

# Returning to the Well



*47:48 Confining/Oppression and the Well* portrays the secret inner connections that lead the noble person out of the thought prisons of a corrupt system through a return to human community, a common source of life-water that all can rely on.

**Stephen Karcher Ph.D.**

## **Mind-forged Manacles**

We talk a lot about education and communication, information and training, ambition and ideals these days. We deplore the state of our schools, make plans to get our children into good programs, develop courses to ready social aliens to enter the work force and try our best to teach the marginalized and suffering how to integrate themselves into our society. At the same time, though many of us are formally educated, often highly, we spend countless hours searching the spiritual supermarkets of the world for something that can “raise our consciousness” - though we seldom have any idea of what is being raised or how.

Our educational and religious institutions have failed us. Our souls and our dreams have become a battlefield of violently diverging feelings, needs and aspirations. Our real desire to be of help and service to others has been turned into confusion, despair and anger. We might call this falling apart of

the connectedness of things by a term that has become quite familiar: spin. The spin we are caught up in is an ever-widening dance of empty signifiers that destroys any connection between the names of things and what they could possibly mean. W. B. Yeats' famous words in "The Second Coming", written back in the 1930's, seem even more true today as we confront an escalating war of competing fundamentalisms backed by a media-driven market economy capable of reducing anything to a series of meaningless but highly emotive slogans:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre,  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of a passionate intensity.

This poem and the symbol from the I Ching give us a portrait of our times, a crisis that combines real danger with the opportunity to come out of the prisons that trap our minds, what the poet William Blake called the "mind-forged manacles" that keep us locked in our greed and need.

### **The Well**

This is what can happen when we begin a dialogue with Change. It opens an interactive space *between*, between action and reaction, mind and heart, night and day, in-breath and out-breath where insight is born and individual change occurs.



The Well. All of us.  
You can alter the city, you cannot alter the Well.  
They come and go in their order.  
The Well is always the Well.

The symbol portrays a place in the soul where deep feminine powers work with the dark river of our pain and sorrow to find the hidden sickness and clear the stream of painful memories. It can turn inner self containment into self cultivation, making the soul connections that let us emerge as a true individual freed from the social conventions that imprison our spirit. For make no mistake, our personal decisions can make a difference now. Each of us is a makeweight in the great process of cultural change. The question is how we can participate in this great change rather than being its victim.

### **Putting the World Back Together Again**

The first hexagram in the Pair 47:48 shows us where we are in our age of spin. It describes the situation that imprisons us and can be our inner guide and inspiration.



**47 Confining/Oppression KUN**



You are cut off, oppressed and exhausted. Collect the energy to get out of this prison and re-establish communication. Be great and master the situation from within. Find what is truly important. Seek those who can help and advise you. The situation is not your fault but words are not to be trusted now. Do not believe what others are telling you to do. Let Confining be your inner guide. It will turn self containment into the ability to manage the flow and flux of events.



### **Circle of Meanings**

**Oppressed, restricted, exhausted, cut off, at the end of your resources; prisons, penal codes, oppressed by a harsh ruler and onerous duties; worry, fear, anxiety, fatigue, disheartened, weary; the moment of truth, search within to find the way out. The old character shows a tree inside a big mouth or ramshackle house that threatens to engulf it.**

The second hexagram in this pair is an image of how the inner changes that grow out of an encounter with Change are realized in the outer world.



Connect with the basic human social structure and the natural force that flows from it. You can change where you live and who you associate with, but you cannot change the well. The water is there for all. Losing and acquiring, coming and going all are part of the well. If all you find is mud, you have not gone deep enough. If you ruin the pitcher used to draw the water, you will be cut off from the spirits and left open to danger. Let Well show you how to realize things. It will turn outer activity into self cultivation that makes the soul connections.



### Circle of Meanings

**Network, resources held in common, life-water from the depths; communicate, interact, common needs and strengths; life and community in good order, norm, model, measure. The old character shows eight family fields grouped around a well, the fundamental unit of social organization.**

In this critical moment, the moment between Confining/Oppression and the Well when we give up everything that we think we know and open ourselves to the symbols, we connect with a Time Cycle or Cycle of Seasons that can show us how things will evolve if we let ourselves be led by the natural movement of time and let go of our schedules and our projects.

**Cycle of Seasons:** You are in **Winter**, finding the seed of the new. Rouse the new growth by expressing yourself joyously (**Spring/58**); ripen the fruits by stepping out to meet the new fate (**Summer/10**); harvest the crop by presenting your case persuasively (**Fall/6**).

We are in the dark time of **Winter** now, finding the seed, the potential of new growth for all by grinding away the old patterns within each of us. We can rouse the new growth by expressing this new spirit (**Spring/58 Open**) –

finding glad words that cheer and inspire, that give spirit a voice again in the human community. As a source of inner guidance, the joyous voice of who we truly are lets us step out of the old structures that keep us isolated and encounter the creative spirit that clears the channels through which spirit flows within and between us (**Summer/10 Treading**). It reveals our destiny, the destiny that Heaven gave us and offers us a Way to walk in the world, a new path, and a new life. Gathering in the insights and experiences this new way offers for all gives the great change of the time a voice in the halls of authority and power (**Fall/6 Arguing**), not through hate or anger or pain, but through persuasive words that are the fruit of real experience and real knowledge of the community of being.

This, to me, is the purpose of The Well – helping each of us find their real voice again, finding our common humanity and our common joy and expressing it in such a way that it transforms the cultural prisons of “spin.” Putting the world back together again in this manner is the mission of the stage of the Symbolic Life when we emerge into higher levels of culture and empowerment in society.

### **Hidden Pathways of Change**

There is a long tradition of seeing into the hexagrams through the interaction of the two trigrams they are made of. **47 Oppression** is seen as Lake above Water, the image of a dry lake whose water has flowed out and disappeared into the dark underground stream.

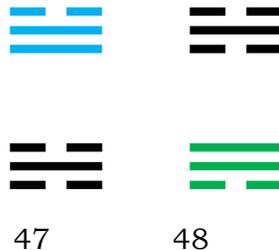
**Lake above Water.** The **Joyous Dancer** and the **Ghost River**. Containing fear and impulse will let you express the spirit in the human community. This is Metal over Water: confined by oppressive ideas, water flows down to the common source. Do not just put on a new face. Confront your fate and release its purpose. Regroup your thoughts and find new spiritual kin. The corruption you face will vanish of itself.

If we look deeper into the pair **47:48 Confining/Oppression and the Well** we might see the hidden pathways and processes that facilitate these great changes that re-connect us to the on-going process of the real.

**47:48 Confining and the Well** centers on emergence from the past as key to a greater vision of culture. It shows the inner connections that lead a noble out of the oppression of a corrupt system through a return to human community. It gives you the strength to escape from social oppression through fellow-feeling.

The inner dynamic of the pairs of hexagrams is expressed by the movement of the eight three-line figures – the Eight Trigrams (*Bagua*) or Eight Spirit Helpers. The movement of these Eight Trigrams releases the pair’s power and virtue (*de*). Through this, change and transformation can occur and the fates of all things come to their perfection.

**Outer to Inner:** the rotational process of the pair transforms the **Joyous Dancer**, the outer world trigram of **47 Confining** into the **Lady of Fates** in the inner world of **48 Well**, making the soul connections that turn social engagement into inner self cultivation.



**Inner to Outer:** this interiorisation shifts the **Ghost River** trigram and the stream of dark memories from the inner world of **47 Oppression** to the outer world of **48 Well**, turning inner self containment into the ability to manage the flow and flux of events.

As you can see by looking at the diagram, the pair 47:48 Confining/Oppression and the Well focuses or operates on the Ghost River trigram that represents the dark stream of our painful memories.

*Kan/Pit:* **Rushing Water/ Ghost River**





Kan is the sacrificial pit at the Earth Altar and the Underworld Waters that flow beneath it, the Ghost River that connects the Sun Tree and the Moon Tree and opens the Gate of Destinies. Its symbols are Dark Water rushing between steep banks, holes, pits and snares, tombs and graves, prisons and the Yellow Springs, the deep center where the Dead live. It evokes the north, midnight, winter and lonely striving. The Ghost River is the beginning of the Inner Fire-Water or *Kan/Li* Axis, the Burning Water or prima material of Change. It represents a critical moment that requires courage and determination in face of the great fear engendered by the presence of the Death, confronting and dissolving obstacles, venturing, falling and moving on through the fearless elegance of the Ghost Dancer.

**Kan, Water** is the **Ghost River**, the unconscious stream of the past. It is the grave and the fear of what is in the grave and the courage and labor necessary at a critical time. As the inner trigram it brings containment of fear and impulse when facing dissolution, danger and toil. As the outer trigram it gives the ability to manage the flow and flux of events.

The upper trigram that is left dry, without feeling flow or inner inspiration is the **Lake** or **Mists** that symbolizes our ability to take the spirit into our lives and give it a voice in the human community. This is what we lack in the times of spin and the thought prisons of oppression.

*Dui/Open:* **Lake/Mists/Joyous Dancer**



The Joyous Dancer gives the spirits a Voice. She dances with them, feels the Bright Omen in her body and offers it to the human community through her inspiring words that bring joy, delight and freedom from the fear of death. We see her in the luminous Mists rising from open waters, fertile marshes and sunlit Lakes and in her words that connect and inspire us. She is the moment when the harvest is home and the winter secure. She gladdens all things that welcome her, regulating the rhythm of life and rousing the power of inner images and the Great Person within each of us.

The dynamic of this pair, its rotation, shifts the **Ghost River** and the dark stream of our painful experiences – the real source of our inner oppression – from the inner/unconscious position to the outer/conscious position. It does this by turning our drive to express ideas that have become stereotypes that imprison us into an inner penetration that can find the hidden sickness and release our soul from its clutches, coupling us with a new fate.

**Outer to Inner:** the rotational process of the pair transforms the **Joyous Dancer**, the outer world trigram of **47 Confining** into the **Lady of Fates** in the inner world of **48 Well**, making the soul connections that turn social engagement into inner self cultivation.

Jung called this process introverting libido, when the stream of our lives is blocked, turns inward and activates the depths of the psyche where the great symbols dwell in order to create a frame of mind that can deal with the outer block in a new way. The process of the pair describes this as the transformation the Joyous Dancer trigram in the outer or upper position of 47 Oppression into the Lady of Fates trigram in the inner world of 48 Well. It is this transformation that can turn the Ghost River, the dark stream of painful and unconscious memories into the water of life that wells up from the deep.

*Sun/Penetrating:* **Wind/Wood/Lady of Fates**





Subtle Penetration, the Lady of Fates, lays out the offerings on the low altar and binds the Myriad Beings to their fates, crossing the thresholds and transmitting orders from Heaven. She finds the hidden sickness and works through hidden influences, the silent power of Wood and Wind. Her wrapped food offerings are an image of the Myriad Creatures toiling and laboring on the field of Earth. She is connected to the Central Palace where fates are consigned and represents a profound penetration of the above into the below which can lead to the awakening of wisdom. She prepares the food and drink for the great meal shared by humans and spirits and nourishes the people on ancient virtue. A spirit-worker and healer, she offers the virtue or *de* that actualizes an individual being. She controls desire and anger, giving vision, motivation and the capacity to act decisively at the key moment.

### **In Dreams Begin Responsibilities: the Space Between**

The key to the transformative process that turns the prisons of outmoded thought into a source of life-water for all lies in what the Lady of Fates does in the in the strange liminal space *between* things, the space between night and day, sleep and waking, life and death where insight is born and individual change occurs. In the matrix of Change this threshold or space between can be seen as the space between the two trigrams that make up a hexagram (the passage between lines 3 and 4) or in the space between the two hexagrams that make up a pair. This is where our experience of life becomes “a great egg that turns itself inside out without breaking its shell”.

Technically, what happens at this threshold tells us about the change of awareness necessary to power the overall process of the pair. In 47:48 Oppression and the Well this inner drive, the place where inner work can manifest in the outer world is a Great Transition when we must confront Ghost River and the shades of the past in order to become a true individual. Here the Anima Intermediaries who create soul connections, the Lady of Fates and the Joyous Dancer work on the Ghost River to clear the stream of our painful memories, freeing us from collective fears and compulsions.

So what is the Lady of Fates up to? What happens in this liminal space when the Ghost River flows out of everything we believe in and our ideas and concerns, our engagement with the world becomes an empty shell?

What happens during this Great Transition when we are challenged to emerge as a true individual?

### **Wandering with the Way**

To follow this mysterious process we have to shift over from a concern with the meaning of words and images to the magical sounds or seed-syllables, the phonetics or phonemes that call them into being. This is the way the Lady of Fates operates. It is the beginning of the old diviner's trance when he read out the changes from his inner thesaurus, a place where the fixed meanings of things dissolve and new connections reveal themselves through spontaneous sound connections. This is a linguistic death and re-birth experience that is characteristic of what linguists call primitive languages and a part of many modern therapies that use sound associations to locate complexes and re-program the way we use language to construct ourselves and the way we see the world.

For example, the phonetic or seed-syllable for 47 Oppression is *kun*. If we follow the sound associations, the first thing we see rise in our imagination is *Kun*/Earth and the Mothers, the primal power of realization.



### ***Field/Yielding/Earth KUN***

**The old character shows the Tree at the Earth Altar and two hands offering sacrifice to the deep river of symbols that flows beneath it. It is a symbol of the primordial waters and rhythm of birth and death.**

Here we learn that our prisons are not really made of metal/ideas, but of the hard-packed rammed earth used to make palaces and walls. They are ideas turned into prisons of the body, deeply embedded thought-demons or introjects that block the flow of the deep river of symbols and the power of the mothers to protect and secure our being. They imprison our ability to give birth to succeeding generations and cut us off from what has come before us.

## The Language of Change

To follow this further we need to know a bit more about how the old Chinese written language, the language of the oldest layers of I Ching, created “words.” At its base, the Chinese written language works very differently from ours. Its “words” - characters or ideograms - are not empty signs that point to meanings like signs on a highway. They are image-concepts that open a gate to the experience of what they mean by bringing the two parts of our mind – the part that deals in logic and meanings and the part that seizes the whole through images – together in an intuitive way. This language builds complex characters out of simple characters to create new image-concepts.

One of the basic ways of making these new compound images is to unite a simple character that often indicates a basic category of thinking or being with what is called a phonetic. The phonetic creates a field of operation for the root character and links the new character to other characters through sound association, creating mysterious interconnections. This is a paradigm of the way the old diviner’s trance worked. It indicates how the overall character is voiced.

### Imagining *Jing*

Let’s follow the flow of the *jing* phonetic, the seed syllable that is the name of the Well and where we are going to see just how we can get there. As the water drains out of the Lake (outer self-expression), introverts and drops into the underworld Ghost River, the Lady of Fates uses the sound-stream of this *jing*-phonetic sound to call up an image of our *jing*/essence or dark fate, the mystery hidden in the experience of oppression and the key to becoming a true individual freed from collective fears and drives in potential.



This *jing* character portrays our subtle essence. It is the unique quality of each being's physical, mental and psychological life, the model of our unique human existence given by Heaven and the base of the dialogue between Heaven and each being. It is what we are meant to manifest in life, a clear and penetrating intelligence hidden in the depths of each of us, at once universal and completely individual.

The character is made up of two graphs. The first is *mi*/grains of rice or millet, seen as the first and perfect seeds. They are the basis of all nourishment and, through an alchemical fermenting and distilling process, can create a spirit that frees us from the past like alcohol is created from grain. This is the source of the transforming Fire, the potential Bright Omen.



Alongside the *mi* graph for seeds is the phonetic *jing*. This *jing* is a color that indicates a particular field of operation, a green/blue or greenish black that is sign of spring, the east and the element or process of wood, particularly the bamboo used for writing and divining. This is the color of all new life, the place where wood engenders fire to sprout new growth. It is the magical power of writing that arises from the Ghost River; the sages say our words should be like this. This is our potential voice, our capacity to express the spirit not through fear or outmoded compulsions but through hope and promise. It turns our outer experience into the seeds of the new.

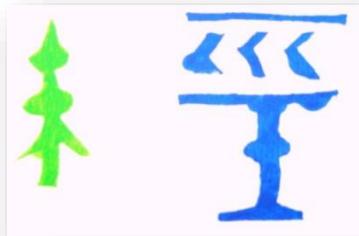


This *jing* phonetic is in turn made up of two graphs. On top is the graph *sheng*/to engender or give birth to. It is the sign for all living beings, the great process of life and regeneration. The bottom part of the *jing* phonetic is

the graph *dan*. It is the name of the metal cinnabar that is the alchemical elixir and sign of the interior alchemical process that reveals inner truth and straightens the course of life. It is literally the image of a well or pit where cinnabar is mined, brought up from the depths of earth and water. This is deep mine that is a well is the base, both the hidden sickness and the hidden cure. It is the place and process whereby all movement reverses itself, where night turns to day, inner turns to outer and our problem turns into an answer. It is the point where that introverting libido finds the inner or essential meaning trapped in the outer prisons of thought.

### **Making the Connections**

As we move up from this hidden center that changes the flow of time and energy the Lady of Fates calls up another *jing* character that is the source of the abundant life-water in the *jing*/Well. This is the way the Ghost River is turned to living water.



This *jing* character has a great range of meanings, the oldest of which is probably to imitate the ancestors. It represents the fundamental principles of life, the energy meridians that run through the body and the landscape, connecting and circulating the energies of Heaven and the Dragon. It is the weaving of the threads of life, interconnecting the generations, the experience of inter-being and the community of life. This *jing* is the name for the great canonical books (including *Yijing* or I Ching) that are the warp threads of life, the scriptures and sutras and the recited and repeated prayers that come from them, words that joyously rise from our mouths opened to Heaven. This is the soul-connection, the place where the spark of insight and essence energy realised by our descent into the depths is connected with a new empowering image.

## Hidden Triggers

The first part of the character (left) is the radical *mi* (old form) that portrays interconnected silk bundles or cocoons held on a vertical spindle or the warp thread of a loom. It invokes the “littlest possible things”, the *ji* or hidden triggers that are the “sprouts of virtue (*de*) that actualize individual beings by connecting them with ancestral potential.



This is the place where the Rousing Thunder emerges and enters our lives.

### Zhen/Shake: **The Rouser**

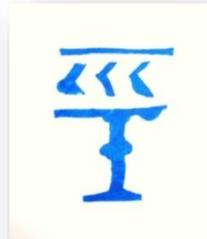


Shake is the Arouser and Exorcist, driving out the old, rousing and opening the field of the new, the spark of yang born in the breast of yin. He is the Thunder rituals and incantations that inspire both terror and joy, the moment when the fetus begins to stir, associated with dawn, the east, the rising sun, green, Wood and the announcement of spring's beginning. He is flamboyant and sexual, luxuriating, frightening and inspiring, green and full of juice. He is motion and moves all things, an emerging Dragon that stimulates everything that moves or

moves in the body, purifies the blood, links eyes and sexual organs, desire and anger, vision and motivation, giving the capacity to act decisively.

### **The Eternal Flow of the Symbols**

Alongside this graph for hidden triggers is the *jing* phonetic that means “the subterranean course of a river, invisible water hidden in the deeps, ripples formed by the wind on the water”.



This *jing* character is also made up of two graphs or parts. The upper part of the character represents the hidden water (the three arrow-shaped lines) that flows beneath the surface (the upper line). It is also seen as ripples that appear on the surface of a river flowing between two banks. The lower part of the character is classically thought to be the radical *gong*, an image of the ancient square through which measurements are made and skilful work done, work on the square field of Earth. An older form of this graph shows a person standing on the Earth, seeing through it to the underground river of symbols beneath and connecting them to the events of our lives. It evokes the still point at the center where old life is brought to an end and we are re-connected to the deep images. This is the place where the spirit-helper or trigram Mountain emerges and enters our lives.

Gen/Stilling: **Mountain/Bound**





Bound fixes the omens and binds the fates, the guard and protector, the spirit of the Inner Work, the Mountain temple filled with images of the spirits and diviners who soar like birds beyond the ordinary limits of life. Bound stands at the limits, the limit of Heaven and Earth, the limit of old and new. The power of Earth works through Bound. The old time is bound and opened, offered to the spirits as a source of holy omens, footprints of the spirits. In the still center of Mountain we open the subtle body.

### **The Tiger's Mouth: Gateway to Returning**

These two trigrams, Thunder and Mountain are the Animus Operators, masculine individuating powers that embody directed thinking and feeling. Together they are the turning point, the Gate between all cycles, that establishes, purifies and focuses the mind. They arise in the depths of the soul, the space created by the Anima Intermediaries as the “spark of yang born in the depths of the yin”.

The process represented by the *jing*/character that means classic or loom rouses these Spirit Helpers and brings them together to create a hidden gateway called 27 Jaws/The Tiger's Mouth.

		<b>Gen: Mountain, Bound and Sacrificer (Earth)</b>
		<b>Zhen: Thunder, Rouser and Exorcist (Wood)</b>

Tiger's Mouth is an initiation ordeal that renews the sources of literal and spiritual nourishment, our daily bread and our connection with the spirit world. It purifies what goes in and out of the mouth, eating, speaking, and spreading the word and lets us take in the lessons of the past. It is the home of the Tiger spirit who devours the corruption of the past and secures ritual space. The old character shows the tiger's mouth and a person whose head is filled with spirit.

Tiger's Mouth, a ritual process that transforms the mind and clears the energy channels in the body through which spiritual nourishment can flow is the gateway to the Well and the return journey. It is the place where the

Ghost River emerges from the depths and becomes the water of life within each of us through our own inner work, eliminating our heritage of pain and rage, the corruption of the past within us. In the tradition of Change this inner corruption is called *Gu*.

### **18 Corruption and Pestilence/Renovating GU**



**The old character shows insects or worms in rotting meat or grain, a sacrificial vessel and the Sacred Meal within it spoiled.**

#### **Circle of Meanings**

**Perversion, decay, plague, pestilence; rotten, poisonous, defiled; corruption in inner parental and ancestral images, negative effects of parents on children; sexual infatuation, rage, pain, hallucination, mania; renew, renovate; name of the first day of a ritual period when decay is removed to support new growth.**

*Gu* suggests hallucination, loss of reality, sexual debauch, the insects that appear in rotting or fermenting grain, miasma, sorcery and, most of all, the curse of the Ancestors, the false dreams and delusions they send when they are neglected or offended. It is the poisonous acts done by fathers and mothers that become manifest in the children. It extends to straightening, handling or managing these affairs, working with the inner family or parental images we all carry within us. It represents a crucial time, a stem-day when a new seed can sprout.

This is the narrow gateway where the Ghost River can flow through each of us to become the life-water of the Well. It is the time when we gather in all the projected parts of our soul and prepare for a spontaneous and joyous response to life. The purification, re-connection and illumination represented by the Tiger's Mouth turns the underground Ghost River into words and symbols and offers them to the generations of humans – all of us that “come and go in our order.” It is where our mind is embodied and our soul is made.

#### **Like it or not, the Gods will be Here**

There is a motto carved in stone over the door to C.G. Jung's city house in Kusnacht: *Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit*. Called or not called the God will be there. The Latin phrase, adopted by Jung as a psychological maxim, translates the answer to a question put to Apollo's Pythia at Delphi:

the Spartans asked the Oracle if its God, Apollo, would help them in their war against Athens. "Called or not called, the God will be there" expresses more than a prediction of the defeat of the Athenians. It insists on the belief that the Gods intervene in human life to shape events and redress *hubris*, overweening pride by breaking through the thought prisons of Oppression.

Jung's use of this oracular response offers a cluster of interwoven meanings, a context for the act of divination we engage in here that includes depth psychology; a critical moment or *kairos* that gives rise to a question; an irrational or random method of producing an answer to that question; the gods or spirits and the world of the unseen; and words, speech, language. Recognition of this unseen world and the speech of the soul it represents is the therapeutic act *par excellence*. For, as Jung remarked, far from having left these gods and their sacred worlds behind:

...modern man has rejected only their verbal specters, not the psychic facts ... The Gods have become diseases, producing curious specimens for the doctor's consulting room or disordering the brains of politicians and journalists who unwittingly let loose psychic epidemics on the world. (CW 13, 54)

*Vocatus atque non vocatus Deus aderit*: Called or not called the Gods will be here. But in this time of Oppression a dialogue with the unseen world can make the difference between serving a God and becoming the victim of a mania. This is the central mystery of the ancient art and practice of divination.

We experience this old mystery as we pose our problem as a question to Change, open ourselves to the symbols it offers and follow the flow of introverting libido into the depths of the soul where our essence energy is re-connected to the great stream of symbols and the generations of being. We let the re-born powers of mind we encounter here clear the channels through which spirit nourishes us, free us from the pain of our past and give us a voice and presence in the world of The Well. We do all this not to learn something but to experience something and be set right. The experience is capable, in Jung's words, of working a profound transformation of our thought.