforced by the first dream which she reported, in which she was drowning in stagnant water (Q1), and for these reasons there were doubts as to her suitability for this project. However, it was decided to include her as she had lucid periods, could recall her dreams, and certainly was in need of supportive therapy.

As Ruth's illness progressed, her last vestiges of ego strength and resilience seemed to be under increasing pressure. She began to see ghostly apparitions flitting past the door of her hospital ward, and at times held long conversations with these figures (all male), whom she said sat beside her on her bed. Ruth insisted that they were 'real', and saw them as spirits of the dead and as harbingers of death. She related that they inspired both hope and fear in her, but was reticent to divulge the precise content of their conversations with her. At the same time, she became increasingly fearful of the 'outer' world, and displayed paranoid ideas that her family and the hospital staff were plotting to withhold her medication so that they could 'be rid' of her. In the final weeks of her life she was for the most part a lonely, isolated figure, busily engaged in imaginary conversations. I was reminded of the nearness of death and madness, both the realms of Dionysus (cf. Otto, 1965; Savitz, 1990).

Ruth's dream series is noteworthy for the recurrent appearance of images of her father, who had died some eight years previously. Ruth mentioned that his death had affected her deeply, and that she had been hospitalised for depression for some months afterwards. She related that since her childhood he had represented for her a figure of security and strength in a frightening world, and that she still felt "lost" without him. In this light, it seemed that the father imago in her dreams might convey a complex range of possibilities, including her own search for inner stability or strength, the unconscious emergence of these qualities in the form of the Masculine, or regression to an earlier state of identification with the father. It is not necessary to consider these dreams in any detail, but as will be seen below the general theme to emerge is one of protection and the prohibition of regression, centred in the father imago. For this reason the recurrent appearance of Ruth's father in her dreams may be seen to be an expression of the role of the static Masculine in protecting her ego from the primitive, destructive aspects of her undeveloped Feminine archetype.

In dream #Q2, for example, Ruth found herself in a dark, sinister place, where she was confronted by a shadowy figure dressed in black - perhaps a personification of death (cf. Chapter Seven). Then her father appeared and reassured her; she felt comforted by his presence. The image of her father appears again in the following two dreams in her series (Q3, Q4), but in less dramatic fashion. In dream #Q6, Ruth was walking along a narrow ledge; she could not see what was below her (she was surrounded by darkness), but was certain that she must not slip off the ledge. Then she lost her balance and began to fall, but her father once again emerged, helping her to regain her footing and to cross the ledge safely. This dream seemed to reflect in the first instance the precarious position of her ego, balanced between life and death, and, perhaps, between sanity and madness. Her father emerged here as a figure of support, assisting her to negotiate her way across the ledge, a 'journey' which is perhaps symbolic of the dying process itself (cf. Chapter Seven).

Some weeks later, Ruth reported a dream in which her father was standing in a circular area, holding hands and kissing with her mother (who in reality had died twelve years previously). She had a strong longing to join them, seeing this as an opportunity to be reunited with her family. But she was prevented from stepping inside the circular area by some form of force-field which had been constructed by her father. In a firm voice, he said to her, 'not yet, Ruth!'. Although Ruth could offer no immediate associations to her dream, she conceded that the image of her parents holding hands was idyllic, and that it reminded her of the warmth and closeness that they had experienced as a family while she was growing up. A reasonable interpretation of the dream is that it reflects on one level a regressive longing to return to a child-like, paradisaal state, i.e. the death instinct. The object of her desire is presented as a *hierosgamos*, symbolised by the union of her parents. Previously, we have seen that this is an image of death. Approaching the dream from this perspective, the prohibitive function of the Masculine becomes evident - it actively opposes the regression of the ego, preventing its entry into the circular arena (regression to the self). At the time, Ruth had been slipping in and out of consciousness, and a few days prior to the dream she had been comatose for over twenty hours; without wishing to over-psychologise medical states, it is possible that these fluctuations were in part a function of the tension between regression and separation that was indicated in her dream. Ruth's medical and psychological state continued to be unstable for the next few weeks, but her ego structure did remain relatively intact, indicating that the regressive impulses had to some extent been countered. On the occasion of what was to be our last meeting, she was in fact more lucid than she had been for many months. It seemed to the clinical team and to myself that she was recovering to some extent, but she died unexpectedly thirty-six hours later. In retrospect, this may have been indicated in the final dream of her series. In it, she was walking hand in hand with her father, who appeared to be leading her to an unknown

destination (Q10). The Masculine now appeared as a benevolent guide on her journey.

The cursory consideration of Ruth's case leaves many unanswered questions, but the purpose has been limited to highlighting the role of the Masculine as a protective function oriented towards the maintenance of boundaries and the negation of regression. However, the emphasis of this discussion has been on the static Masculine, and it is now necessary to briefly consider the significance of the dynamic or transformative Masculine in dying. As an active tendency towards differentiation and the development of consciousness, this propensity may be expected to play a key role in bringing the potentialities of the self to bear. It may do this by emerging as a benevolent compartment, which is responsive and hospitable to the creative flux of Feminine reality and thus to the possibility of death (cf. Greenfield, 1985). Symbolic indications of such an attitude, and its connection to the Masculine, may be discerned in two dreams which have been amplified in the previous chapter. First, the transformative role of the Masculine emerges in the figure of the blind seer who lives in a cave, and who instructs the dreamer to undertake a journey to the centre of the earth. The themes associated with this dream have been considered in Chapter Seven and need not be repeated here, but in the context of the present discussion it is significant that the male figure - apparently an allusion to the Wise Old Man - is portrayed as dwelling in a cave, an image which has strong connotations both with death and with the Feminine. Perhaps this indicates an aspect of the Masculine that lives in close proximity to the primordial realities of birth and death, and that is responsive to both. The second dream is that of the farmer who ploughs the devastated fields, insisting that the vegetation will grow again with the coming of spring. Here too we find an image of Masculine responsiveness and hospitality towards the Feminine and its mysteries. Ultimately, these images may reflect the role of the Masculine in actively facilitating the ego-self axis, and thus may anticipate the potential for a poetic (or 'Philemonic') responsiveness to dying. This function of the Masculine may also be reflected in its role as a *psychopompos*, a mediator between the world of ego-consciousness and that of the self (cf. Chapter Seven).

It must not however be forgotten that as with all archetypes the Masculine has a 'negative' as well as a 'positive' face. In its negative form, it may manifest as unyielding rigidity or as savage repression (cf. Greenfield, 1985). The Masculine may also emerge in conscious life as an exaggerated heroism, which in the context of death and dying may mean that death is steadfastly resisted and that the self is not given room to emerge. Such a stance initially characterised Tim's demeanour (see above), and this may be reflected in a dream in which his wife had approached him for sexual intercourse, but he had instead slashed at her with a large knife, eventually turning the knife on himself (F5). In 'The Visions Seminars', Jung (1976b) spoke of images

of cutting with a knife as pointing to the discriminating function of the rational intellect: "the mind discriminates and cuts, and is therefore symbolised by a cutting instrument, a knife or a sword" (p. 274). This seems an appropriate amplification in view of Tim's self-confessed rationalism, and the fact that he was slashing at his wife in the dream may indicate both a resistance to fusion and union (i.e. death), and an aggressive stance towards the Feminine. But the dream also indicates that, as tends to be the case with all extreme attitudes, this ultimately proves to be self-destructive.

8.5. The Clinical Uses of Dreams in the Dying Process

Considering the themes and the case material advanced in this chapter, there are clearly grounds for asserting that dreams serve as valuable indicators of the dying process, highlighting psychological movements and demands that may not always be immediately apparent during waking life. In this way, they may also have a therapeutic benefit in clinical work with dying patients (cf. Welman & Faber, 1992). For instance, dreams may assist in highlighting specific areas of conflict, or may anticipate significant changes in emotional life. The cases of John, Tim, Peter and Ruth - outlined above - substantiate this claim. As Hall (1977) points out, however:

"The interpretation of dreams for their classic psychoanalytic use is not the only value that dreams can have in clinical practice. Dreams can aid in diagnosis and prognosis, in deciding questions of medication, and in choosing between different modes of therapy ... Nevertheless, interpretation of dreams in reference to the unconscious structure of mind remains the primary focus in Jungian psychoanalysis" (p. 183).

The clinical uses of dreams in the context of terminal illness is a question that warrants an entire dissertation, and in this context the issue cannot be given the attention which it deserves. It is however pertinent to consider a particular issue which has received relatively little attention in the literature, namely the anticipatory or prognostic significance of dreams in the dying process.

The impression may be gained from the case material introduced in this chapter that in many instances dreams appear to anticipate actual death by way of dramatic images of finality and resolution. Thus we have seen with regard to the case of Peter that an image of a radiant flower preceded his death by a short period; the flower, it was said, indicated a sense of completion and

finality. In Tim's case, the image of the dove, accompanied by a sense of peace and 'readiness' to die, was the final dream in his series. For Ruth, death was anticipated in the dream in which her father led her away. Another participant reported a dream involving the motifs of a rotating silver ring, a circle with a square over it, and the figure eight (E5), which have all been interpreted as symbolic indications of the self. She lapsed into a coma the following day and died some hours later. A similar situation was observed for a woman who died a week after reporting a dream in which the most striking feature was a very bright light (G6).

The case of Tim, which has also been reported elsewhere (Welman & Faber, 1992), merits specific attention with regard to the anticipatory significance of dreams. A few weeks before his death, Tim deteriorated physically and was admitted to a hospice ward where he drifted in and out of consciousness for a few days. His family was told to expect the worst, but he continued to linger on with periods of lucidity. As he was in severe pain, he expressed a strong wish that "it could all just end". Around this time, he reported dreaming that he had to remove a dinner jacket from his body, but the last button was fastened and could not be loosened despite all his efforts (F14). Given his situation at the time, the dream seemed to indicate that despite his professed wish to die, he was not yet 'ready' for death. His close relatives were experiencing great distress and apprehension regarding his condition, and his son, who was overseas at the time, was uncertain as to whether to travel to his father's bedside immediately, or delay his visit. In view of these considerations, it was deemed appropriate to tentatively infer to the family that Tim's dream suggested that his death might not be as immediate as was expected; it was explained to them that while dream interpretation is not an exact science, dreams do sometimes have a prognostic significance. And indeed, the medical crisis did remit for a brief period.

About two weeks later, Tim suddenly began to shout the word 'egg' at random intervals. The egg has symbolic connotations with new life, and thus with death (Neumann, 1963; Welman & Faber, 1992). Around the same time, Tim reported dreaming of a "wonderful white wedding cake" (F15); as noted in the previous chapter, both the colour white and the motif of the wedding are closely related to death and rebirth. There were thus indications that death was near, and Tim related that he had such an 'intuitive' sense himself. Of course, no academic treatise can capture the poignancy of our discussion, as we both realised that this could, perhaps even would, be our last meeting. We shared our feelings with his family, and his son was summonsed from overseas. Some thirty hours later, almost immediately after he had received a visit from his son, Tim died in his sleep. The family indicated that they had found the advice, based on his dreams, informative and comforting.

The significance of anticipatory dreams for clinical thanatology clearly extends beyond purely theoretical considerations, but it must be acknowledged that there is an inevitable therapeutic and ethical risk in attempting to translate inferences based on dreams into actual practice. For one thing, the symbolic language of dreams is seldom, if ever, amenable to precise interpretation, and it would be imprudent to assume that one's interpretation of a dream is necessarily 'correct'. Thus it must be emphasised that the use of Tim's dreams to counsel his relatives was undertaken after careful deliberation and with some trepidation, and the case has certainly not been advanced here as a generalised approach to working with the dying. On the other hand, we would seem to be missing something fundamental if we were simply to ignore the 'hints' that emerge in dreams. One uses the term 'prophetic' with great caution - it is perhaps particularly offensive to our scientific respectability - but as Whitmont (1969) has written, it does seem that "at times the anticipatory foreknowledge of the objective psyche expresses itself through what may be regarded as truly prophetic dreams" (p. 53). If our approach to care of the dying is to move beyond purely palliative concerns, this is an area that warrants further exploration.

8.6. A comment on the validity and contribution of the research

The considerations advanced in this chapter - some of which have emerged as anecdotal supplements to the major purpose of the research - are based on a relatively small sample of subjects, and any generalisations must be made cautiously. In addition, the fact that dream recall was relatively sporadic for almost all subjects, and that dream reports tended to be brief⁴, suggests that many dimensions of the symbolic representations of death and dying have not been recorded in this study. On the other hand, the consistency of these findings with those established by other Jungian researchers (cf. Chapter Five) does compensate for these limitations, and supports the validity of the arguments advanced in this chapter.

A major consideration concerns the validity of the initial and the concise themes that were identified in Chapter Seven. It must be accepted that the reader may well identify themes that have not been considered here, and may similarly establish different meanings to some themes than those that have been outlined in this study. In scientific research, such lack of agreement might indicate an

⁴ Most subjects stated that they found it difficult to recall dreams, more so than prior to the onset of their illness. This may be at least partly due to the effects of medication, such as morphine, on dream recall (cf. Fortier, 1972; Hall, 1977).

unacceptable degree of subjective bias, leading to serious concerns as to the validity of the study concerned. But in hermeneutic projects, it is accepted that the data (the text) will lend itself to different meanings depending on the particular perspective of the interpreter and on the specific context of the research (cf. Chapter Six). Thus the question of validity is not so much whether or not other researchers would identify the same themes, but rather (a) whether the selection of themes was justified, and (b) whether the themes are useful in elucidating the meaning of death and dying. With regard to the first issue, it may be argued that the themes selected emerged from a rigorous process of hermeneutic analysis, based on a method (amplification) that is established and accepted within analytical psychology. So far as the second issue of validity is concerned, it has hopefully been demonstrated that the identification and understanding of particular archetypal themes has in fact elucidated something of the meaning of death and dying.

Ultimately, it must be conceded that the present study raises more questions than it offers 'answers'. However, this may serve to engender further reflection as to the meaning of death and its implications for the conduct of life, and in this way it is hoped that the study will serve to supplement the tradition of poetic thanatology. Perhaps what is particularly valuable has been the indications of the compensatory roles of the Masculine and Feminine during the course of dying; this finding points to a carefully orchestrated closure of life, and reinforces the belief that the dying process is not simply a period of stagnation and decline, but of heightened potential for creative development and for an awakening to Being.

Finally, certain indications for future research may briefly be noted. First, it would be useful to turn attention to intensive case-studies, with an emphasis on the longitudinal analysis of dream series. This would give a clearer picture of the unfolding of individuation in the context of dying. Second, it would be informative to establish whether different types of illnesses reveal themselves through different patterns of archetypal imagery. This would add to our understanding of the diagnostic and prognostic value of dreams, and to our thinking about the mind-body relationship, an issue which we have not been able to enter into in this thesis. Third, it seems necessary to undertake investigations into the applicability of these findings to different cultural groups. For while the reality of death itself is universal, it may be anticipated that the actual tasks of dying may vary according to the differing demands of particular cultural and historical contexts. Finally, it has already been commented that the role of dreams in therapeutic work with the dying is an issue that needs to be vigorously pursued.

8.7. Concluding Thoughts

As emphasised in previous chapters, the intention of this study was not simply to investigate the dreams of dying persons. Rather, it has emerged from a position of concern regarding the tendency for modernist science to literalise and objectify the fundamental mysteries of human existence, thereby rendering them essentially meaningless. In this regard, we are called to the recognition that it is not only impossible to conclusively 'know' the meaning of death, but also undesirable: for when the eternal symbol of death loses its sense of mystery, then it is very possible that the last remaining bastion of meaning in a technocratic age will similarly give way. On the other hand, it seems equally important to recover something of the authentic meaning of death that has been concealed in Western society. In particular, there is a need to consolidate the literal meaning of death, which manifests through the voice of modern science, with the imaginative vision which poets have brought to bear. Let us not be misled into assuming that this task is simply the lot of those who are dying, for we are continually confronted with the consequences of maintaining dualistic boundaries within the image of death. When death is seen only as a catastrophic ending, then life does not want to die; when death is embraced only as a wondrous ending, then life turns away from the tasks of living. At a collective level, too, the unmitigated tension between an unspoken horror of death on the one hand, and ungrounded aspirations attached to it on the other hand, continues to haunt modern humanity. Increasingly, voices speak of an ecological and human crisis that threatens the very world which sustains our existence, but it appears to be less recognised that the path to redemption, to a rescue of the world from the technological excesses of modernism, leads to death. Romanyshyn (1989) leaves us with a sobering reflection:

"In the shadow of the bomb our technological mastery of the earth seems a bad dream, and in the shadows of Chernobyl and the space shuttle disaster our service to the earth seems to have gone terribly awry. On a dry African plain, in the silence of the early morning, one can still imagine technology as a vocation, as the earth's call to become its agent and instrument of awakening. But in the shadows, the imagination falters and technology seems less the earth's way of coming to know itself and more the earth's way of coming to cleanse itself of us" (p. 3).

This calls for personal reflection more than for academic deliberation.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC & DIAGNOSTIC DATA FOR SAMPLE

Subject ¹	Sex	Age	Diagnosis
A	f	56	Ca rectum
B	f	32	leukemia
C	m	71	Ca prostate
D	f	60	COAD
E	f	71	Ca bowel
F	m	57	Ca bone
G	f	49	Ca breast
H	m	58	Ca lung
I	m	60	Ca oesophagus
J	f	53	Ca colon
K	f	53	Ca lymph
L	m	44	AIDS
M	m	31	Ca oesophagus
N	m	58	Ca lung
O	m	72	Ca bowel
P	f	63	Ca lymph
Q	f	73	Ca lung
R	m	67	Ca bowel
S	f	55	Ca (brain metastases)
T	m	32	AIDS
U	m	67	Ca throat

¹ For the purpose of reporting case material in this thesis, the convention has been adopted of coding all 21 subjects included in the final sample alphabetically (A - U).

APPENDIX B

Dream Reports¹

SUBJECT A²

Dream #A1

It was a very frustrating dream...I had lost all of my personal papers - my identity documents, bank cards, all of that, and was looking all over the house for them. But I seemed to be having no luck. The dream just went on like that, getting more and more frustrating.

Dream #A2

I am walking through a deep trench, angling into the ground. A woman leads me into a circular area, something like a circus ring. That's all I remember of it ... there was more, but it didn't seem too important, just different things going on in the background.

SUBJECT B

Dream #B1

A maid took me by the arm and said that I had to be cleansed. She took me to an old-fashioned

¹ It must be noted that personal associations and comments of subjects are not included in this appendix, for the sheer volume of material would have made for unwieldy reporting. In addition, it has been emphasised (cf. Chapter Six) that the focus of this study is essentially on archetypal themes, rather than on individual cases. However, particularly interesting or significant comments and associations which were elicited from subjects have been worked into both the amplification of initial themes (Chapter Seven), and the discussion of findings (Chapter Eight). It must also be noted that while most dreams are reported verbatim, some have been paraphrased for the sake of brevity or, at a subject's request, edited to protect confidentiality.

² For the purpose of reporting case material in this thesis, the convention has been adopted of coding all 21 subjects included in the final sample alphabetically (A - U). Dream reports have been coded in numerical sequence for each subject.

bathtub and helped me into it. She seemed to be Oriental, probably Chinese. I remember that she had a beautiful smile, and the room was not like an ordinary bathroom. It was very old, I think. There was a lampstand in the corner which I recognised as an antique, and I was wondering how valuable it must be. But then the Chinese woman pointed to the tub and insisted that I get in. She bathed me in sweet-smelling water and then dressed me in new clothes, which were all white.

Dream #B2

I was walking alone in a field. Everything was lush and green, it must have been spring-time. Suddenly my late mother appeared at the other end of the field. She seemed to be calling me.

Dream #B3

A group of people were trying to fit a square over me. They were very strange and seemed to have no facial features. I kept trying to see their faces but they didn't seem to have any, and that scared me. I think that they were doing something with me, trying to fit this thing over me. That was also strange. It was something like a box, but not quite a box. It was like a magic square which could be used for many things. It was made of glass, and it is used to check if people are in fact who and what they say ... perhaps a way of gauging truth. The figures are all dressed in white.

Dream #B4

I found myself in a place where there were a lot of people gathered. They seemed to be muttering words softly to themselves. I was curious and asked somebody what was happening. A small group of people began to talk to me and explained that a ritual was being performed for the dead.

SUBJECT C

Dream #C1

I dreamed that I had two bodies, which fitted together like two parts of something...One body was slowly lifting out of and floating away from the other one.

Dream#C2

I was driving in my car when I suddenly drove through a chimney on top of a house ... Then I ended

up in a dark tunnel, and kept driving deeper and deeper down the tunnel ... I tried to use my brakes to stop, but the wheels of the car kept going because they couldn't grip the surface of the tunnel. I remember wanting to get out and I even tried to reverse, but I just kept gaining speed and continued down this endless tunnel in the house...At last I saw a bright spot of light at the end of the tunnel.

Dream #C3:

I dreamed of some friends of mine who have died over the past few years. They were speaking to me and appeared to be beckoning me, but I can't remember what they were saying.

Dream #C4:

I had a very strange dream...I was a computer which wasn't working. Somebody called the technicians who said that there was something wrong with my parts and that they would have to get new parts put into me...But when they looked they couldn't find any spare parts.

Dream #C5:

I saw two violins...two large violins...For some reason I was very worried about them, but I'm not sure why.

Dream #C6:

I dreamed that I was sitting in a theatre and watching a young girl dancing on stage...I felt very close to her, and could communicate with her - not actually be speaking, but in another way altogether - through the mind - like telepathy, I suppose you could say. Then another girl came and joined the first one and they started to dance in a circle...It was actually a very nice dream, and when I woke up I felt good.

Dream #C7:

I dreamed of a bright flower...I thought that I had always wanted one like that in my garden.

SUBJECT D

Dream #D1

Somebody had died, and I was attending the funeral. It seemed to be somebody who I had known, and everybody was dressed in black and looking very solemn. That seemed to irritate me for some reason, because I didn't like the morbid atmosphere. I was laughing and trying to cheer people up, but that didn't work. So I started telling silly jokes, and people were looking at me strangely. Somebody said to me "that could be you lying in there, you know." I looked down, and there was a corpse lying in a grave - there was no coffin, just a corpse lying in hole in ground.

Dream #D2

I had a very strange dream about a green man...He said that he had come from Atlantis and lived in a house underneath the road. I think that he was trying to seduce me or at least get fresh with me. I wasn't sure if the man meant that he came from Atlantis, the lost city, or from Atlantis, the suburb [outside of Cape Town]. But he was a strange character so I suppose he must have come from the lost city. I couldn't understand why he would want to get fresh with a lady of my age - what a strange character he was!

Dream #D3

I seemed to be in large temple. Everything was very beautiful, especially the colours. They were so bright and vivid. It was breathtaking, and I wandered around in awe for a while. Then I came to a door and knocked on it, but there was no reply. I went around a corner and saw an old man sitting on a large leather chair. He stood up and motioned me to come forward. I was hesitant because I didn't know what he wanted from me, but he seemed kind and gentle and so I went to him. He touched me on the head and started to recite an ancient chant in Hebrew, going faster and faster. In his left hand he held a caduceus.

Dream #D4

I had to cross a very wide lagoon to meet with Israeli soldiers who were camping on the distant bank. I was trying to figure out a way of getting across. I started to wade into the lagoon but it was very deep and I was afraid that I would drown. A man appeared and said that he would help me. They were Israeli soldiers, so I presume that the land that I was trying to get to must have been

Israel - the Promised Land. Maybe that's what the dream is about ... like Moses, trying to get to Israel from Egypt.

Dream #D5

I was placed on a sundial by people who seemed to be priests of some sort. The sharp point pierced my back and emerged through my navel. Thick blood ran out. I was in pain and wondered why they were torturing and killing me, but they said that my blood had to be thinned out, and that everyone had to go through this ritual. Then they started to spin the sundial round and round, and finally one of them climbed onto the sundial and made love to me.

SUBJECT E

Dream #E1

I'm afraid that I really don't remember too much about this dream. It was very vague and I've forgotten most of it. I know that I was angry with a friend of mine. I dreamed that she had stood me up for an important appointment and I was looking for her so that I could give her a piece of my mind.

Dream #E2

I had a dream which was really just a jumble of things. There were people and animals of all kinds, all roaming around. They were quite oblivious of each other, even though they were mixing together. I was standing in the middle of this chaos, and was not sure what I should do. Things just kept flashing past me - other people and animal, all just rushing past me. I wasn't sure what to do. Things kept coming and going, all the time in groups of six.

Dream #E3:

I dreamed that I was in a meadow with long grass. It was difficult to walk there, because the grass was very thick and high, and I couldn't really see where I was going. I was also scared of what might be lurking in the grass, like a snake or something. I seemed to be looking for a house, or a similar place, but I couldn't find it. I was walking around in confusion, not knowing where to go. Then, out of the blue, a bull appeared and ran towards me. I was afraid and started to run away but it charged after me and caught up to me. But in the end it turned out to be a playful old thing.

We played together and made friends. Then we headed off to a lake together, and we both jumped in.

Dream #E4:

I was lying in my bed in the hospital ward and then suddenly I was in a swimming pool. A beautiful dolphin leaped out of the water and actually smiled at me. It seemed to be beckoning to me to follow it somewhere.

Dream #E5:

This was a strange type of dream ... A circle with a square over it, and inside of it the figure eight. The circle rotates slowly around. A lot of people seem to be watching this event. The circle turns out to be a big silver ring.

SUBJECT F

Dream #F1

I had a bit of a nightmare last night. I dreamed that I was being chased by a pack of fierce dogs. I was sure that if they got me they would rip me apart. I started to run and seemed to be gaining distance on them, but just as I was starting to get away one of them, a big black dog, gained speed and jumped on me. It started to tear at my body, causing deep gashes and wounds. I woke up in a panic. I remember a very vivid scene of blood splashed all over the place.

Dream #F2

Now, I can't remember too much about this one, and it wasn't terribly exciting ... I remember that I was eating what seemed to be a feast, fit for a king, but that's about it.

Dream #F3

I was driving my car along the main road, but it was incredibly frustrating. The robots weren't working properly, and people were just going. There were a few accidents here and there, and people shouting and cursing at each other. I tried to weave my way in and out of these cars, but this proved impossible. I felt utterly helpless and frustrated.

Dream #F4:

I was digging in the garden and the spade hit something hard. I put my hands into the soil and a skeleton's head or skull emerged. It was grinning - not really grinning, but a kind of sinister leer, like a skeleton from a horror movie. Then its hand appeared - although it was more like a claw. It either tried to pull me into the ground, or I feared that it would, I couldn't recall clearly. I was terrified and tried to run, but I couldn't seem to get away.

Dream #F5:

I dreamed that J approached me and asked me to go with her to the bedroom, so that we could make love. For some reason this really upset me, because I started to slash at her body with a large knife. She screamed and begged me to stop, and then I started to cut myself instead.

Dream #F6:

I can't remember much about this dream. It was about somebody I know vaguely - he works in another division of my company. We were talking about a sporting event, and we were all going off to watch it, or making plans to do so.

Dream #F7:

Again, the details of this dream are fuzzy. I believe that I was in a bookstore with the name of Dingley's - like in the old TV show. I believe that the Dingley's tune was even playing in my head at the time.

Dream #F8:

I was on my way to X's surgery [his physician] at the clinic. In the entrance foyer there was a girl who was selling flowers. She offered me a bunch but I said, quite forcefully, that I had neither the time nor the inclination to buy any. She seemed unperturbed and offered me a collection of the works of Kalil Gibran. I snorted and said "that's really going to help me, isn't it"? Still she seemed unmoved and looked at me knowingly. She said that I had the time but that I was wasting it, and that if I didn't have the inclination then I needed flowers and Kalil Gibran even more. The conversation seemed to meander around like this for quite some time, with my resolve gradually

weakening. In desperation I said that I had to leave because there was an interesting course in applied mathematics which I wanted to attend, but she touched my arm and said, quite sternly: "No! Go to a religious meeting instead".

Dream #F9:

I was walking in an open space. The vastness of it was quite striking. I seemed to be happy in the dream, and started skipping along. Then the scene shifted, or perhaps there was a segment which I have forgotten, but I seemed to be in a throng of people. I noticed a stunningly beautiful woman among them, and thought that I would desperately like her to be my wife. Then I realised with a shock that the woman was J.

Dream #F10:

I was walking down a long open road, with my backpack on, and met an old woman. She said that I should join her and asked her why I would want to do that. She replied that she knew a great secret, which I might discover if I went with her. So off we went, although who knows where to? We seemed to do a few things together, and then she said that she would be the midwife when I was born. Then a song started to play - it was Elizabethan Serenade, one of my all-time favourites.

Dream #F11:

I was mountaineering in the Drakensberg mountains when I came to a cave. I went inside and discovered that there were numerous passages winding like a labyrinth inside the mountain. I decided to explore them and in one passage came to an old man with long white hair sitting and tending a fire. He beckoned to me to sit down. It turned out that he was blind and deaf. He drew out a long staff and I thought that he must have been a shepherd at some time. He drew a circle on the ground and told me that at the centre of the earth was the treasure I was seeking. I had to go down there to find it. He told me that was my great quest.

Dream #F12:

I dreamed of Christ in four parts. It was my task to discover the meaning of these parts, and to piece them together. I managed to do this for three parts, but the meaning of the fourth part eluded me and I couldn't put it together with the other parts. But I knew that I would get the hang of it in the end.

Dream #F13:

There was a bright round light, it looked like full moon, but brighter. I knew that the light represented life. Then a dark round circle moved over it, so that it was like a solar eclipse. I knew that was death. In my dream I was trying to keep these two circles apart by concentrating very hard, but then a voice said 'that is the way of all things', and this made me feel a little better. I stopped struggling and let the two merge.

Dream #F14:

I was trying to take my clothes off. All of them came off easily except for my jacket. I couldn't get the last button undone.

Dream #F15:

There was a wedding cake...a wonderful white wedding cake. Somebody was getting married...That's all I remember. It was a very vivid image.

SUBJECT G

Dream #G1:

I was in a room which was like a slaughter-house. There are animal carcasses lying around ... a very gruesome sight. They were all rotting and the stench was awful. I felt disgusted. I asked the men working there if they had fresh meat for sale but they said that this was all that was left.

Dream #G2:

G [husband] was fighting with me, and I was upset ... I don't know what the fight was about. I felt that he was being unfair and stormed off. That's all I remember.

Dream #G3:

I was in an aeroplane, going to Cape Town. The pilot announced that something was wrong with the engines. I looked out of the window and saw all of the houses down below, the lights twinkling in the windows. I realised that we were going to crash and would all be killed. I felt sorry that I had

not got my affairs in order.

Dream #G4:

I was wandering in a dark forest, and seemed to be lost. The trees were very tall, and I eventually went to sleep under one of them. From what I can remember two dogs found me there in the morning. They led me out to safety, to an open place.

Dream #G5:

I was going up in a space shuttle, leaving the earth behind and heading off to some very distance place. We - the other passengers and I - arrived at a very strange but enchanting place. Everything was clean and fresh ... It seemed to be a colony of people, but not like on earth. I felt a sense of great peace. There was no fighting there, not like here at all. I wandered around for a while, and then came to a reception desk. There was a pretty young woman there who knew who I was and said that my arrival had been expected for some time. She assured me that everything would be taken care of and that I would be most comfortable. I began to suspect that perhaps I had after all died and had arrived in heaven, and when I asked her if this was so she said "here there is only life!".

Dream #G6:

A very bright light...that's all there seemed to be. I was just facing a bright light.

SUBJECT H

Dream #H1:

I was at a racecourse, waiting for the running of a race. The horses were all in the starting stalls and the starter's flag went up but then all hell broke loose. The horses suddenly went wild and started to charge off, running all over the place. The jockeys were trying to control them, but couldn't. It was mayhem. I was very cross because I had placed a large bet on a horse and I knew that the race would now be declared null and void.

Dream #H2:

I was at the airport, ready to go overseas. I got on to a 'plane and sat down. In the seat next to me was a skeleton, just sitting there. I got a damn skrik [a fright] and jumped up, but all the other passengers were also skeletons. I tried to get out but we had already taken off. So I ran to another part of the plane but everywhere there were just these fucking skeletons. I found the air hostess and said that I would sue the airline for this, but she just looked at me and said that I should try to relax because it wasn't a long flight anyhow.

Dream #H3:

I dreamed of F, a colleague and friend who died a few months ago. He said "M, come, let's have a dop [a drink] together.

Dream #H4:

Just water ... a hell of a lot of water, covering everything ... Like the great flood again, except that there was no Noah's Ark this time. Everything was smashed up by the water. I was trying to save things, but got washed away.

SUBJECT I

Dream #11:

I had a dream about human organs that somebody seemed to have discarded on a rubbish dump. There were limbs and bodily parts lying all over the place, and flies were swarming around them. It was a terrible scene, but in the middle of it there was a woman who was rummaging through the pieces like a scavenger. I asked her what she was doing, but she said that we had to join them all back together again.

Dream #12:

This one's a bit embarrassing ... I was having very passionate sex with a woman whose face I could not see. After it was over she turned around and I discovered that it had been my sister all along.

Dream #13:

I was at what I thought was a reception for the Queen. Somebody said that the reception could not

begin until the king had arrived. I walked into a large hall, keen to catch a glimpse of her and after looking around for a while I spied her at the other end of the room. She looked up and saw me and came rushing across to me, saying how nice it was to make my acquaintance. I was flabbergasted, wondering how it was that she should know me. When I asked her this she looked surprised and said that the reception was after all being hosted for me.

Dream #14

I was taken to a beautiful place by an unknown man, who seemed to radiate compassion and caring. It was very high up in the clouds somewhere, which was heaven. There were beings of light there, perhaps they were angels, but they were just very bright. I felt a sense of great peace in me. I was less afraid of everything.

SUBJECT J

Dream #J1

I was walking along High Street, carrying my handbag. Inside it I had a roll of film for developing - one of those really old-fashioned reels of film. I knew that the film was very precious because it contained all of the scenes of my life. Then suddenly the whole bag caught fire and the film just evaporated in smoke. I felt distraught. It was a really scary dream. It felt as if my whole life was going up in a flash of smoke, and nothing was left of it. I woke up feeling absolutely desperate to get my life back".

Dream #J2:

I was in a beautiful chapel and found my parents [both deceased] praying for me. they seemed very much in love and looked happy and healthy. We all embraced and they said that they had been keeping very well, and were so sorry to hear about the trouble I was having to breathe. We also spoke about other things, like my sister's engagement and why they didn't approve of her husband-to-be, and my son's good progress at school. After a while they said that they had to go and I asked if I could go with, but they replied that it wasn't yet my time and that my son needed me around for his final exams. Then they said that they would always be there for me, just as they had when they were alive, and that we would soon all be together again.

SUBJECT K

Dream #K1:

I walked into a classroom, where medical students were being taught. The doctor shook his head to the students and I guessed that he was saying that there wasn't much hope for me. It was a very sad dream, and I cried when I woke up and remembered it.

Dream #K2:

We [the dreamer, her husband and two daughters] were travelling through Europe, and in a small town or village we stopped to explore an ancient cathedral. I entered a passage and came across a strange man who beckoned me follow him down many flights of stairs which led down to a dark basement. I was uncertain and thought that I should return to my family, but they seemed to have gone. I felt very alone, and sacred, but the strange man was quite insistent so I turned to follow him. After what seemed some time we reached the basement, which was very dark except for a fire burning in the middle of the floor. He pointed me to it, expecting me to step into it. I said "can't you see that I'm in a wheelchair" - even though I wasn't - but he was insistent. So I walked into the fire, but I didn't feel any pain. In fact, I started to feel stronger, and came out of the other side looking much younger and healthier.

Dream #K3:

The details of this dream are vague, and I don't recall much of it ... It had something to do with my aunt, who was supposed to have left me an inheritance. Who knows - maybe it was meant to be a lot of money!

Dream #K4:

I dreamed that I was being carried into hospital on a stretcher, and I realised that I was on my last legs - this is it, I would not be coming out again. I was wheeled, on one of those awful hospital trolleys, down a long passage. Then I passed a woman who was giving birth.

Dream #K5:

I dreamed about four angels, who were singing a hymn. I knew that they had come to fetch me ...

I'm sure that was what this dream was about. They told me that they had come to take me, and that my suffering was nearly over. They were the most beautiful things I have ever seen.

SUBJECT L

Dream #L1:

There was one particularly awful dream ... my arms and legs were being chopped off and into pieces by people who seemed to be cannibals, although I couldn't seem to be sure ... But I think that they were eating parts of my body. I was in agony and terrified.

Dream #L2:

I was on a nature camp with a number of people. I seemed to be very excited about two black widow spiders which I had come across while hiking on a trail through the bush. I rushed into the house where the others were sleeping and shouted: 'Do you want to see two black widows mating in the moonlight?' and insisted that they follow me. We rushed down the mountainside and there, strung between two trees, was a large web which was illuminated by the moonlight. Inside the web were two black widow spiders, one big and the other small. I wanted to duck under the web, but as I did so the larger one bit me twice on the back. It was very painful and I shouted out. Then the realisation dawned on me that these were very poisonous spiders and that I would die. I removed my shirt and there were two huge lumps on my back. Nobody seemed to know what to do. Everyone was shouting and panicking. I looked down calmly at the lumps on my back - they were now red and swollen - and thought 'oh good, I'm going to die'.

Dream #L3:

My mother and I were fighting. We were both very angry. I was accusing her of something, but I can't remember what.

Dream #L4:

I was out in the bush somewhere and came across a beehive. True to form, I decided to see what would happen if I poked a stick into it. Suddenly a swarm of bees flew out and started to attack me. For some reason this didn't worry me, until I saw that the bees had been protecting the queen bee. Then I realised that they would sting me to death because I had interfered with the queen.

Dream #L5:

I was at home. It was at night, and somebody rang the doorbell. I opened it and a group of men rushed into the house. They appeared to belong to the AWB. They poured petrol over me and I knew that they were going to set me on fire and kill me, although I had no idea why. My mother appeared in the room and we looked at each other, knowing what would happen. It was a very sad moment. I wanted to say something to her, wanted to say goodbye, knowing that I would never see her again.

Dream #L6 :

I dreamed of three sexy women, all dressed in slinky black outfits. They draped themselves across a car and start to sing to me. I can't remember the tune but the chorus was "Now you've got a ride ... you've got a taxi."

Dream #L7:

I was walking in the *veldt*. Everything was dry, probably from the drought. In another part the bush seemed to have been burned black by a fire. The ground itself was scorched black. It was a scene of absolute devastation, almost surrealistic. I walked on, feeling that perhaps the world had ended - had there been some kind of holocaust or ecological disaster? I felt a deep inner emptiness and utter despair. Then I came across a farmer sitting on a tractor, ready to plough the fields. I found this highly incongruous. "There's not a hell of a lot left, is there?" I asked, but he carried on chugging across the land, saying that "it will all grow again in the spring, when the rains come".

Dream #L8:

I was holding a beautiful dove. I realised - even in my dream - that it was a symbol of peace ... that I'm ready to die now.

SUBJECT M

Dream #M1:

I was in a desert, seemingly lost. There was just sand all around. Suddenly I came across a church. I was struck by this ... a church in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of the desert.

Dream #M2:

I dreamed that I was in a strange and unusual place, which seemed very beautiful. When we got there people were standing and moving their hands in a funny way. They were weaving golden threads into squares, by moving their hands in this way. I was only allowed to stand and watch this ... Then all the people went through the golden squares and I wanted to follow them but the squares closed and I was not allowed to go through.

Dream # M3:

I was in the desert again. This time I came across a black tent, and went inside. Something happened inside, because I came out of the other side dressed all in white, like an Arab.

Dream #M4:

I've forgotten most of this dream, but I was in a lift, travelling up to floor seven.

SUBJECT N

Dream #N1:

I dreamed recently about a war. A town was being attacked and the army was retreating. I was angry because the soldiers had deserted, but in the end I was shot by the enemy ... an aircraft flew low over me and blew me to pieces.

Dream #N2:

This was a similar dream to the last one ... this time I was defending a town. It was my responsibility to defend the town. I realised that if I could defend the town square, then the town would be safe ... the square was the key part.

Dream #N3:

This was a very powerful dream. I was flying - not in an aeroplane or with a mechanical aid, but on my own, my body being free to move about in the sky as if I were a bird. I didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular, but the dream was incredibly vivid. All the scenery seemed so rich, as I have never experienced before. And I was incredibly aware of everything, even the smallest details of the landscape. It was like the whole world was part of me ... It's almost impossible to explain.

SUBJECT O

Dream #O1:

I was in a strange place...it was very cold, lots of snow and ice ... The details are blurred now.

Dream #O2:

Oh, I was crossing a bridge, and my young granddaughter was at the other side, laughing and waving to me, calling me to come across and play. That's all.

Dream O3:

I was in a strange town. I wondered where I was. But there's really not much else that I can tell you.

SUBJECT P

Dream #P1:

I am in an old house and descend down a spiral staircase which leads through a number of levels. In a dark room I find a strange woman sitting and weaving a huge cloth.

Dream P2:

An odd dream ... I am eating pizza, complaining that there is not enough garlic on it.

Dream P3:

I am at a dance. There is a great congregation of people, all wearing masks. I suppose it is a masked ball. I am with a strange man, who seems to be my lover. He is also wearing a mask. There is a metal box fitted with bright jewels which is to be opened at midnight. I say, "that is past the time I usually stay up", but my companion says that we will make love at midnight. I know that is when I will see his face for the first time.

Dream P4:

A strange scene of black and white. There is a long and wide passage, the left half of which is white, while the right side is black and in darkness. I am walking on the right side, struggling to see where I am going, but a strange voice tells me to move over to the left side, that everything is happening on the left. I am uncertain about this but the voice tells me to trust and to have faith.

SUBJECT Q

Dream Q1:

I was drowning in a pool of stagnant, rotting water. The stench was overwhelming. I hated it. That's all I remember.

Dream Q2:

I am in a strange, dark place. It is a very sinister and foreboding atmosphere, and I start to walk fast, wanting to get away from there. It is a bit like a scene from an Alfred Hitchcock movie. I am aware of a presence that seems to be following me, and I begin to get more and more afraid. I keep turning around, but it is too dark to see anything. I reach what seems to be a warehouse or a shed, and think that now I will find help, but it is empty and deserted. I feel very alone, and wonder how I will be able to defend myself if I am mugged. Then a figure appears in the doorway of the shed, dressed in black. I cannot make out the face, but it seems to be a man. He stands immobile, saying nothing. I try to act casual, and ask him if he works there, but there is no reply. I ask him various other questions, but each time there is just a stony silence. I say 'well, I must go now', and head towards him, but he does not move out of the way. I am too scared to confront him directly. The he is suddenly gone and I rush out, but now I am in another scene, a skyscraper. I enter a lift and

the doors close. I look around and he is there again, standing motionless in the corner. My father suddenly appears and tells me that it will allright. I feel safer with him there.

Dream #Q3:

My father is sitting on a very big shiny rock. He is in a kind of valley; the rock is on the left of him. I can't find a way down to him, but it's so nice to see him.

Dream Q4:

I dreamed of my father again. He was searching for a pair of boots, which he said he must have. A pair of black boots. Somebody had stolen them. I said that I would find them and bring them to him.

Dream Q5:

I was walking down a passage. My son comes towards me, but he looks different, a lot younger than he is ... But he doesn't even seem to notice me ... It's like I'm invisible

Dream Q6:

In this dream I was walking along a narrow ledge, and knew that I mustn't fall. But I couldn't see anything because I was surrounded by darkness. I lost my balance, but as I began to fall my father appeared and helped me across to the other side.

Dream Q7:

I was in a strange place in this dream. There was a circular area, and inside it I saw my parents, holding hands. I wanted so much to join them but my father had constructed some kind of force-field to keep me out. I pleased to join them, but he said very sternly, "not now, Ruth!".

Dream Q8:

My father is standing and muttering something strange; he is calling some numbers out to me; they are all to do with 7. I don't know what he means.

Dream Q9:

I was stripping away layers of something, but I'm not sure what it was. More and more layers came off.

Dream Q10:

I dreamed that I was wandering around in some or other place - I don't know where it was. My father came and found me, and led me away. I don't know where we were going, but I was happy to be going with him.

SUBJECT R

Dream R1:

I was at a family gathering, and had to go round to each person, saying goodbye. We were all crying. It was a very sad occasion.

Dream R2:

I was in a sleazy bar, and ended up having to arm wrestle with a black man. People were placing bets on the outcome. I was told that if I lost the match I would be put to death.

Dream R3:

I dreamed that I was riding down stairs on a motorbike. It was in a posh shopping mall. Then I went up some stairs and came to a function room. A Christmas party was going on, and I was surprised to find that a huge Christmas tree was lying across the banquet table. I wondered to somebody how we were supposed to eat with the tree in the way, but he said that the tree was the whole point of the celebration.

SUBJECT S

Dream #S1:

I was at a funeral. I didn't know it at first but it turned out that it was my husband who had died. It was very sad - I thought that I might never see him again.

Dream #S2:

I dreamed that the electrical circuits on my car had burned out. I took it into a garage but the mechanic told me that it would be too expensive to repair.

Dream #S3:

I was going rafting, and looking very forward to it. We were whooshing along the rapids, and then we came to huge waterfall. We were in those tubber duck things ... Somebody said to me we should go skydiving too, but that this was the most exciting ride in the world - he said that we would drop 200 feet in a few seconds and that it was absolutely exhilarating. I looked over the edge and saw this drop of hundreds of feet. But then I woke up.

Dream #S4:

I dreamed that I was at the airport, at passport control, about to fly off to America.

Dream #S5:

I dreamed that I was swimming in the ocean, which is unusual because I always keep to shallow water. I was actually enjoying myself, and swam out a far distance from the shore. People seemed to be waving to me and telling me to come back because I was going out too far, and I became scared, thinking that I might drown or get swept out to sea. I started to swim back but a current seemed to be pulling me out. I battled on for a bit, but didn't make much progress, and then I thought how nice it was that I could swim so far out without being afraid. I saw the shore in the distance but it seemed far away. I lay back in the water and let myself drift, further and further away. It was a wonderful feeling.

SUBJECT T

Dream #T1:

I was standing in Cape Town harbour, watching a drama at sea. A tanker had caught fire and was struggling into harbour. The whole hull was cracked and burning and it was quite clear that the ship was about to sink. But the superstructure seemed intact, in fact undamaged. Somebody told me that even when the ship sank the superstructure would just break off and continue to float.

Dream #T2:

I dreamed that I answered a knock on the door to discover a policeman there. He gave me news that some of my best friends had died in a car crash. It felt like a huge shock ... I woke up really scared.

Dream #T3:

I was on a ship - a passenger liner - sailing off somewhere. I remember a scene from the dream where I was just leaning against the rails, watching the sea sparkle, mesmerised by it all. It was a very peaceful dream - but not quite as good as the real thing, of course.

Dream #T4:

Here I was in a serious fight, but I'm not even sure who the fight was with. An unknown man was trying to kill me, that's all I can really say. I know it was a serious fight - we were using all sorts of weapons on each other. At one point I was brandishing an axe, as I now recall. I don't know what happened in the end - the dream just seemed to fade out.

Dream #T5:

I dreamed that I was in a heavenly city - perhaps heaven itself. It was really beautiful, and it left me with a sense that the gates of heaven won't be closed to me after all. It was a very vivid dream also. The air was clean, the sky incredibly blue, and the city seemed to form part of an egalitarian society.

Dream #T6:

This dream was a bit vague, but the feature that stood out is an image of light and a loud voice saying "this is the Holy Ghost".

SUBJECT U

Dream #U1:

I'm sorry ... not much to tell you about this one. All I can recall is that it had something to do with my boss at work. He wanted to know if I would be coming back, and I was worried about getting fired. He told me not to worry, that the company would look after me.

Dream # U2:

I dreamed of a white-clad figure walking. He had no face. Then he was joined by other figures also dressed in white robes. They all just walked around, and then came to my bed-side. I was shit scared. I think a force came to take me away that night.

Dream #U3:

I dreamed that I was an American fighter pilot in the Pacific during world war II. We were fighting the Japanese, and various things happened around this theme, but I couldn't actually give you specific details.