

The Divine Between

The Divinatory Circle as Alchemical and Ritual Space

Stephen Karcher, PhD.

According to the tradition of the Alchemists, the divine can be encountered and redeemed from the prisons of matter and literalization in the transformational field between two people. When that field is empowered as ritual space and the people involved step into the ritual roles of Alchemist and Mystic *Soror* or Sister it constellates Eros and Agape, a kind of love and compassion that creates the world and the community of all things.

This model of the space and process between, inspired by Jung's reclamation of alchemical imagery and developed by the study of the relation between analyst and analysand called transference represents a cutting edge of our current spiritual situation: the mutual pursuit of a spiritual path to the divine, in contrast to working with the spirit within oneself or among a group. It offers a description of the Ritual inter-space between diviner, inquirer and the Change in the practice of deep divination, the processes it constellates and the goals to which it aspires - a model of using the Change as a Dao or Way, a long-term spiritual process.

The Great Enterprise

The Great Work or Great Enterprise (*Dayeh*) in alchemy was to redeem and transform the divine that had fallen into matter. It was a joint effort, a mutual process out of which a transformative Third arises – the divine darkness of Mercurius, the alchemical Trickster. Over time, this Mercurial Third comes to be experienced as the Fourth – the Divine Pair, The Protectors, the “beloved parents who draw near”. This Divine Pair results from the cleansing and clearing of the

Inner Father and Mother which opens us to the Ancestors as both Source and Goal/Fulfillment.

The intersubjectivity of the Transference creates a divine field or *temenos* in which processes from the unconscious are manifested both between and around the participants. The ritual attention of the participants within this field awakens the deeper or archetypal level, raising the participants' awareness of their own unconscious, that of the partner and what arises between and around them. Through constellated the Tiger energy, the process purifies and transforms the Parent-child relation. The great archetypes that underlie our myths, religions and our very nature arise from this Fertile Darkness and are activated as a special language or way of perceiving that redeems the divine by reconnecting us to the world in a transformed way.

Though first experienced through our parents, these “alchemical” myths and stories are actually the *prima materia* of our path of transformation, its beginning and end – imaged in the Pair 63:64 The Burning Water and the Small Fox as Dream Animal). Found in the rejecta of life, they are where the *ji*, the hidden triggers of Change are hidden. They are imagination itself, exiled to “mere fantasy” in the literal world. How we deal with this “fantasy” is crucial; it opens the Imaginal World.

This is where we start:

The Dao gives birth to the One; the One gives birth to the Two

Here we go Into the Mountain. The Square, the Square Field of Earth with its Four Directions or Functions of consciousness arises as a Double Snake's Head - Binarius or the Two Below as the Devil of all dichotomies – spitting a cloud of toxic fumes. This is the unconscious Wholeness in matter, Mercurius the Hidden God (Deus Absconditus) hidden in the matter of our initial condition, our literal problems. Scattered throughout the field are the *Scintillae* or divine sparks in the dark field. In the center of the field is a kind of Fountain, a metal column with Three Spigots (seen as the animal, vegetable and mineral aspects of soul) that begin an endless flow or circulation that is witnessed by the Two Above (the Male-Female Protectors) and the One which is also the Five (the Quintessence).

Contained in the Vessel of the Field Between, the undifferentiated One is first polarized and set in conflict as the Two (see 38 Diverging and the Shaman of the Shadows); the reconciling Three, or what Jung called the Transcendent Function arise and begins a long, slow circulation. This is how we develop imaginally and psychologically, held within the Field or Vessel, forbidden to “act-out.” Our general conception of ourselves, who and what we are, gets rudely awakened when we examine our unconscious selves. This warring of internal opposites (male-female, anima-animus, light-dark, death-life, yin-yang) is contained, polarized and slowly developed and a Third is dimly sensed – the transcendent or imaginal function.

The Two gives birth to the Three

This is the Tiger Work, eliminating the *Gu* or hidden corruption. The Hidden Mercurius divides into Male and Female opposites. They meet ritually in the center, still connected by a “sinister” left-hand bond – the *Gu* - balanced and inspired by surrounding symbols of Flowers (the blossoming) and Bird (the spiritual connection). Here we address all that is painful, rejected, difficult yet potentially full of wonders – the *ji* or triggers of Change hidden in the *Gu*. It is Mercurius as Tiger who is actually being addressed here, and he separates our *persona*, our personal experiences and our social or conventional “face” from the archetypal contents hidden within it. The Oppressor (Bluebeard) and the Victim (Puella) are slowly mediated and joined and the King and Queen appear. The Transference/Counter-transference field on the individuals becomes the Divine Within/Between. This shared awareness becomes a Bath that contains and unites the Opposites and works on releasing the Hidden Divine. The participants work on it and it works on them.

This is the Union of King and Queen in the Water, symbolized as the Fishes. The two images are sexually conjoined both as Humans and as Winged Creatures or Birds, concretized, sublimated and linked in the seasonal cycle of Birds and Fishes, representing the deep inner sense of the need for the Union of Opposites in the Soul, the need for both awareness and union. We are moved from the Parent-Child relation to the Brother-Sister relation.

The Three gives birth to the Ten Thousand Things

This is the *Conjunctio* and Death in the Soul. The Crowned Male-Female Figures unite to become a bisexual individual. This is the *conjunctio* – the joy of inner

union and the emergence of the sense of meaning Jung called synchronicity. It is immediately followed by the nigredo, or (potentially fertile) Darkness. Achievement and peace is followed by depression, the darkness of no action. This is the incubation or imaginal fertility, the death of the power of the Opposites and the birth of the enduring uncertainty of chaos. It is the true birth of what Jung called the Self or the Four, a transcendent experience of the Field Between all things, a relation with the Divine within linked with the ten Thousand Things.

This produces Circles of Blessing, Imaginal Fertility and the Divine Child of the Soul. The *filius philosophorum*, the *Junzi* or Realizing Person as our new “persona” or identity - ascends to Heaven or One Above from the death of the *nigredo*. The depression and chaos of our struggle to unite the human and divine nature produces a “whitening” (*albedo*). This is a purification of the darkness and a new spiritualization arising from the suffering of the divine in matter/literalization. The moisture of love and forgiveness, the Dew, descends. Angels appear in the fertile darkness, the Dakinis singing praises of gratitude for the redemption and a powerful image arises amongst them – the Calling Crane pouring out her wine-cup of blessing, calling her scattered children. We become that honored Vessel of divine transformation carrying the symbol (*xiang*) of the *Ding*, the union of the most extreme opposites. The Reconciler, the Soul, dives down from Heaven to bring life back to the dead body, the fruit of renewal, revivification, a new life in a new personality.

Within the Vessel the Ten emerges, the perfect number, the One and the Ten Thousand Things united and containing the Two, the Three and the Four. This is the Self, a vision of wholeness that is the Field Between, imaged as the united Male and Female, the Snake become the Tree of Life.

This figure or Symbol rests on the Moon. This birth of the Self from below, from matter and the Earth has a deeply feminine and reflective character, the addition of the feminine body in a renewed *Imago Dei* or Image of God. The Soul is represented as a human, feminine being crowned by two holy male representatives of the spirit. This is the deification of the Soul in its most human form, symbolizing a treasuring of nature, relationship and mutuality rather than competition and hierarchy as a focus of meaning. It is a *unio mentalis*, the mind

healed and made partner in the work, product of the long retreats of Friendship, the mystical College of Diviners in which we experience the deep communion of words and silence that embody friendship as the Divine Between.

The Way of Change

In this final image, one Bird remains on Earth, partially buried. This is the further work, the redemption of the Earth Spirit. All our efforts are the “last but one.” This image reunites us with the body to carry out the work of the Self – embodying and living the Wholeness in the world of the 10, 000 Things, spreading the Circles of Blessing. Only in this field does our true individuation take place. This is the Dao or Way of the Change.