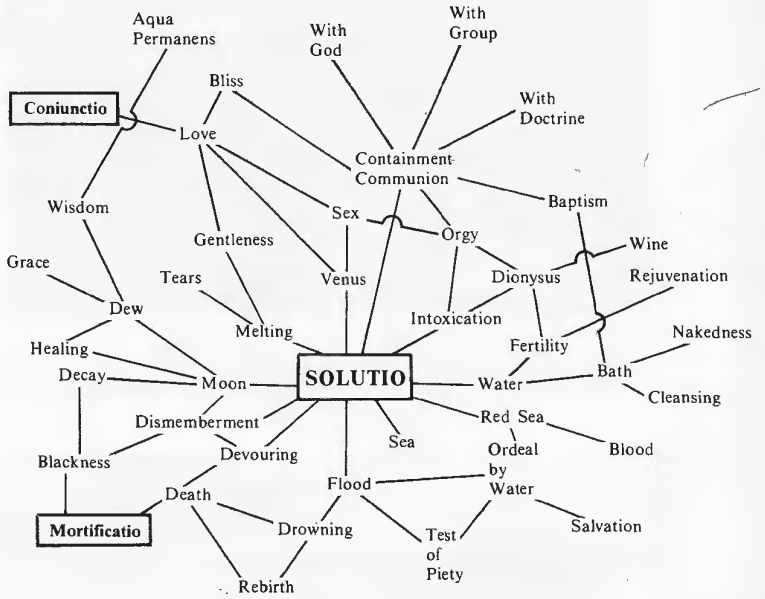

3 *Solutio*

THE OPERATION OF *SOLUTIO* is one of the major procedures in alchemy. One text says, *"Solutio* is the root of alchemy."[1] Another says, "Until all be made water, perform no operation."[2] In many places the whole *opus* is summarized by the phrase "Dissolve and coagulate." Just as *calcinatio* pertains to the element fire, *coagulatio* to the element earth, and *sublimatio* to the element air, so *solutio* pertains to water. Basically, *solutio* turns a solid into a liquid. The solid seems to disappear into the solvent as if it had been swallowed up. For the alchemist, *solutio* often meant the return of differentiated matter to its original undifferentiated state—that is, to *prima materia.* Water was thought of as the womb and *solutio* as a return to the womb for rebirth. In one text the old king submits to the *solutio* of drowning, saying,

> Else I God's Kingdom cannot enter in:
> And therefore, that I may be Borne agen,
> I'll Humbled be into my Mother's Breast,
> Dissolve to my First Matter, and there rest.[3]

First matter, or *prima materia,* is an idea that the alchemists inherited from the pre-Socratic philosophers. In Thales, and also in many creation myths, water is the original material out of which the world is created. The alchemists thought that a substance could not be transformed unless it were first reduced to *prima materia.* One text says, "Bodies cannot be changed except by reduction into their first matter."[4] This procedure corresponds to what takes place in psychotherapy. The fixed, static aspects of the personality allow for no change. They are established and sure of their rightness. For transformation to proceed, these fixed

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[1]Bonus of Ferrara, *The New Pearl of Great Price,* p. 365.

[2]Read, *Prelude to Chemistry,* p. 262.

[3]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis, CW* 14, par. 380.

[4]Kelly, *The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly,* p. 34.

aspects must first be dissolved or reduced to *prima materia*. This is done by the analytic process, which examines the products of the unconscious and puts the established ego attitudes into question.

One alchemical recipe for *solutio* is the following:

> Dissolve then sol and luna in our dissolving water, which is familiar and friendly, and the next in nature unto them, and as it were a womb, a mother, an original, the beginning and the end of their life. And that is the very reason why they are meliorated or amended in this water, because like nature rejoiceth in like nature....Thus it behooves you to join consanguinity, or sameness of kind....And because sol and luna have their origin from this water their mother; it is necessary therefore that they enter into it again, to wit, into their mother's womb, that they may be regenerate or born again, and made more healthy, more noble, and more strong.[5]

The chemical fact that lies behind this text is the capacity of mercury to dissolve or amalgamate with gold and silver, here referred to as Sol and Luna. In fact, this process is the basis of a very old method for extracting gold from crude ore. The ore is pulverized and treated with mercury, which dissolves the gold. The mercury is then separated from the gold by distilling with heat. However, our text has turned this chemical process into a symbolic image by superimposing a projected psychological process onto the chemical one. Sol and Luna will stand for the masculine and the feminine principles as they concretely manifest themselves in the personality at the beginning of the process. In other words the dominant conscious attitude of the ego is represented by Sol and the anima at its current state of development by Luna.[6] These two are dissolved in "friendly water"—that is, mercury—which is equated with the maternal womb and corresponds to the *prima materia*. Incest symbolism is emphasized in the phrase, "it behooves you to join consanguinity, or sameness of kind."

We have here a picture of a descent into the unconscious, which is the maternal womb from which the ego is born. It is the *prima materia* prior to the differentiation of the elements by consciousness. This text describes the procedure as a very pleasant process. There are others which express it much more negatively. For instance, consider this *solutio*-dismemberment recipe: "The body of that woman [who slays her husbands] is full of weapons and poison. Let a grave be dug for that dragon, and let that woman be buried with him, he being chained fast to that woman; and the more he winds and coils himself around her, the more will he be cut to pieces by the female weapons which are fashioned

[5]"Secret Book of Artephius," in *The Lives of the Alchemystical Philosophers*, pp. 145-46.

[6]This applies to a man's psychology. For a woman, Luna would represent the ego attitude and Sol the animus.

in the body of the woman. And when he sees that he is mingled with the limbs of the woman, he will be certain of death, and will be changed wholly into blood."[7]

This grisly image expresses how a fairly well-developed ego might experience *solutio*. An immature ego may find it pleasant to surrender to containment in a blissful regression; however, at a later stage of development the prospect of *solutio* will generate great anxiety because the hard-won state of ego autonomy is being threatened with dissolution. A blissful *solutio* is the most dangerous one. It corresponds to Neumann's concept of uroboric incest:

> Uroboric incest is a form of entry into the mother, of union with her, and it stands in sharp contrast to other and later forms of incest. In uroboric incest, the emphasis upon pleasure and love is in no sense active, it is more a desire to be dissolved and absorbed; passively one lets oneself be taken, sinks into the pleroma, melts away in the ocean of pleasure—a *Liebestod*. The Great Mother takes the little child back into herself, and always over uroboric incest there stand the insignia of death, signifying final dissolution in union with the Mother....
>
> Many forms of nostaglia and longing signify no more than a return to uroboric incest and self-dissolution, from the *unio mystica* of the saint to the drunkard's craving for unconsciousness, and the death-romanticism of the Germanic races. The incest we term "uroboric" is self-surrender and regression. It is the form of incest taken by the infantile ego, which is still close to the mother and has not yet come to itself; but the sick ego of the neurotic can also take this form and so can a later, exhausted ego that creeps back to the mother after having found fulfillment.[8]

An example of the longing for blissful *solutio* is Siegfried's yearning for union with Brunnhilde in Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* (cf. figure 3-1):

> Before me
> a wondrous river flows
> with all my senses
> I only see
> its joyous, billowing waters...
> still would I plunge
> in the cooling water,
> myself, as I am,
> ending my pains:
> O that its billows
> Might drown me in bliss
> and quench my fire with its waves![9]

[7]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *CW* 14, par. 15.

[8]Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, p. 17.

[9]Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, p. 254.

FIGURE 3 - 1
Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens (Rackham, *Color Illustrations for Wagner's "Ring."*)

Another example is the final death-song of Isolde in act 3, scene 4 of Wagner's great *solutio* drama, *Tristan and Isolde*:

> Resounding yet more clearly, wafting about me,
> are they waves of refreshing breezes?
> Are they clouds of heavenly fragrance?
> As they swell and roar around me,
> shall I breathe them, shall I listen to them?
> Shall I sip them, plunge beneath them,
> to expire in sweet perfume?
> In the surging swell, in the ringing sound,

> in the vast wave of the world's breath—
> to drown, to sink
> unconscious—supreme bliss!

Our alchemical text is a mixture of images, as often happens in alchemy. It is a combination of *solutio* and *coniunctio*. Sol and Luna are being dissolved and united at the same time. This corresponds to a common type of alchemical picture in which the king and queen are bathing together in the mercurial fountain. An outstanding sequence of pictures of this type is found in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*[10] (cf. figure 3-2).

As our text indicates, the *solutio* has a twofold effect: it causes one form to disappear and a new regenerated form to emerge. The dissolution of the old one is often described in negative imagery and is associated with the *nigredo*. For instance, Philalethes says: "The blackness becomes more pronounced day by day until the substance assumes

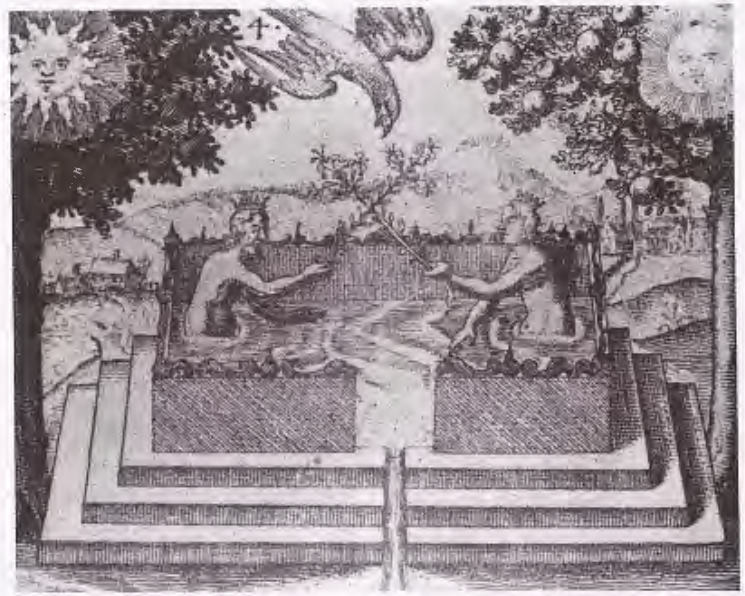

FIGURE 3 - 2
The King and Queen in the Bath (Mylius, *Philosophia reformata,* 1622. Reprinted in Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy.*)

[10]Reproduced in Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," in *The Practice of Psychotherapy CW* 16.

a brilliant black color. This black is a sign that the dissolution is accomplished."[11]

Solutio thus may become a *mortificatio*. This is understandable because that which is being dissolved will experience the *solutio* as an annihilation of itself. It is here that the saying of Heraclitus applies: "To souls it is death to become water."[12] However, *solutio* leads on to the emergence of a rejuvenated new form, and when this aspect is emphasized the tone is positive. For instance, *The Golden Treatise of Hermes* says: "O, blessed watery pontic form, that dissolvest the elements!... For when, by the power of the water, the composition is dissolved, it is the day of the restoration; then darkness and Death fly away from them, and Wisdom proceeds."[13]

Often *solutio* is performed on the king. There is, for instance, the image of the drowning king, since "drowning" is a synonym for *solutio* (see figure 3-3). One text has the drowning king (or king's son) say, "Whosoever will free me from the waters and lead me to dry land, him will I prosper with everlasting riches."[14] Psychologically, the meaning is that the old ruling principle, which has undergone *solutio*, is calling out to be coagulated again in a new, regenerated form, saying that it has quantities of libido (riches) at its disposal.

Another text speaks of a dropsy, an inner drowning. The king asked for a drink of water saying: "'I demand the water which is closest to my heart, and which likes me above all things.' When the servant brought it, the king drank so much that 'all his limbs were filled and all his veins inflated, and he himself became discoloured'...'I am heavy and my head hurts me, and it seems to me as though all my limbs were falling apart.' He demanded to be placed in a heated chamber where he could sweat the water out. But when, after a while, they opened the chamber he lay there as if dead."[15]

Jung comments on this text: "The king personifies a hypertrophy of the ego which calls for compensation.... His thirst is due to his boundless concupiscence and egotism. But when he drinks he is overwhelmed by the water—that is, by the unconscious."[16]

[11]Waite, trans., *The Hermetic Museum*, 2:258.

[12]Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 27.

[13]Atwood, *Hermetic Philosophy and Alchemy*, p. 122.

[14]Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, *CW* 12, par. 434.

[15]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *CW* 14, par. 357.

[16]Ibid., par. 365.

FIGURE 3 - 3
Solutio of the King. Background: Drowning King Calling for Help. Foreground: The King Reborn. (Trismosin, *Splendor Solis*, 1582.)

As Jung suggests, the king refers to the ego—at least the dominant or ruling principle according to which the ego is structured. The king is dissolving in his own surfeit; that is, inflation is the cause and agent of *solutio*. A swollen ego is dissolved by its own excess. Its dissolution leads the way to a possible rejuvenation on a sounder basis.

In another text the king is described as drowning in the fountains of Venus. In this poem Venus is identified with the fountain, the mother and bride of the king, in which her "fixed" father is drowned:

A stone there is, and yet no stone,
In it doth nature work alone.

From it there welleth forth a fount [Venus]
In which her Sire, the Fixed, is drown'd:
His body and life absorbed therein
Until the soul's restored agen.[17]

In this case the agent of dissolution is the Eros principle, Venus or Aphrodite. Her mythology has important relations to water by virtue of the fact that she was born out of the sea (see figure 3-4). Her dangerous powers of *solutio* are represented by seductive mermaids or water nymphs who lure men to death by drowning. An impressive example of this theme occurred in the dream of a young man who was thinking of leaving his wife and young children to marry a seductive woman. He dreamed:

I am in an underpass where people pass to and fro from the beach. Here are sold the usual recreation goodies: enormous lollypops, popcorn, pretzels a foot or more in length, and crackerjacks. Two of my children are with me (the two youngest). A beautiful woman beckons me to the sea and I leave the children in

FIGURE 3 - 4
The Birth of Aphrodite (c. 460 B.C. Rome, Terme Museum. Reprinted in Richter, *A Handbook of Greek Art.*)

[17]Ibid., par. 415.

a hawker's stand munching pretzels. The dream ends as I stand midway between the sea and the stand.

A classical example of a fatal *solutio* occurs in the story of Hylas. During the expedition of the Argonauts, Hylas, the beautiful favorite of Heracles, was sent to fetch water. He was pulled into a pool by water nymphs and was never seen again. Here the *solutio* image accompanies a homoerotic entanglement, the attachment between Heracles and Hylas (see figure 3-5).

The Old Testament provides examples of the erotic *solutio* that combine the themes of woman, bath, and the dissolution of the masculine. David spied Bathsheba bathing (2 Sam. 11:2), and thus began the dissolution of that man of integrity (see figure 3-6). In the apocryphal text of Daniel and Susanna, the two elders lustfully approach Susanna in her bath and meet their downfall after giving perjured testimony (see figure 3-7).

These images tell us that love and/or lust are agents of *solutio*. This corresponds to the fact that a particular psychic problem or stage of development often remains arrested or stuck until the patient falls in love. Then abruptly the problem is dissolved. Although new complications appear, life has begun to flow again. It has been liquified.

One alchemist defined *solutio* this way: "Solution is the action of any

FIGURE 3 - 5
Hylas and the Nymphs (John William Waterhouse. Manchester, England, City Art Gallery. Reprinted in Grant and Hazel, *Gods and Mortals in Classical Mythology.*)

FIGURE 3 - 6
Bathsheba (Rembrandt. Paris, the Louvre. Reprinted in *Rembrandt,* text by Ludwig Munz.)

body, which, by certain laws of innate sympathy, assimilates anything of a lower class to its own essence."[18] Understood psychologically, this definition states that the dissolving agent will be a superior, more comprehensive viewpoint—one that can act as a containing vessel for the smaller thing. Jung's concept of "the contained and the container" applies here. In relating to a more complex personality, he says: "the simpler personality is surrounded, if not actually swamped, by it; he is swallowed up in his more complex partner and cannot see his way out. It is an almost regular occurrence for a woman to be wholly contained, spiritually, in her husband, and for a husband to be wholly contained, emotionally, in his wife. One could describe this as the problem of the 'contained' and the 'container.' "[19]

Whatever is larger and more comprehensive than the ego threatens to dissolve it. Internally, the unconscious as the latent Self or totality of the psyche can dissolve the ego. Externally, an individual with a larger

[18]Kelly, *The Alchemical Writings,* p. 87.

[19]Jung, *The Development of Personality, CW* 17, par. 331.

FIGURE 3 - 7
Susanna and the Elders (Tintoretto. Vienna, Gemäldegalerie. Reprinted in *Italian Painting: The Renaissance.*)

consciousness than one's own can bring about *solutio.* For instance, a man who had recently come in contact with Jung's ideas and had fallen under their sway had this dream: *He dreamed that he fell into the Lake of Zurich.* A group, a school, or a party may also be the dissolving agent. A group collective can easily attract the projection of the Self and swallow up the individual who succumbs to it. Identification with political parties or religious creeds would be examples of *solutio* within a group.

In the process of psychotherapy it usually happens that the ego of the patient encounters in the therapist a more comprehensive standpoint, which has a dissolving effect. This happening often leads to a partial state of containment of the patient by the therapist and is a common cause of the transference. Whenever a one-sided attitude encounters a larger attitude that includes the opposites, the former, if it is open to influence, is dissolved by the latter and goes into a state of *solutio.* This explains why a more comprehensive standpoint is often experienced as a threat. It feels as though one were drowning, and hence it will be resisted. Such resistance is valid and necessary and should be respected. The psychotherapist must always be aware of the possibility that the

patient may need to be shielded from the former's more comprehensive attitude.[20] Basically it is the Self, either experienced from within or as a projection on an individual or a group from without, that is the agency of *solutio*. As Jung says: "The ego is contained in the self as it is contained in the universe of which we know only the tiniest section. [A person can serve that same containing function because] a man of greater insight and intelligence than mine can know myself, but I could not know him as long as my consciousness is inferior to his."[21]

Bath, shower, sprinkling, swimming, immersion in water, and so forth, are all symbolic equivalents for *solutio* that appear commonly in dreams. All of these images relate to the symbolism of baptism, which signifies a cleansing, rejuvenating immersion in an energy and viewpoint transcending the ego, a veritable death and rebirth. Baptism was once done by total immersion and was meant to signify drowning—an echo of the ancient primitive procedure of ordeal by water. It signified a total conversion, the death of the old life and rebirth of a new person into the community of religious believers. The ritual was considered quite literally to bring about the creation of a new personality. Eliade describes the symbolism of baptism in these words: "Immersion in water symbolizes a return to the preformal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a reintegration into the formlessness of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed."[22]

In Christian baptism the individual is united with Christ; that is, the ego is linked to the Self. The Apostle Paul says: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3–4, RSV).

Another feature of baptism is that it dissolves all separateness and individual distinctions. According to Paul: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27–28, RSV).

From the inner standpoint this amounts to an integration or unification of separated fragments. However, from the external standpoint—as with an outer religious ritual—it represents the collectivization of the

[20]An example of the effects of encountering a larger personality is found in the Moslem legend of Moses and Khidr. See Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, CW* 9i, pars. 244ff.

[21]Jung, *Letters* 2:194.

[22]Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion,* p. 88.

individual who has his unique features dissolved by an identification with the new viewpoint. It is also an example of a lesser standpoint being dissolved by the greater, more comprehensive standpoint—indicated by the phrase "*in* Christ Jesus." To be "in" anything, such as in love, or in pain, means one is surrounded, contained, and dissolved by the containing matrix. Thus the religious faithful were described as fish swimming in the pond containing the water of doctrine.

The ambiguous interplay of the opposites is revealed by the fact that often *solutio* is experienced not as containment, but rather as fragmentation and dismemberment. A classic example is the myth of Actaeon (see figure 3-8). The young hunter Actaeon unexpectedly came upon Artemis naked in her bath. In retaliation, Artemis turned Actaeon into a stag, and he was then dismembered by his own hounds. The dog is a theriomorphic aspect of Artemis, therefore Artemis herself can be considered as the dismembering agency. This myth depicts the dangerous aspect of encounter with the archetypal feminine by an immature ego. It is thrown into a regressive *solutio* by the activation of instinctual factors (the hounds). One way of putting it would be that Actaeon is dissolved

FIGURE 3 - 8
Diana and Actaeon (Titian. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland. Reprinted in *Titian: The Colour Library of Art.*)

by his lust. He is bitten and consumed by his animal nature. A similar idea is expressed in Plutarch's account of Isis and Osiris. According to this story, the child Maneros witnessed Isis' terrible love and grief upon seeing the dead Osiris. This awesome sight was so intolerable to Maneros that he fell out of the boat and drowned.[23] Most men, if they are honest, will acknowledge having had the experience of Maneros when confronted with a woman's intense grief, desire, or anger.

Artemis is the moon. Her dismemberment of Actaeon thus corresponds to the alchemical statement that "the *solutio* takes place in the moon"[24] (see figure 3-9). A young man who had gone as far in analysis as he was ready to once dreamed the simple statement, *Psychoanalysis is of the moon.* He awoke from this dream in panic and discontinued analysis not long thereafter. Analysis can indeed be a dissolving immersion into the dark, irrational lunar side, and the dreamer's anxiety is quite understandable.

The theme of dismemberment leads directly into the myth of Dionysus. As an infant, Dionysus was dismembered by the Titans. Also, the Maenads who worshipped him were dismemberers who tore apart whatever crossed their frenzied path. Such was the fate of Pentheus in *The Bacchae* of Euripides. Many aspects of the Dionysian principle belong to *solutio* symbolism. Walter Otto tells us: "Water is... the element in which Dionysus is at home.... The cults and myths are as explicit as they can be about the fact that Dionysus comes out of the water and returns to it, and that he has his place of refuge and home in the watery depths."[25]

Dionysus is even described as the moisture principle itself and therefore the source of all fertility. Psychologically he is the principle of life, spontaneity, and energy as contrasted with form, measure, and restraint.

One aspect of the Dionysian *solutio* is the orgiastic instinct bath. Sometimes the yearning of the lonely, alienated ego for containment in a larger whole expresses itself as lust for orgiastic, collective sexuality (see figure 3-10). If acted out concretely, such experiences aggravate the state of psychic fragmentation. Symbolically, however, the image of a collective orgy suggests the possibility of reestablishing one's lost connection with common humanity. Group experiences of collective identification may activate this image of an orgy. For instance, a group process that I had an opportunity to observe generated in some participants definite *solutio* dreams. A beginner in the group had this dream

[23]Plutarch, *Moralia,* vol. 5.

[24]Bonus of Ferrara, *The New Pearl of Great Price,* p. 426.

[25]Otto, *Dionysus Myth and Cult,* p. 162.

FIGURE 3 - 9
Baptism with Lunar Water While Being Bitten by Dragons (Ashmole, ed., *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum,* 1652.)

after being shocked by the psychological intimacies shared by group members.

I am looking for the group. I open a door to the room and on the floor I see all the group members making love with each other. One couple falls out of the door in front of me.

Another group member had this dream:

I am in a classroom like a chemistry classroom. With seats in high tiers leading down to a stage-like platform. It is our group,

FIGURE 3 - 10
Bacchanal of the Andrians (Titian. Madrid, Prado. Reprinted in *Titian: The Colour Library of Art.*)

and the exhibit is of a beach with enormous, crashing waves, which become abruptly real. I can see that under the waves, along the sand, there is a strong sturdy fishing net which has been firmly anchored into the sand in several places, obviously to catch and hold a good haul in even rough weather, but the waves become so real and turbulent that they splash out of the exhibit stage and onto the audience. Several of us scramble down from the seats to avoid getting wet. I notice that I have left my purse behind in my hurry, and I think I will have to go back and get it.

Water as the Dionysian fertility principle is described beautifully in Goethe's hymn to water:

> Hail anew! Spring's burgeoning
> Leaps up within my heart, a spring
> With truth and beauty permeated—
> From the wave was all created.
> Water will all life sustain:
> Ocean, grant your endless reign!

> But for clouds of your rich lending,
> And the brooklets of your sending,
> Rivers' courses wide extending,
> Streams that reach majestic ending,
> What were our world, our mountains, and our plains?
> Your power the freshness of our life maintains.
> 'Tis you from whom the life flows in our veins.[26]

Fertility and creativity were emphasized in the phallic aspects of Dionysian rituals. Otto writes:

> Inherent in the Dionysiac element of moisture is not only the power which maintains life but also the power which creates it. Thus it flows through the entire human and animal world as a fertilizing, generative substance. The learned Varro was very well informed when he declared that the sovereignty of Dionysus was not only to be recognized in the juice of fruits whose crowning glory was wine but also in the sperms of living creatures. From this sphere of the god's activity he traced the origin of the custom in which a phallus was crowned with wreaths and carried around in the god's cult. We certainly know how great a role this symbol of procreative power played in his festivals. "A wine jar, a vine, a goat, a basket of figs, and then the phallus"—this is the description Plutarch gives us of the original simplicity of the Dionysiac celebration. A song was sung to the phallus. We have inscriptional evidence for the use of a large wooden phallus in the processions of the Dionysia in Delos. Each colony sent a phallus regularly to the Athenian Dionysia.[27]

An example of Dionysian phallic symbolism linked with baptismal imagery is provided by the following dream. The dreamer was a middle-aged woman with emerging creative powers as a poet and a scholar. She dreamed:

> *There is a party at my mother's apartment. A strange and disturbing man, Mr. X, a poet, is the guest of honor. (After several episodes the mother leaves the party.) When she does, there's a kind of universal, spontaneous rejoicing which I also feel, though I don't know what's up. I find out soon enough, though. For almost at once X gathers all the women around him in a semi-circle, whereupon he undresses and ejaculates a huge stream of sperm which falls like a fountain on each of us. I'd thought the idea was for us to serve him in this way, but as it turns out that's only part of it. Because as the sperm shower hits us severally, we each experience our own separate and individual orgasms.*

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[26]Goethe, *Faust,* pt. 2, lines 8432–44.

[27]Otto, *Dionysus Myth and Cult,* p. 164.

This dream foreshadowed an emerging positive realization of the dreamer's creative capacities. However, sometimes one's relation to the creative power is dangerous. Nietzsche, the great exponent of the Dionysian principle, is an awesome example of the dangers of a destructive *solutio* brought about by a personal identification with Dionysian creativity. In his psychosis, Nietzsche called himself "Dionysus" and signed his letters, "Zagreus"—that is, "the dismembered one." Jung has some profound observations to make on the danger of dissolution in identification with creative powers. He says:

> [The creative forces] have you on the string and you dance to their whistling, to their melody. But in as much as you say these creative forces are in Nietzsche or in me or anywhere else, you cause an inflation, because man does not possess creative powers, he is possessed by them. That is the truth. If he allows himself to be thoroughly possessed by them without questioning, without looking at them, there is no inflation, but the moment he splits off, when he thinks, I am the fellow, an inflation follows....
>
> It happens automatically that you become conscious of yourself and then you are gone, it is as if you had touched a high tension wire. Nietzsche, of course, could not help looking at the thing and then he was overwhelmed with resentments, because the creative powers steal your time, sap your strength, and what is the result? A book perhaps. But where is your personal life? All gone. Therefore, such people feel so terribly cheated, they mind it, and everybody ought to kneel down before them in order to make up for that which has been stolen by God. The creative forces have taken it out of them, and therefore they would like to personify them, imagine that they are Shiva, in order to have the delight of being creative. But if you know you are creative and enjoy being creative, you will be crucified afterwards because anybody identified with God will be dismembered. An old father of the church, the Bishop Synesius, said that the *spiritus phantasticus*, our creative spirit, can penetrate the depths or the heights of the universe like God, or like a great demon, but on account of that he will also have to undergo the divine punishment, and that would be the dismemberment of Dionysus or the crucifixion of Christ.[28]

In general, the Dionysian is daimonic and ecstatic, promoting intensity of experience rather than clear, structured meaning. It is a dissolver of limits and boundaries, bringing life without measure. In its extreme form it is wild, irrational, mad, ecstatic, boundless. It is the enemy of all conventional laws, rules, and established forms. It is in the service, not of safety, but of life and rejuvenation. The weak and immature may be destroyed by its onslaughts; the healthy will be fertilized and enlivened like the land by the flooding of the Nile (see figure 3-11).

Many clinical syndromes are due to a concretistic identification with the Dionysian principle. Alcoholism and drug addiction are obvious. Don Juanism can also be considered an identification with Dionysus, in

[28]Jung, *Zarathustra Seminar* 1:67.

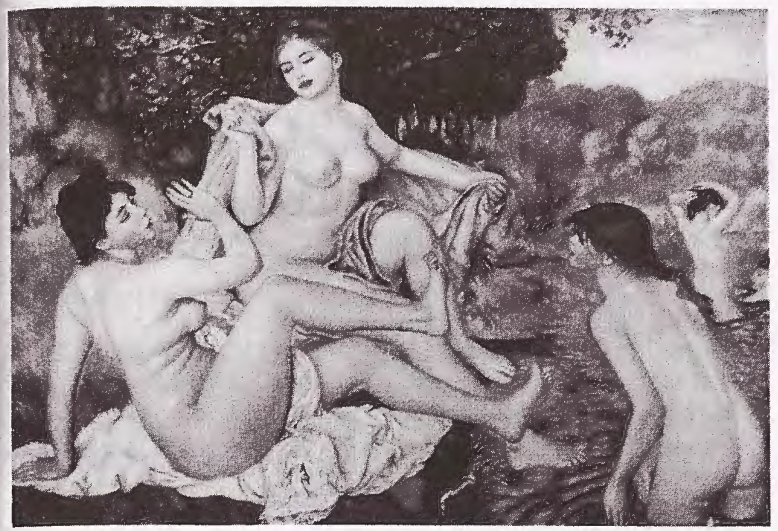

FIGURE 3 - 11
Bathers (Renoir. Philadelphia, Collection of Carroll Tyson. Reprinted in Craven, *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces.)*

which the individual surrounds himself with an entourage of women in various stages of love or frenzy (Maenads). This situation threatens to bring about his own psychological dismemberment by conflicts, obligations, and entanglements. The Dionysian takes on a compulsive quality when it exists in a dissociated personality. Put another way, the Dionysian destroys the Pentheus-like ego that is not related to wholeness. In favorable circumstances it promotes harmony and dissolves differences. For instance, consider this paean to the Dionysian by Nietzsche:

> Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Freely, earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey of the rocks and desert approach. The chariot of Dionysus is covered with flowers and garlands; panthers and tigers walk under its yoke. Transform Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" into a painting; let your imagination conceive the multitudes bowing to the dust, awestruck—then you will approach the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or "impudent convention" have fixed between man and man are broken. Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with

him, as if the veil of máyá had been torn aside, and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity.[29]

The Apostle Paul expresses approximately the same idea concerning the efficacy of the blood of Christ. In Ephesians, we read: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end" (Eph. 2:13–16, RSV).

The wine of Dionysus and the blood of Christ are symbolically equivalent. This fact is illustrated in the dream of a young clergyman, which I have previously published in *Ego and Archetype*.[30] It is as follows:

Dream (abbreviated):

I am to celebrate communion. In the sacristy, which looks like a kitchen, the communion wine is to be prepared by mixing two separate wines–a blue wine and a red wine. The latter is in a bottle with a yellow label that looks like a Scotch label and is marked "Paul." At a round table, two men are sitting. One is a political leftist, the other a rightist. Up to now they have maintained a facade of social amenity but now they are becoming hostile to one another. I suggest that they ventilate at the gut level and resolve their feeling relationship. At this point the scene darkens as in a theatre play and a red-yellow spotlight focuses on a small table between and behind the two men. On the table is a bottle of the warm red wine with the Scotch label clearly marked "Paul." Then there is total darkness and the tinkle of glasses, sounding as though they've been clinked and perhaps broken. The sense is obvious in the dream. I think: they've drunk the red wine in their discussion, attained comradeship, become drunk in the process, fallen asleep, and dropped their glasses. My response is delight in the aesthetic way this has been portrayed and anxiety about the fact that the service needs to begin and we do not now have the ingredients for the communion wine mixture.

The dreamer's psychology is not known to me in depth; however, it is evident that Dionysian and Christian symbolism are here combined.

[29]Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, p. 37.

[30]Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, pp. 248ff.

Although the union of the two wines—perhaps Logos and Eros—remains to be achieved, a *solutio* has occurred that dissoves the opposition between leftist and rightist, although at the price of consciousness since they fall asleep. In this case, as is often true, there is a confusion between authentic reconciliation of opposites through greater consciousness and a regressive dissolution which blurs awareness of the opposites.

A cosmological version of *solutio* is the widespread myth of a cosmic catastrophe by flood (see figure 3-12). In Hebrew myth it is Noah's flood; in Greek myth, the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha. According to an ancient idea each of the four elements in turn was to be an agent of world destruction. As reported by Dio Chrysostom, the story is as follows: "The Lord of the world rides in a chariot drawn by four horses which are sacred to Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, and Hestia respectively. In other words, the four horses are the four elements, fire, air, water, and

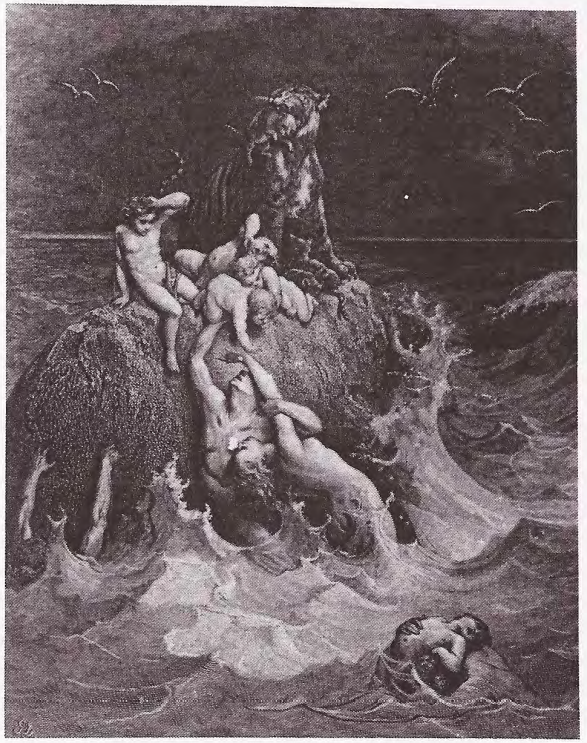

FIGURE 3 – 12
The Flood (Doré, *Bible Illustrations.)*

earth. As a rule they are tractable, now and then, however, the first steed becomes restive and sets fire to the other three. This is the origin of the story of Phaethon told by the Greeks. Again it is the steed of Poseidon that becomes restive, and the drops of his sweat are sprinkled upon the other three. This, again, is the source from which the Greeks derived their story of Deucalion's flood," and likewise with the other two horses.[31]

This idea corresponds to the alchemical *circulatio* in which the material is to be repeatedly sublimated and coagulated, circling again and again through all the states of being until the Philosophers' Stone is created. The whole history of the world is thus seen as a vast alchemical process.

The flood myths are quite instructive psychologically. God sends a destructive flood when the world has become wicked and degenerate. It is as though humanity must be reduced through *solutio* to its *prima materia* in order for it to be transformed to something better. Another aspect of *solutio* is also demonstrated by the flood stories, namely, the theme of ordeal by water. Through this ordeal the godly men, those with authentic existence, remain intact while the wicked or inauthentic are dissolved. Psychologically this would mean that those aspects of the ego consciously related to the Self withstand *solutio*.

In the myths, the threat of a world flood was used to encourage an awareness of God. Similarly, a threat of flooding from the unconscious may have a salutary effect on a presumptuous ego and bring about an awareness of a need for a relation to the transpersonal. This state of mind is expressed in the Sixty-ninth Psalm (see figure 3-13):

> Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. (1, 2, AV)
>
> Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (14, 15, AV)

Flood dreams refer to *solutio*. They represent an activation of the unconscious that threatens to dissolve the established ego structure and reduce it to *prima materia*. Major life transitions are commonly *solutio* experiences. For instance, a woman with three children who was going through a second divorce had several flood dreams, one of which was reported by Rivkah Kluger:

[31]Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1:199–200.

FIGURE 3 – 13
"Save Me, O God; For the Waters Are Come in unto My Soul" (Illustration for Psalm 69, *The Visconti Hours*. Florence, National Library.)

From a beach house I look out and see a great wave. I call the girls in. Mary is slow but does come in time and I shut the doors. Then the wave is on us. It comes through every crack and is all around us. I am frightened about Bob, my son, who is on the beach and wonder if he has been able to escape. I know that all the swimmers will have died. There is no escape and I say to myself: "So this is how it is." I feel no real panic. Since escape is impossible, it is simply the way it is. But then the water subsides.

We run about trying to close up cracks. There is a hole in the floor, besides many cracks in the walls.... Another wave comes. It crashes over and around us but this time the room is not flooded and the cabin does not lift

and roll about. We begin to run before the next one comes. I open the back door and there stands an old friend whom I have not seen in years. I hug him in joy and relief.... The country is bleak and mud is washed high up in the land. I see how lucky we have been and am so glad for the man who came to take us away.[32]

Another example is the following dream. The dreamer was a mature, middle-aged man who was going through a major life reorientation and facing a serious operation. He also later was divorced. He dreamed:

World life is seen as in a great bowl. Then there is a huge flood, something like a dam lets loose and everything is overwhelmed. It is cataclysmic, a catastrophe of huge proportions and all is washed away in the rising waters.... We flee before the deluge and some of us escape.

Then it seems as if we are in a new era. This is world life seen inside a great sphere. There are many levels connected by staircases, ramps, etc., all around an open center. Apartments and living spaces are part of the outer wall.... Before it was night, now it is day. In the middle all is earth. It is a thick layer covering over the water.

Dreams of a great flood sometimes include the experience of being rescued by a divine or transpersonal agency. In the following dream it is evident that a fatal *solutio* was avoided by the discovery of Jungian psychology:

[*The dreamer*] *was caught in a monstrous sea. Though she was a strong and practiced swimmer, her strength was nearly exhausted, and she knew she could not hold out much longer. Just then she saw ahead a square houseboat resembling the Noah's arks of her childhood. With a tremendous last effort she made for it, and just in time she reached its side, to be hauled up half fainting by none other than Dr. Jung, whom she had never even seen at the time.*[33]

A middle-aged man going through the dissolution of a dependent relationship had this dream:

I am at the center of a great city watching a vast stream of humanity pass by—individuals of every type and description. It's like the flow of a great river. I am fascinated.

[32]Kluger, "Flood Dreams," in *The Reality of the Psyche*, p. 51.

[33]Bertine, "The Great Flood," in *Jung's Contribution to Our Time*, p. 204.

On awakening the dreamer thought of the doctrine of Heraclitus that "all things are in flux" (*panta rhei*). The dream is thus picturing the *solutio* aspect of existence—life as perpetual change and becoming. A painful personal experience is cast in an archetypal or general context and thereby made meaningful and even fascinating.

The connection of *solutio* with salvation is indicated by the Apostle Peter's relation of Noah's flood to baptism. "Now it was long ago, when Noah was still building that ark which saved only a small group of eight people 'by water'.... That water is a type of the baptism which saves you now" (1 Pet. 3:20, 21, JB).

Because eight people were saved in the flood, the number eight became associated with baptism, the ritual repetition of the original flood. The Christians of antiquity and the Middle Ages nearly always built their baptistries in octagonal form. An inscription composed by St. Ambrose for the baptistry of the church of St. Thecla in Milan reads as follows:

Eight are the temple's walls—O number worthy of holy
Actions performed at the spot; eight are the walls of the font.
Mystical shape of the house that covers the rites of the water
—Rites for the saving of man—mystical number of eight,
Rites that derive their pow'r from the light of Christ resurrected
Christ who set all men free, breaking the shackles of Hell,
Who from the blemish of sin releaseth him that repenteth,
In the crystalline spring cleansing the bather from guilt.
What greater proof can ye ask of the power of God who
Acting at one small point loosens the guilt of the world?[34]

We now know that the number eight is an individuation number, an expression of wholeness. The flood and baptism symbolism is therefore telling us that by passing through the water of *solutio* we become whole—that is, related to the Self.

The exodus and passage through the Red Sea was also connected with baptism by Paul: "I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1–2 RSV).

Jung mentions the Peratics' (a Gnostic sect's) interpretation of the Red Sea: "The Red Sea drowned the Egyptians, but the Egyptians were all 'non-knowers.'... The Red Sea is a water of death for those that are 'unconscious,' but for those that are 'conscious' it is a baptismal water of rebirth and transcendence."[35] Augustine says, "The Red Sea signifies

[34]Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, p. 78.

[35]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *CW* 14, par. 257.

baptism," and according to Honorius of Autun, "the Red Sea is the baptism reddened by the blood of Christ, in which our enemies, namely our sins, are drowned."[36]

The alchemists used the image of the Red Sea. The tincture is said to be extracted from the Red Sea. One text speaks of the "Tyrean dye, which is extracted from our most pure Red Sea."[37] Another says, "And know that our Red Sea is more tincturing than all seas, and that [it]... penetrates all bodies."[38] The term "our Red Sea" refers to the *aqua permanens*, the universal solvent—that is, the liquid form of the Philosophers' Stone. Thus, that which has passed through the *solutio* of the Red Sea is the goal of the *opus*, the Self. Or, put another way, the Red Sea is the totality of the psyche, the agency of *solutio* that the ego must encounter and pass through on the way to individuation (see figure 3-14).

The Red Sea had several overlapping meanings to the alchemists. (1) It was the crucial transition of the exodus. The Israelites' escape from slavery was equated with the redemption of the lost value hidden in the darkness of matter and indeed with the whole alchemical process of transformation. (2) It had the general meaning of the sea—the original chaos, the creative source of all that comes to be, in psychological terms, the unconscious. (3) Its redness associated it with the color of the Philosophers' Stone and the transforming tincture. Thus the Red Sea was not only the *prima materia*, but also the goal of the *opus*. It was also connected with the redeeming blood of Christ and the "blood of the lamb" as described in Revelation. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes?...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made then white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:14, 15, AV).

Literal blood baptism was practiced in the taurobolium of Mithraism. Blood is associated with the element fire; hence, blood symbolism combines fire and water—that is, both *calcinatio* and *solutio* imagery.

Baptism is basically a purification ritual that washes one clean of dirt, both literal and spiritual. Washings were frequent preliminary procedures in religious ceremonies, in the Eleusinian Mysteries for instance. Psychologically, the dirt or sin that is washed away by baptism can be understood as unconsciousness, shadow qualities of which one is unaware. Psychological cleanliness means not literal purity, but aware-

[36]Ibid., par. 256.

[37]Ibid., par. 259.

FIGURE 3 -14
Pharaoh's Army Drowning in the Red Sea (*The Visconti Hours*, Florence, National Library.)

ness of one's own dirt. If one is psychologically clean, one will not contaminate one's environment with shadow projections (see figure 3-15).

I cannot conclude this section on baptism symbolism without citing a beautiful quotation that equates Christ and the sun as partners in baptism. This from Melito of Sardis, a second-century theologian:

> When drawn by his fiery steeds the sun has completed his daily course, then by reason of his whirling passage he takes on the color of fire and becomes as a burning torch....Then, almost lost from view, he descends into the ocean. ...Bathing himself in the mysterious depths he shouts mightily for joy, for water is his nourishment. He remains one and the same, yet he comes forth

FIGURE 3 – 15
The Woman Washing Clothes (Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens,* 1618.)

strengthened out of the depths, a new sun, and shines his light upon men, having been cleansed in the water....

There follow him in due course the dancing ranks of the stars and by reason of him the moon puts forth her power. They bathe in the baptistry of the sun like those who are obedient under instruction and it is only because moon and stars follow the course of the sun that they shine with a truly pure light. If then the sun and the stars and the moon all bathe together in the ocean, why should not Christ have been baptized in the River Jordan? King of Heaven, prince of creation, sun of the eastern sky who appeared both to the dead in Hades and to mortals upon earth, he, the only true Helios, arose for us out of the highest summits of Heaven.[39]

Earlier, the moon was mentioned as an agent of negative or dangerous *solutio*. It also has important connections with highly positive imagery. The moon was considered to be the source of dew—an agent of healing grace and identical with the *aqua permanens*. Isis was called "dew," and it was the dew of her tears that brought together the dismembered fragments of Osiris.[40] Jung describes moon and dew symbolism in these words:

[39]Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery,* p. 115.

[40]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis, CW* 14, par. 14.

Luna secretes the dew or sap of life. [According to an alchemical text,] "This Luna is the sap of the water of life, which is hidden in Mercurius!" Even the Greek alchemists supposed there was a principle in the moon which Christianos calls the "ichor of the philosopher." The relation of the moon to the soul, much stressed in antiquity, also occurs in alchemy though with a different nuance. Usually it is said that from the moon comes the dew, but the moon is also the *aqua mirifica* that extracts the souls from the bodies or gives the bodies life and soul. Together with Mercurius, Luna sprinkles the dismembered dragon with her moisture and brings him to life again, "makes him live, walk, and run about, and change his color to the nature of blood." As the water of ablution, the dew falls from heaven, purifies the body, and makes it ready to receive the soul; in other words, it brings about the *albedo*, the white state of innocence, which like the moon and a bride awaits the bridegroom.[41]

In ecclesiastical symbolism dew represents grace, and in alchemy it is the *aqua sapentiae*. An excellent example is seen in one of the *Rosarium* pictures reproduced in *The Psychology of the Transference*[42] (see figure 3-16). This picture shows the king and queen following coitus merged and dead lying on a slab. Drops of moisture are falling on them from a cloud above. Jung interprets the descending dew as the water of divine Wisdom or "Gideon's dew," a synonym for the *aqua permanens*. It "is a sign of divine intervention, it is the moisture that heralds the return of the soul."[43] This corresponds to the recovery of feeling after succumbing to the deadly, barren state of intellectual abstraction like Faust's before his encounter with Mephistopheles. As Jung tells us, "The alchemists thought that the *opus* demanded not only laboratory work, the reading of books, meditation, and patience, but also love."[44]

The dew of divine Wisdom emphasizes another aspect of *solutio*, namely, its power to answer questions or provide a *solution* to problems. Gerhard Dorn says: "The chemical putrefaction is compared to the study of the philosophers, because as the philosophers are disposed to knowledge by study, so natural things are disposed by putrefaction to solution. To this is compared philosophical knowledge, for as by solution bodies are dissolved, so by knowledge are the doubts of the philosophers resolved."[45]

The *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* expresses the same idea in a style more appropriate to *solutio*.

> The Grape that can with Logic absolute
> The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:

[41]Ibid., par. 155.

[42]Printed in Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy CW* 16.

[43]Ibid., par. 487.

[44]Ibid., par. 490.

[45]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis, CW* 14, par. 363.

PHILOSOPHORVM

ABLVTIO VEL
Mundificatio

FIGURE 3 – 16
The Corpse of the Merged King and Queen Being Purified and Reanimated by Heavenly Dew (*Rosarium Philosophorum*, Frankfurt, 1550. Reprinted in Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*.)

The sovereign alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute.[46]

The *solutio* experience "solves" psychological problems by transferring the issue to the realm of feeling. In other words, it answers "unanswerable" questions by dissolving the libido obstruction of which the question was a symptom.

A variant of *solutio* is *liquefactio*, the process of melting. Sometimes it is called "ceration." About this procedure Ruland says, "Ceration is performed upon a body which is hard and of dry humour by continual

[46]Fitzgerald, trans., *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, st. 42.

inbibition until melting takes place....the sign of perfect ceration is when the medicine, being most swiftly projected upon a burning plate, resolves itself, without smoke, into the consistency of molten wax."[47]

The ability to melt upon heating, a feature of most metals, was considered to be an indicator of quality or nobility. Thus, regarding a nonfusible metal, an alchemist exclaims in disgust, "Bismuth...is not even fusible by fire—such is its earthly grossness and impurity."[48] This is an interesting psychological point. It tells us that psychic quality is indicated by its ability to soften, to melt into a liquid flowing state. Perhaps this is the root image of the idea of a *gentle*man. Lao Tse describes it beautifully:

The best of men is like water;
Water benefits all things
And does not compete with them.
It dwells in (the lowly) places that all disdain,—
Wherein it comes near to the Tao.

In his dwelling, (the Sage) loves the (lowly) earth;
In his heart, he loves what is profound;
In his relations with others, he loves kindness;
In his words, he loves sincerity;
In government, he loves peace;
In business affairs, he loves ability;
In his actions, he loves choosing the right time.
It is because he does not contend
That he is without reproach.[49]

The *I Ching* has a hexagram, number 59, which might have been named "*solutio*." Wilhelm calls it "Dispersion or Dissolution." Part of the commentary reads as follows:

> Religious forces are needed to overcome the egotism that divides men. The common celebration of the great sacrificial feasts and sacred rites...was the means employed by the great rulers to unite men. The sacred music and the splendor of the ceremonies aroused a strong tide of emotion that was shared by all hearts in unison, and that awakened a consciousness of the common origin of all creatures. In this way disunity was overcome and rigidity dissolved....Egotism and cupidity isolate men. Therefore the hearts of men must be seized by a devout emotion. They must be shaken by a religious awe in face of eternity.[50]

[47]Ruland, *A Lexicon of Alchemy*, p. 95.

[48]Waite, trans., *The Hermetic Museum* 1:24.

[49]*Tao Teh Ching* or *The Book of Tao*, Chapter 8, Tr. Lin Yutang.

[50]Wilhelm, trans., *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, pp. 227ff.

To summarize, I have spoken of seven major aspects of *solutio* symbolism: (1) return to the womb or primal state; (2) dissolution, dispersal, dismemberment; (3) containment of a lesser thing by a greater; (4) rebirth, rejuvenation, immersion in the creative energy flow; (5) purification ordeal; (6) solution of problems; and (7) melting or softening process. These different aspects overlap. Several or all of them may make up different facets of a single experience. Basically it is the ego's confrontation with the unconscious that brings about *solutio*. Jung says:

> The analysis and interpretation of dreams confront the conscious standpoint with the statements of the unconscious, thus widening its narrow horizon. This loosening up of cramped and rigid attitudes corresponds to the solution and separation of the elements by the *aqua permanens*, which was already present in the "body" and is lured out by the art. The water is a soul or spirit, that is, a psychic "substance," which now in its turn is applied to the initial material. This corresponds to using the dream's meaning to clarify existing problems. "*Solutio*" is defined in this sense by Dorn. "As bodies are dissolved by solution, so the doubts of the philosophers are resolved by knowledge."[51]

This quotation describes the analytic process as chiefly a *solutio* for the patient. However, the therapist must also submit to *solutio*. Certain texts state this explicitly: "It is necessary therefore to convert the bodies of metals into a fluid substance; for...every tincture will tinge a thousand times more in a soft and liquid substance, than when it is in a dry one....Therefore the transmutation of imperfect metals is impossible to be done by perfect bodies while they are dry and hard: for which cause sake, they must be brought back into their first matter, which is soft and fluid."[52] Again, "that which is dry does not enter into, nor tinge anything besides itself...nor can it tinge except it be tinged."[53]

Thus, both patient and agent must be soft and fluid. This corresponds to what Jung tells us about the nature of psychotherapy:

> The relation between doctor and patient remains a personal one within the impersonal framework of professional treatment. By no device can the treatment be anything but the product of mutual influence, in which the whole being of the doctor as well as that of his patient plays its part.... Hence the personalities of doctor and patient are often infinitely more important for the outcome of the treatment than what the doctor says and thinks....For two personalities to meet is like mixing two different chemical substances: if there is any combination at all, both are transformed. In any effective psychological treatment the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor. You can exert no influence if you are not susceptible to influence.[54]
>
> Between doctor and patient, therefore, there are imponderable factors which bring about a mutual transformation. In the process, the stronger and more stable personality will decide the final issue. I have seen many cases where the patient assimilated the doctor in defiance of all theory and of the latter's professional intentions—generally, though not always, to the disadvantage of the doctor.[55]

Each of the alchemical operations has a lesser and a greater aspect, just as it has both a negative and a positive side. The fire of *calcinatio* can be experienced as hell fire or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The same applies to *solutio*. One text says: "You are to know that, although the solution is one, yet in it there may be distinguished a first, and a second....The *first* solution is...the reduction of it to its First Matter; the *second* is that perfect solution of body and spirit at the same time, in which the solvent and the thing solved always abide together, and with this solution of the body there takes place simultaneously a consolidation of the spirit."[56]

The greater *solutio* thus involves a transposition of the opposites; the solution of the body brings about a consolidation of the spirit. Many other texts say the same thing. Kelly quotes Avicenna: "The true principle of our work is the dissolution of the Stone, because solved bodies have assumed the nature of spirits, i.e., because their quality is drier. For the solution of the body is attended with the coagulation of the spirit."[57] Another text says, "Our solucyon ys cause of our coagulacyon; For the dissolucyon on the one syde corporall causyth congelacyon on the other syde spyrytuall."[58]

This is profound and paradoxical symbolism. The most obvious meaning is that a release from concrete particulars promotes a realization of universals. However, the paradoxical play of opposites means ultimately that the procedure leads to the Self—the transpersonal center of the psyche that unites and reconciles the opposites. We are thus brought, finally, to the ultimate in *solutio* symbolism, the idea of the water that is the goal of the process. Several terms are used for this liquid version of the Philosophers' Stone: *"aqua permanens," "elixer vitae,"* "tincture," "philosophical water," "universal solvent," "divine

[51] Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *CW* 14, par. 306 and n. 587.

[52] *The Lives of the Alchemystical Philosophers*, p. 135.

[53] Ibid.

[54] *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, *CW* 16, par. 163.

[55] Ibid., par. 164.

[56] Waite, trans., *The Hermetic Museum* 1:40.

[57] Kelly, *The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly*, p. 49.

[58] *The Lives of the Alchemystical Philosophers*, p. 219.

water," and so forth. Water as the goal of the *opus* is described in this text:

> [The philosophers] say that the whole work and the substance of the whole work are nothing but the water; and that the treatment of the same also takes place in nothing but the water.... And by whatever names the philosophers have called their stone they always mean and refer to this one substance, i.e., to the water from which everything [originates] and in which everything [is contained], which rules everything, in which errors are made and in which the error is itself corrected. I call it "philosophical" water, not ordinary water but *aqua mercurialis.*[59]

Here the philosophical water in which everything takes place is both the beginning and the end of the *opus,* the *prima materia,* and the Philosophers' Stone. It is a liquid symbol of the Self containing the opposites and turning each one-sided thing into its contrary. Thus it is said, "This (divine) water makes the dead living and the living dead, it lights the darkness and darkens the light."[60]

Just as the Philosophers' Stone was identified with Christ, the divine water of the alchemists was also connected with the living water that Christ equated with himself in the Gospel of John: "Whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never suffer thirst anymore. The water that I shall give him will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life" (John 4:14, NEB). "If anyone is thirsty let him come to me; whoever believes in me, let him drink. As Scripture says, 'Streams of living water shall flow out from within him'" (John 7:38, NEB).

An interesting dream parallel to the "stream of living water" came to my attention. During a particular session, the analyst was especially resourceful in giving a rich amplification of the patient's dream. That night the patient dreamed that *a stream of crystal clear water was flowing from the analyst's mouth.* This episode is an excellent example of Jung's statement, "The analysis and interpretation of dreams...corresponds to the solution and separation of the elements by the *aqua permanens.*[61]

The Psalmist cries out to God, "My soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is" (Ps. 63:1, AV). Almost in answer to this cry, an alchemical recipe for *solutio* begins with these words, "If thou knowest how to moisten this dry earth with its own water, thou wilt loosen the pores of this earth." Jung offers the following interpretation:

[59]Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy, CW* 12, par. 336.

[60]Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis, CW* 14, par. 317.

[61]Ibid., par. 306.

> If you will contemplate your lack of fantasy, of inspiration and inner aliveness, which you feel as sheer stagnation and a barren wilderness, and impregnate it with the interest born of alarm at your inner death, then something can take shape in you, for your inner emptiness conceals just as great a fullness if only you will allow it to penetrate into you. If you prove receptive to this "call of the wild," the longing for fulfillment will quicken the sterile wilderness of your soul as rain quickens the dry earth.[62]

The greater *solutio* is an encounter with the *Numinosum,* which both tests and establishes the ego's relation to the Self. As the flood myths tell us explicitly, the flood comes from God; that is, *solutio* comes from the Self. What is worth saving in the ego is saved. What is not worth saving is dissolved and melted down in order to be recast in new life-forms. Thus, the ongoing life process renews itself. The ego that is committed to this transpersonal process will cooperate with it and will experience its own diminishment as a prelude to the coming of the larger personality, the wholeness of the Self.

[62]Ibid., par. 190.