

Psyche and Matter

by Marie-Louise von Franz

selected passages

"Matter and Psyche from the Point of View of the Psychology of C.G. Jung" (1974)

"There are probably many different numerical structures that repeatedly make a parallel appearance in the psychic and physical realms. ... This is ... where further research must be encouraged. When Jung came to this point, he said the following: 'Now I have the feeling that I've hit my head against the ceiling. I can't get any farther than this.' This was shortly before his death. Now, I have not tried to produce any creative new ideas, but rather, in my book *Number and Time* I have tried to take this idea that Jung hinted at somewhat further and to show that the natural numbers in fact do possess in exactly the same way in the world of psychic representations all the qualities that they possess mathematically and that they have in physics and in the hereditary code. Thus a real, absolute isomorphism is present. I was able to take this up to the number four. Then it became too complicated, and at that point I also hit my head on the ceiling."

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"Symbols of the *Unus Mundus*" (1968)

"When he created the concept of synchronicity, Jung laid a foundation which might lead us to see the complementary realms of psyche and matter as *one* reality. ... Synchronistic events ... seem to point towards a *unitary aspect of existence* which transcends our conscious grasp and which Jung has called the *unus mundus*." 40

The "mandala is the psychological equivalent and synchronicity the parapsychological equivalent of the *unus mundus*." 41

"The above-mentioned mandalas [in the writings of Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, Ramon Lull] are attempts to combine the psychic equivalent of the *unus mundus* (i.e., mandala) with an attempt to tap the 'absolute knowledge' (i.e., synchronicity). Some of them are triadic, and these seem more explicitly intended to put the inner man in order, whereas others can be turned, and these have the additional purpose of obtaining ESP knowledge or of producing magical effects. Some of these cosmic models, such as the calendar of Guillaume de Digulleville, which describes in *Psychology and Religion* and *Psychology and Alchemy*, have a double structure of two circles. The same holds true for the mysterious modern vision of a world clock which Jung published in *Psychology and Alchemy*. Jung suggests that this world clock might represent the essence of the time-space union or rather its origin" 44

"This complementary double aspect of number (quantity and quality) is in my opinion the thing which makes it possible for the world of quantity (matter) and of quality (psyche) to interlock with each other in a periodical manner (world clock!)." 57

"The Psychological Experience of Time" (1978)

Speaking of two dreams of a seven-year old child in which things get run over: "These two dream-visions mean to give the child a helpful shock, in order to wake her up to *our* cultural time world, to which she now has to adapt when going to school. She has to learn that all goes over rapidly and that she now has to live in *time*." 128

"Probably most of you have had once or more times that typical agonizing dream of having to catch a train, coming across one obstacle after another. This generally indicates that we are not in harmony with time, that we are not 'up to the moment' in one way or another, but that we sleepily drift along in life not realizing what is meant to be realized *at that moment*." 128

"In the realm of physics ... acausal orderedness manifests, for instance, in the time rate of radioactive decay, which is a just-so fact, for which we cannot indicate a cause. In the realm of the psyche an example of acausal orderedness would be the just-so-ness of individual natural numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc." 130

"Numbers altogether in China was closely related to time. ... Numbers are not only names for quantities but also indicate *qualitative time phases* in the existence of the whole." 132

"To the three great archetypal symbols of time, the river (or snake), the procession (or train), and the wheel (or clock), we could add one more archetypal image, the God of Death." 136

"Psyche and Matter in Alchemy and Modern Science" (1975)

"[S]pirit and matter are two unknown realms of existence which we call inner and reality. We have to make such a dualistic distinction because there are two archetypes at work—father-spirit and mother-matter. ... The rationalism of the seventeenth century thus had one advantage after all; it drove father-spirit and mother-matter so far apart that now we can reunite them in a cleaner way." 157

The "point, Jung thought, was to investigate synchronicity further, because synchronistic events are obviously the meeting point. In a synchronistic event something happens materially and psychically, coincides, and is united by a common meaning." 162

Jung "pointed out that the natural numbers have completely individual mathematical qualities; and that, he said, must account also for their magical importance. For the first time, he tried to unite these two streams.

"Jung's idea was that one should study the individuality of these numbers—be interested in what each has that the others have not, rather than what they have in common. ... Then he said he

couldn't do it; he felt too old. That was about two years before his death. ... [T]hat's why I have now written this rather unreadable book, *Number and Time*, making at least a little attempt. I have tried the first four integers, as you know; I counted to four and tried to assemble the qualities of each in psychology, mythology, physics, mathematics; and it is, to me at least, quite clear that they *really have the same function*—that if you compare the role of three in mathematics and physics, there is a similar function in psychological and symbolic manifestation. Then I discovered, to my amazement, that Chinese mathematics were completely built on this idea of the quality of numbers." 164

"There were once eleven [Chinese] generals, and they had to vote if they should attack or retreat. They voted, and eight were for attack and three were for going back. Therefore, they retreated. The three had won out because three is the number of harmony; three is a better number, qualitatively, than eight. So the people who hit the three won out." 164

"I have made *endless* charts, and then I have been discouraged and left it. I have left it a year, and now my dreams say I should not leave it, that it's still there, that I've only attacked it from the wrong angle. So now I have to pick it up again and try from another angle. I don't know, I'm just groping ... that's all I can say." 165

"Some Historical Aspects of C.G. Jung's Synchronicity Hypothesis" (n.d.)

"My attempt to penetrate into the fundamental problems of mathematics has until now been nearly entirely ignored. However, I am convinced that the next steps of creative scientific thinking will go further in this direction ... " 199

"What creates a great problem for the acceptance of the synchronicity hypothesis is the fact that it breaks with ago-old habitual patterns of thought. It is true that the omnipotence of causality has been breached in such a way as to cast doubt on the simple-minded clockwork fantasy of a deterministic universe, but in addition the hidden omnipotence of the surviving magical thought mode is also being done away with. This amounts to a checkmate for the power drive of the scientific intellect. What the new hypothesis of Jung has to recommend it, is the fact that it introduces a creative element and a factor of meaning into the hard sciences of nature. But with this, the feelings and ethical values of the observer must be taken into account by scientific inquiry. This aspect is something that, much to our detriment, has until now been excluded by science." 199

"The Synchronicity Principle of C.G. Jung" (1979)

"The numbers are probably the most primordial archetypes that there are; they represent the actual matrix of the archetypes.¹ ... Number, as it were, lies behind the psychic realm as a dynamic

¹"The fact is that the numbers pre-existing in nature are presumably the most fundamental archetypes, being the very matrix of all others. Here Pythagoras was certainly on the right track

ordering principle, the primal element of that which Jung called spirit. As an archetype, number becomes not only a psychic factor, but more generally, a world-structuring factor. In other words, numbers point to a background of reality in which psyche and matter are no longer distinguishable. ... [O]ne and the same ordering principle underlies both living matter and the human psyche ... " 216

"According to Jung, the mandala is the psychic equivalent and synchronistic phenomena are the parapsychological equivalent of the *unus mundus*. 218

"The coincidences between dreams and real situations seem to belong to the operative type 'attraction of related phenomena.'" 221

"Some Reflections on Synchronicity" (1984)

Jung uses the term *psychoïd* "to characterize the fact that the archetypes of the objective psyche sometimes seem to cross over into the realm of matter." 251

"Meaning and Order" (1981)

"In his book on synchronicity, C.G. Jung introduces two new concepts into depth psychology concerning the world of so-called chance. One is the concept of 'acausal orderedness' and the other that of 'synchronistic events.' The former means a regular omnipresent just-so-ness, such as, for instance, the specific speed of light, the quantization of energy, the time-rate of radioactive decay, or any other constant in nature. Because we cannot indicate a cause (for these regularities); we generally express this just-so-ness by a number ... " 267

Numbers are, "in Jung's view, ... archetypal symbols. They are also individuals and have an aspect of just-so-ness ... " 269

"We could say that mathematics deals with the 'acausal orderedness' in our own mind, which is based on number; and physics, among other themes, deals with the 'acausal orderedness' in nature, such as the speed of light and the rate of radioactive decay, which could also be designated by number." 270

Concerning synchronicity: "[T]here also exists a 'danger that meaning will be read into things where actually there is nothing of the sort,'² or that one misinterprets the meaning." 272

and we modern men have forgotten this aspect of the pre-existing numbers because we were only busy manipulating numbers for the sake of calculating. But Number is a factor pre-existent to man, with unforeseen qualities yet to be discovered by him." C.G. Jung, *Letters, II*, 327.

²C.G. Jung, *Letters, II*, 495.

"Physics and psychology indicate that ... numbers ... appear as qualities of matter—just as they appear as a quality of psychic contents. The only difference, it seems to me, would lie in an interpretation of this quality only in terms of order or also, as we do in psychology, in terms of meaning. Up until now most physicists certainly do not associate consciously any meaning with order." 285

The "meaningful but rather vague language of myth is in his [Jung's] view more appropriate for the description of psychological facts. Only so can it include the vagueness of meaning and the feeling function. This, I think, will always keep psychology separate from physics. If we try, all the same, to meet, it is for the reason that in its fringes, where psychology reaches over to the other fields of science, there should exist—if possible—no fundamental contradictions. A psychology which does not keep pace with the findings of other sciences seems to me no good. I think that Jungian psychology meets nuclear physics on a fringe via the concept of order, especially close in the view that number is an archetype as well as a property of material phenomena, be it quantum numbers or patterns of particle interactions. Dr. Capra writes: 'When the particles are arranged according to their values of their quantum numbers they are seen to fall into very neat patterns'³ Very similar patterns appear in the archetypal structures produced by the unconscious psyche, but in contrast to the aspect of order alone we have in psychology also to search for their 'meaning.' Number, it seems to me, unites both: order and meaning, and is therefore ... a possible meeting point for the two fields of science." 288-9

³Fritjof Capra, "Quark Physics without Quarks: A Review of Recent Developments in S-Matrix Theory." (Reprint) Submitted to *The American Journal of Physics*, p. 7.