

## The myth of Hermes/Mercurius and the formation of identity

Hans van den Hooff, seminar IGAP May 30th-31st London

### Friday

Tomorrow-morning we are going to do some rigorous reading about Hermes / Mercurius, Hermes as bringer of dreams, as messenger God, as metaphor for the transcendent function. Hermes the Graeco-Roman god as well as Mercurius as spirit in the bottle. In the afternoon we will explore some alchemical images of Hermes: Hermes as prima materia, holder of opposites. Hermes - Senex who is like Hermes Trismegistus, Hermes the savior, Hermes as archetype of the unconscious, -Mercurius is the Ultima Materia as the Philosopher's Stone or gold (i.e. the goal of his own transformation). As I Saturnine substance which happens to be the dwelling place of the Devil. Mercurius as Lucifer, the Light Bringer, and diabolical Satan, as the Uroboros, the tail-eating serpent, who devours and gives birth to itself ("himself lifts himself on high") as well as Mercurius is the Cosmic Child, the Filius Macrocosmi (which is also the Philosopher's Stone and the inner man);

But tonight is Friday night and some of us are tired, so I am going to try to keep it light and experiential tonight. OK?

*I am in a mailroom where the incoming mail gets sorted prior to delivery. There are tables and cupboards for sorting the mail. Maybe it is a post-office or maybe it is the mailroom of a company. The atmosphere is as if the work for the day is finished, all the mail has been processed, the people who work here have gone, I am the only one left in the room. Then I see a forgotten envelop between two trays. I go to pick it up. It looks very old and I note that the stamp is from the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik, i.e. former East Germany). The poststamp is in very clear print and shows that the letter is from the early 1970's. I think that the envelop must have been laying around here for all these years and I ask myself if I shall open it. It feels as if there is something else than paper in it. It feels a bit thick and it is very flat. Then I open it. It contains pure white powder. What I notice most are the whiteness, the dryness and the fineness of it. I ask myself what kind of powder it is. Is it cocaine? Is it flour? Is it ash? Should I smell it? Is it dangerous? I smell from some distance. I sense that it is not cocaine or flour. It has no organic smell. Perhaps I sense some inorganic bitterness. Maybe it is white ash or some other very fine salt.*

#### 1. What is individuation/

**Definition** The concept of individuation plays a large role in our psychology. In general, it is the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology. Individuation is therefore a process of differentiation having for its goal the development of the individual personality cw 6§ 757

#### 2. what is needed to develop a healthy sense of identity?

Before we will explore Jung's perspective in some detail, it is perhaps useful to mention the main perspective from developmental psychology on the healthy formation of identity. When it comes to questions of the formation of identity, the most quoted author in developmental psychology is **Erickson**. According to him the following factors are important for the healthy development of a sense of identity: a secure family system, that the child learns to develop boundaries between himself and others, that the child learns to develop secure attachments and that it is possible for the child to explore and choose his identity freely from alternative identities. (i.e. no trauma in the family, or illness or absence of a parent or caretaker which might lead to identification with

(traumatic or replacement) parts of the (missing) parents or caretakers.

**Winnicott** saw the True Self as rooted from early infancy in the experience of being alive, including blood pumping and lungs breathing – what Winnicott called simply being.[5] Out of this the baby creates the experience of a sense of **reality**, a sense that life is worth living. The baby's spontaneous, nonverbal gestures derive from that **instinctual** sense,[6] and if responded to by the motherer, become the basis for the continuing development of the True Self.

3. Where however what Winnicott was careful to describe as good enough parenting - i.e. not necessarily perfect![7] - was not in place, the infant's spontaneity was in danger of being encroached on by the need for compliance with the parents' wishes/expectations.[8] The result for Winnicott could be the creation of what he called the False Self, where “Other people's expectations can become of overriding importance, overlaying or contradicting the original sense of self, the one connected to the very roots of one's being”.[9] The danger he saw was that “through this False Self, the infant builds up a false set of relationships, and by means of introjections even attains a show of being real”,[10] while in fact merely concealing a barren emptiness behind a independent-seeming facade.[11]
4. The danger was particularly acute where the baby had to provide attunement for the mother/ parents, rather than vice versa, building up a sort of dissociated recognition of the object on an impersonal, not personal and spontaneous basis.[12] But while such a pathological False Self stifled the spontaneous gestures of the True Self in favour of a lifeless imitation, Winnicott nevertheless considered it of vital importance in preventing something worse: the annihilating experience of the exploitation of the hidden True Self itself.[13]
5. **Kohut** extended Winnicott's work in his investigation of narcissism,[21] seeing narcissists as evolving a defensive armor around their damaged inner selves.[22] He considered it less pathological to identify with the damaged remnants of the self, than to achieve coherence through identification with an external personality at the cost of one's own autonomous creativity
6. Alice Miller cautiously warns that a child/patient may not have any formed true self, waiting behind the false self facade;[29] and that as a result freeing the true self is not as simple as the Winnicottian image of the butterfly emerging from its cocoon.[30] If a true self can be developed, however, she considered that the empty **grandiosity** of the false self could give way to a new sense of autonomous vitality.[31]
7. what may prevent individuation/ the healthy development of identity?
  - a. absent parents
    - i. parental envy
    - ii. alcoholism
    - iii. psychiatric problems
    - iv. death/ leaving
  - b. trauma
  - c. cultural complexes
8. what happens psychologically if individuation is impaired?
  - a.
9. what does it take to repair it in analysis and how might Hermes be helpfull in analysis
10. So lets start with a dream.

## **A Who/ what is Hermes?**

*I am in a house and I have to go somewhere, there is a road of stones in the sea such that there is a very thin layer of water covering the stones.... It al feels familiar ..... a small boy with a ball approaches me.... a dark men walked behind him... all on that road .... the boys smiles and kicks the ball towards me ... when kicking the ball back to him, I accidentally kick the ball in the water, to fetch it I have to go up to my belly in the water to fetch the ball ... the man looks disapprovingly*

The associations included that she should have more carefully pointed the ball in the direction of the boy, thus follow the path of the just-under-water road, such that it would land at the boys feet. The analysis that in real life the analysand could be somewhat unattentive in empathy and really carefully addressing the other.

Hermes grows up in a single day. He floats between men on earth and the gods on mount Olympus. He is the messenger God. With wings attached to his sandals he flies up and down between men and the gods. This is why he can psychologically is seen as metaphor for the relationship between the ego unconscious. Hermes, who is called Mercurius with the Romans and according to Tacitus Wotan with the germanic tribes. (the nameday of Wotan is Wednesday corresponding to Mercredi). Hermes/ Mercurius is also the bringer of dreams and the fortuneteller. He steals the cows from his brother Apollo in a very ingenious way and he teaches the hitherto purely rational Apollo to make music. He offers free passage for everybody and has been the inventor of astronomy. the alfabet and the musical scales. He is the god of commerce and the god of thieves.

Of all the Greek gods, the character of Hermes is most difficult to grasp. Apollo and Artemis can be imagined much easier. So are Gaya, the great-Mother and Atlas who carries everything. With many other gods it is relatively easy to imagine which psychological motif they represent metaphorically. But Hermes is ungraspable and paradoxical. And that is precisely what he symbolizes: the ungraspable and the paradoxical. And it is that because the human unconscious is partly also ungraspable and paradoxical, that Hermes is so often used as a symbol in analytical psychology. Today, we will therefore look at Hermes as a metaphor for the intra-psychic relationship between the ego and the other parts in our self. Particularly, we will look at the dynamic of the transformation of our sense of identity, that is the image that our ego has (rightly or wrongly, complete or incomplete) of who we are: in totality and quintessentially.

Yesterday we have explored Erickson, Winnicott, Kohut and Miller  
Jung was not very good at developmental psychology

However, today I would like to look at identity formation from the perspective of analytical psychology from which the (trans-)formation of identity can be seen as a process of integration and differentiation of different parts of ourselves which leads to a certain sense of identity, correct or incorrect, positive, negative or both). [repeat]. It appears that the metaphor of Hermes offers a meaningful framework to characterize in some detail this process of integration and differentiation.

Jung called the process of healthy identity formation: individuation. He particularly studied the individuation process in the second half of life. The cases that he presented concerned often individuals presenting with typical mid-life issues. In Jung's definition of individuation (cw 11 §400) we immediately notice the neurotic consequences of not being well enough individuated. He describes individuation as " the act of gathering together of all things in us that have never been properly related, and coming to terms with that". [REPEAT]

The image one has of oneself can change significantly during the different phases in life. The essential result of psychoanalysis, Jungian or Freudian is that the analysand renews and broadens his or her self-image. [MEDITATE] About experiencing this renewed Self-image Jung says: Individuation appears, on the one hand, as synthesis of a new unity which previously consisted of scattered particles, and on the other hand, as the revelation of something that existed before the ego" (CW 11 § 400). I think this is one of Jung's brilliant formulations which I gladly repeat: Individuation appears, on the one hand, as synthesis of a new unity which previously consisted of scattered particles, and on the other hand, as the revelation of something that existed before the ego". Concretely: after years of roaming around, identifying than with this and than with that archetypal motif, a person may re-find his authentic Self. This may happen through a structured process of analysis but of course may also happen in different ways. Today I will speak about experiences from analysis.

How can “scattered particles” be brought to the “synthesis of a new unity”? How can we better understand this complex dynamic of psyche which is in part a spontaneous manifestation of the self and in part of the will of the ego? The answer that Jung gave to this question was: via the character of Hermes. For example: Jung interprets Grimm’s fairy-tale of the spirit in the bottle as a projection of this unconscious dynamic of individuation. [REPEAT]. In different places of the CW (eg Psychology and alchemy, Aion and Mysterium Coniunctionis) Jung researches the character of Hermes/ Mercurius as it appeared in Mythology, alchemical texts and in Fairy tales as a metaphor for the relation between the Ego and the unconscious.

Firstly, we will look at the character of Hermes, the self-nominated God from Greek mythology. Central in Hermes’ character is his way of relativizing the primacy of rationality. Hermes brings to falter a person who thinks too much and does not live sufficiently in touch with her feelings. For example when he teaches his very rational brother Apollo the importance of music. This led to Hermes’ nomination as messenger of the gods, particularly as messenger from Zeus. Hermes is also Oneirotopos: accompanier of dreams. Psychologically: Hermes is seen as the personification of the relationship between the Self, the gods, the archetypes and ego, the mortal. In that respect, Hermes is the most important god for psychoanalysis. He corresponds to Freud’s chimney sweeper. He provides free passage for all. In short: this is his myth:

### **Hermes’s Nature And Deeds**

WHEN Hermes was born on Mount Cyllene his mother Maia laid him in swaddling bands on a winnowing fan, but he grew with astonishing quickness into a little boy, and as soon as her back was turned slipped off and went looking for adventure. Arrived at Pieria, where Apollo was tending a fine herd of cows, he decided to steal them. But, fearing to be betrayed by their tracks, he quickly made a number of shoes from the bark of a fallen oak and tied them with plaited grass to the feet of the cows, which he then drove off by night along the road. Apollo discovered the loss, but Hermes’s trick deceived him, and though he went as far as Pylus in his westward search, and to Onchestus in his eastern, he was forced, in the end, to offer a reward for the apprehension of the thief. Silenus and his satyrs, greedy of reward, spread out in different directions to track him down but, for a long while, without success. At last, as a party of them passed through Arcadia, they heard the muffled sound of music such as they had never heard before, and the nymph Cyllene, from the mouth of a cave, told them that a most gifted child had recently been born there, to whom she was acting as nurse: he had constructed an ingenious musical toy from the shell of a tortoise and some cow-gut, with which he had lulled his mother to sleep.

b. ‘And from whom did he get the cow-gut?’ asked the alert satyrs, noticing two hides stretched outside the cave. ‘Do you charge the poor child with theft?’ asked Cyllene. Harsh words were exchanged.

c. At that moment Apollo came up, having discovered the thief’s identity by observing the suspicious behaviour of a long-winged bird entering the cave, he awakened Maia and told her severely that Hermes must restore the stolen cows. Maia pointed to the child, still wrapped in his swaddling bands and feigning sleep. ‘What an absurd charge she cried. But Apollo had already recognized the bands. He picked Hermes, carried him to Olympus, and there formally accused him theft, offering the bands as evidence. Zeus, loathing to believe that his own new-born son was a thief, encouraged him to plead not guilty, but Apollo would not be put off and Hermes, at last, weakened confessed.

‘Very well, come with me,’ he said, ‘and you may have your herd. I slaughtered only two, and those I cut up into twelve equal portions as a sacrifice to the twelve gods.’

‘Twelve gods?’ asked Apollo. ‘Who is the twelfth?’

‘Your servant, sir,’ replied Hermes modestly. ‘I ate no more than my share, though I was very hungry, and duly burned the rest.’

Now, this was the first flesh-sacrifice ever made.

d. The two gods returned to Mount Cyllene, where Hermes greeted his mother and retrieved something that he had been hidden underneath sheepskin.

‘What have you there?’ asked Apollo.

In answer, Hermes showed his newly-invented tortoise-shell lyre and played such a ravishing tune on it with the plectrum he had also invented, at the same time singing in praise of Apollo's nobility, intelligence, and generosity, that he was forgiven at once. He led then surprised and delighted Apollo to Pylus, playing all the way, there gave him the remainder of the cattle, which he had hidden in a cave.

'A bargain!' cried Apollo. 'You keep the cows, and I take the lyre.'" 'Agreed,' said Hermes, and they shook hands on that.

e. While the hungry cows were grazing, Hermes cut reeds, made them into a shepherd's pipe, and played another tune. Apollo, again delighted, cried: 'A bargain! If you give me that pipe, I will give you this golden staff with which I herd my cattle; in future you shall be the god of all herdsmen and shepherds.'

'My pipe is worth more than your staff,' replied Hermes. 'But I will make the exchange, if you teach me augury too, because it seems to be a most useful art.'

'I cannot do that,' Apollo said, 'but if you go to my old nurses, the Thriae who live on Parnassus, they will teach you how to divine from pebbles.'

f. They again shook hands and Apollo, taking the child back to Olympus, told Zeus all that had happened. Zeus warned Hermes that henceforth he must respect the rights of property and refrain from telling downright lies; but he could not help being amused.

'You seem to be a very ingenious, eloquent, and persuasive godling,' he said.

'Then make me your herald, Father,' Hermes answered, 'and I will be responsible for the safety of all divine property, and never tell lies, though I cannot promise always to tell the whole truth.'

'That would not be expected of you,' said Zeus, with a smile. 'But your duties would include the making of treaties, the promotion of commerce, and the maintenance of free rights of way for travellers on any road in the world.' When Hermes agreed to these conditions, Zeus gave him a herald's staff with white ribbons, which everyone was ordered to respect; a round hat against the rain, and winged golden sandals which carried him about with the swiftness of wind. He was at once welcomed to the Olympian family, whom he taught the art of making fire by the rapid twirling of the fire-stick.

g. Afterwards, the Thriae showed Hermes how to foretell the future from the dance of pebbles in a basin of water; and he himself invented both the game of knuckle-bones and the art of divining by them. Hades also engaged him as his herald, to summon the dying gently and eloquently, by laying the golden staff upon their eyes.

h. He then assisted the Three Fates in the composition of the Alphabet, invented astronomy, the musical scale, the arts of boxing and gymnastics, weights and measures (which some attribute to Palamedes), and the cultivation of the olive-tree.

From Greece to Western-Europe, we will now move onwards with the Grimm brothers fairy tale: the spirit in the glass bottle which, according to Jung (CW 13§ 239 ff) yields the quintessence and deepest meaning of the Hermetic mystery.

### **The Spirit in the Glass Bottle**

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Once upon a time there was a poor woodcutter who worked from morning until late at night. When he had finally saved up some money he said to his boy, "You are my only child. I want to spend the money that I have earned by the sweat of my brow on your education. Learn an honest trade so you can support me in my old age when my limbs have grown stiff and I have to sit at home."

Then the boy went to a university and studied diligently. His teachers praised him, and he remained there for some time. After he had worked through a few classes, but was still not perfect in everything, the little pittance that the father had saved was all spent, and the boy had to return home to him.

"Oh," said the father sadly, "I cannot give you anything more, and in these hard times I cannot earn a Heller more than what we need for our daily bread."

"Father, dear," answered the son, "don't worry about it. If it is God's will everything will turn out well for me. I will do all right."

When the father said he was going into the woods and earn some money by cutting cordwood, the son said, "I will go with you and help you."

"No, my son," said the father, "you will find it too difficult. You are not used to hard work, and will not be able to do it. Furthermore, I have only one ax and no money left to buy another one with."

"Just go to the neighbor," answered the son. "He will lend you his ax until I have earned enough to buy one for myself."

So the father borrowed an ax from the neighbor, and the next morning at daybreak they went out into the woods together. The son helped his father and was quite cheerful and full of energy. When the sun was directly above them, the father said, "Let us rest now and eat our noon meal. Then all will go twice as well."

The son picked up his bread and said, "Just you rest, father. I am not tired. I will walk about a little in the woods and look for birds' nests."

"Oh, you fool," said the father, "why do you want to run about? Afterwards you will be tired and no longer able to lift an arm. Stay here, and sit down beside me."

But the son went into the woods, ate his bread, was very cheerful, and looked into the green branches to see if he could find a bird's nest. He walked to and fro until at last he came to an enormous oak that was certainly many hundred years old, and that five men would not have been able to span. He stood there looking at it, and thought, "Many a bird must have built its nest in that tree."

Then suddenly he thought that he heard a voice. Listening, he became aware of someone calling out with a muffled voice, "Let me out. Let me out."

He looked around but could not see anything. Then he thought that the voice was coming out of the ground, so he shouted, "Where are you?"

The voice answered, "I am stuck down here among the oak roots. Let me out. Let me out."

The student began to scrape about beneath the tree, searching among the roots, until at last he found a glass bottle in a little opening. Lifting it up, he held it against the light, and then saw something shaped like a frog jumping up and down inside.

"Let me out. Let me out," it cried again, and the student, thinking no evil, pulled the cork from the bottle. Immediately a spirit ascended from it and began to grow. It grew so fast that within a few moments a horrible fellow, half as big as the tree, was standing there before the student.

"Do you know," he cried in an terrifying voice, "what your reward is for having let me out?"

"No," replied the student fearlessly. "How should I know that?"

"Then I will tell you," shouted the spirit. "I must break your neck for it."

"You should have said so sooner," answered the student, "for then I would have left you shut up inside. However, my head is going to stay where it is until more people have been consulted."

"More people here, more people there," shouted the spirit. "You shall have the reward you have earned. Do you think that I was shut up there for such a long time as a favor? No, it was a punishment. I am the mighty Mercurius. I must break the neck of whomsoever releases me."

"Calm down," answered the student. "Not so fast. First I must know that you really were shut up in that little bottle, and that you are the right spirit. If you can indeed get inside again, then I will believe it, and you may do with me whatsoever you want."

The spirit said arrogantly, "that is an easy trick," pulling himself in and making himself as thin and short as he had been before. He then crept back into the opening and through the neck of the bottle. He was scarcely inside when the student pushed the cork back into the bottle, and threw it back where it had been among the oak roots. And thus the spirit was deceived.

The student was about to return to his father, but the spirit cried out pitifully, "Oh, do let me out. Oh, do let me out."

"No," answered the student, "not a second time. I will not release a person who once tried to kill me, now that I have captured him again."

"If you will set me free," cried the spirit, "I will give you so much that you will have enough for all the days of your life."

"No," answered the student, "you would cheat me like you tried to the first time."

"You are giving away your own good fortune," said the spirit. "I will not harm you, but instead will reward you richly."

The student thought, "I will venture it. Perhaps he will keep his word, and in any event he will not get the better of me."

So he pulled out the cork, and the spirit rose up from the bottle as before, and extended himself, becoming as large as a giant.

"Now you shall have your reward," he said, handing the student a little rag that looked just like a small bandage. He said, "If you rub a wound with the one end, it will heal, and if you rub steel or iron with the other end, it will turn into silver."

"I have to try that," said the student. He went to a tree, scratched the bark with his ax, then rubbed it with the one end of the bandage. It immediately closed together and was healed.

"Now it is all right," he said to the spirit, "and we can part."

The spirit thanked him for having freed him, and the student thanked the spirit for the present, and returned to his father.

"Where have you been running about?" said the father. "Why have you forgotten your work? I said that you wouldn't get anything done."

"Don't be concerned, father. I will make it up."

"Make it up indeed," said the father angrily. "Don't bother."

"Just watch, father. I will soon cut down that tree there and make it crash."

Then he took his bandage, rubbed the ax with it, and struck a mighty blow, but because the iron had turned into silver, the cutting edge bent back on itself.

"Hey, father, just look what a bad ax you've given me. It is all bent out of shape."

The father was shocked and said, "Oh, what have you done! Now I'll have to pay for the ax, and I don't know what with. That is all the good I have from your work."

"Don't get angry," said the son, "I will pay for the ax."

"Oh, you blockhead," cried the father, "How will you pay for it? You have nothing but what I give you. You have students' tricks stuck in your head, but you don't know anything about chopping wood."

After a little while the student said, "Father, I can't work any longer after all. Let's quit for the day."

"Now then," he answered, "do you think I can stand around with my hands in my pockets like you? I have to go on working, but you may head for home."

"Father, I am here in these woods for the first time. I don't know my way alone. Please go with me."

His anger had now subsided, so the father at last let himself be talked into going home with him.

There he said to the son, "Go and sell the damaged ax and see what you can get for it. I will have to earn the difference, in order to pay the neighbor."

The son picked up the ax and took it into town to a goldsmith, who tested it, weighed it, and then said, "It is worth four hundred talers. I do not have that much cash with me."

The student said, "Give me what you have. I will lend you the rest."

The goldsmith gave him three hundred talers and owed him one hundred. Then the student went home and said, "Father, I have some money. Go and ask the neighbor what he wants for the ax."

"I already know," answered the old man. "One taler, six groschens."

"Then give him two talers, twelve groschens. That is double its worth and is plenty. See, I have more than enough money." Then he gave the father a hundred talers, saying, "You shall never need anything. Live just like you want to."

"My goodness," said the old man. "Where did you get all that money?"

Then the son told him everything that had happened, and how by trusting in his luck he had made such a catch. With the money that was left he went back to the university and continued his studies, and because he could heal all wounds with his bandage he became the most famous doctor in the whole world.

These were the myths of Hermes and the fairy tale of the spirit Mercurius. Which parallels can we see between them and the experience of individuation? In the most general way we can say that Hermes is the Personification of the relationship between the Self, the gods, the archetypes and ego

Perhaps we can start by recognizing the Hermes is well hidden. In the middle of the woods or in a dark cave. Contrary to the other gods, Hermes is deeply hidden during the first half of life and only present as a potentiality, at the roots of the oak that we are. For years, Hermes lies dormant in psyche, waiting for something to happen --often a personal crisis-- to emerge. Like the seeds of flowers in the dessert are waiting for the rain. Jung compares the wood in the fairy tale to the unconscious and the immensely old oak he sees as "the prototype of the self". Dante too used the wandering through the woods as a metaphore for mid-life crisis. The first sentence from the Divina

Comedia is: Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura! (in the middle of the travel of my life I find myself in a dark wood.

Secondly it seems that what is necessary for “activating” Hermes in the psyche of an individual is that there is a (psychological) “shortage” of some kind. The poor student only finds Mercurius when he walks in the woods as he has no more money for studying. Dante used the wandering through the woods as a metaphor for mid-life crisis. The first sentence from the Divina Comedia is: Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura! (in the middle of the travel of my life I find myself in a dark wood. Our student too has a crisis. It seems that Apollo too has a shortage although in first instance he does not seem conscious of it. His eagerness to trade his cows for Hermes’ lyre is perhaps indicative of Apollo’s shortage. Many well educated western individuals of a certain type, have in their first half of life have been identifying wrongly with the early Apollo. They orient themselves mainly via thinking and rationality and less via their feeling and creativity. Woman may identify themselves with Artemis, Apollo’s sister. The false identification are of course highly neurotic as in these men and women much is alive that they do not see, know or recognize as part of their identity. It may be that these individuals have had a hunch of this shortage which is based on certain life experiences but not yet understood.

Jung described individuation as the act of gathering together of all things in us that have never been properly related, and coming to terms with that (CW 11 § 400). Also: Individuation is differentiation from the collective (CW 6 § 757). And: to distinguish between what a man is and how he appears to himself ((CW7 §310) and ... to become what you always have been ( CW 10 §722). Analysis is a structured process to facilitate individuation. Early in the analysis, many “things in us” are partially unconscious. These “things” can surface to consciousness during the analysis.

How does this process begins? It seems that there should first be an important shortage of some kind in the life of the analysand. Hermes can not be found and thus individuation does not start without such shortage. Obviously, this corresponds to the experience that in the beginning of the analysis there is always a shortage of some kind. Conscious or unconscious. For example: there can be a shortage of energy (burnout or depression) or there can be a shortage of self-confidence (anxiety) or a shortage of love (relationship issues) or, last but not least, a shortage of inner peace and reflection.

According to Jung, the hero in the fairy tale is totally unconscious of his true self. He is one of the “sleepers”, the blind or the blindfolded from alchemical texts and drawings. He is like the person who is not yet conscious of his own real Self and of what shadow and archetypal material is alive in the unconscious. This is generally the situation of an analysand at the beginning of analysis in which Hermes is only present as a germ. Jung says about this early phase: “the patient only knows himself as ego” (CW 8 §430) and “ the patient is not yet distinguishing between “who he is” and “how he appears to himself”. (CW7 § 310) [ REPEAT} “the patient only knows himself as ego” (CW 8 §430) and “ the patient is not yet distinguishing between “who he is” and “how he appears to himself”.

How can Hermes be activated during the first sessions of the analysis? In other words: how can the onset of a continuous flow of unconscious material, archetypically and shadowy, towards the ego be established? So that the analysand starts to get a picture of “the things in us that never have been properly related to each other”. How can we get Hermes flying up and down?. Well, first of all it should be said that sometimes absolutely nothing of the sort happens. In those cases the spirit stays firmly in the bottle. Well hidden at the root of the tree. This situation may continue for a long time, for example in cases where the analysand is known with traits of OCD or with serious narcissistic traits or with dissociative problems. This can be very frustrating and sometimes it is best to stop analysis. However, in most cases, if the analysand experiences a safe container, a hermetically closed secure analytic temenos, Hermes starts roaring his wings. Then, Hermes wants to get liberated out of the bottle. Most individuals who enter analysis want to know and become who they really are. With Hermes help obeying the oracle of Delphi: (γνώθι σεαυτόν).

Another question that Jung addresses is whether the initiative for individuation comes from ego or from the self [what do you think?]. In CW11 § 400 Jung says a couple of interesting things about this question. For example:

*“human nature has an invincible dread of becoming more conscious of itself. What nevertheless drives us to it is the Self, which demands sacrifice by scarifying itself to us. Conscious realization or the bringing together of the scattered parts is in one sense an act of the ego’s will, but in another sense it is a spontaneous of the Self (fn: in so far as it is the Self that actuates the ego’s self-recollection) which was always there. Individuation appears on the one hand as the synthesis of a new unity which previously consisted of scattered particles, and on the other hand, as the revelation of something which existed before the ego and is in fact its father or creator and also its totality.”*

What does the Greek myth tell us about what actuates the self-recollection process? Comparing mortals to the ego and Olympian gods to unconscious motifs, the self-recollection process would be actuated by the ego as in the myth, importantly, Hermes is born as a mortal and not as an Olympian God. Only in second instance Hermes is admitted as a God after Zeus recognizes his talents saying to Hermes: “You seem to be a very ingenious, eloquent, and persuasive godling”. As far as I know, this is the only example of a man becoming a god in Greek mythology. On the other hand, Hermes was begotten by Zeus. This corresponds to the Self playing role in the actuating of individuation.

Once actuated, the coming on-stream of a flow from the unconscious may develop fast. In the fairy tale, this corresponds to the ghost who after leaving the bottle grows in no-time to half the size of the oak. In the Greek myth, Hermes grows up to a boy on the day that he is born. Therefore, from mythology we learn that, once activated, the unfolding of the archetype of Hermes, which has been locked up in psyche for years, proceeds quickly and can not be reversed. Like an airbag in a car inflating after collision. In analysis this may manifest as a deep aha experience after the analysand experiences the deep meaning of the initial dream. The initial dream, brought by Hermes, often presents a hint of the possible unfolding of a much deeper and more complete identity than the analysand had previously assumed. Aren’t these amazing parallels which correspond to our experience? Discovering the unconscious, experiencing that there is psychic life below the ego, not as a theoretical construct but as a phenomena, usually impresses people no end.

Also the role of Maia, as archetypically protective mother is interesting, when we consider the whole issue of regression in analysis. In the Homeric Hymns, a hymn to Hermes the first lines of which read as follows:

Muse, sing of Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia, lord of Cyllene and Arcadia rich in flocks, the luck-bringing messenger of the immortals whom Maia bore, the rich-tressed nymph, when she was joined in love with Zeus, -- a shy goddess, for she avoided the company of the blessed gods, and lived within a deep, shady cave. There the son of Cronos used to lie with the rich-tressed nymph, unseen by deathless gods and mortal men, at dead of night while sweet sleep should hold white-armed Hera fast.

This last paragraph of, poetically describing the conception of Hermes, correlates to the phenomenon of regression in analysis when analysand and analyst may find themselves deeply in a wombly cave. Warmth, trust and a positive transference are the essential factors which help to actuate and develop the individuation and the systematic coming to consciousness of parts of psyche that hitherto were alive in the patient yet unknown to her. Warmth and trust and a constant attention of the analyst for what the analysand feels or does not feel about this essential for good progress of “collecting the unconscious chunks that were hitherto hidden”. To work with the feeling is the key thing to liberate Hermes. It is more important than working with thinking, words and intellectual constructs, no matter how brilliant. It is the feeling of trust and safety and *temenos* that sets Hermes free and thus let the unconscious unveil themselves: chunk by chunk. Thoughts, words and intellectual framing can be useful for re-integration of the unconscious parts once they

have surfaced. But for the analyst to facilitate the coming to consciousness of hidden parts the feeling-function is much more important and thinking and intellectual framing can generally be considered as a defense. Importantly: Hermes is also metaphor for the development of the feeling-function in a person who initially oriented himself via the thinking function. Hermes transforms from logos only to logos-and-eros. Of course this starts in Maia's cave and is even more clear with Apollo's transformation through Hermes. Initially Apollo does not miss the muse, he is the Sun god, god of linearity of the arrows trajectory, logic and the predictability of sunrise. Initially that is good enough for him. We here nothing of the feeling side of the early Apollo. He herds his cows but knows nothing of music and the magic of singing.

Aren't these amazing parallels which correspond to analytical experience? Jung writes about the unconscious recognition of the mother matrix in analysis (CW5 § 459) that Hermes can only be constellated when the maternal matrix gets constellated. Again, here the analyst has a crucial responsibility. Reliability, regularity, healthy abstinence and total confidentiality create the Hermetically closed vessel that the analysis should be. Only when these conditions are met Hermes can return to the cave and Maia will re-wrap him again as if a baby in his cradle. Only then does Apollo see the lyre. Then, suddenly, Apollo is ready to offer his cows in exchange for the lyre. The parallels of this latter transformation with what analysands experience in analysis is that the old way of attributing meaning on the basis of thinking THINKING (about a job, career, marriage, themselves etc) may shrink making room for attribution of meaning to life experience based much more on feeling, as symbolized by the lyre. More importantly, the self-image, that is the sense of identity may totally change. For example from: "I am a doctor" to "I am a human being with a spectrum of interests and abilities and my profession is doctor".

Once activated, Hermes will fly to and fro the ego, delivering a more or less steady flow of messages, i.e. unconscious content, from the unconscious. As most of us know, the breaking through of insights and aha's in analysis, based on the new insights in ourselves, both from the personal as well as from the collective realms, are of course the fruits for which we spend time and money on analysis. Often shadow material comes out before the archetypal motifs surface but it is hard to distinguish as they often somehow surface intertwined. It is the angry/evil spirit that comes out of the bottle first. Often in connection to early childhood dynamics. Narcissistic wounds. Traumatic experiences. Pain and suffering. The lesser appreciated behaviors, and unwelcome feelings, repressed or split-off, such as lying (I did not feel it, do it) and stealing (of cows) are very much Hermes attributes too and acceptance and integration of these tendencies in ourselves are often taking place in the early phases of analysis. This may be followed by hints about what we may improve and how the relation between parts of ourselves things can be re-integrated and appreciated differently. In the recognizing some kind of higher truth in ourselves thus re-integrating and gradually meeting the true self, the world as whole may start to make more sense too. Particularly, when we start to learn to de-identify with collective content (this or that archetype) and come to see that what constitutes a human being is his or her relation with the collective and what constitutes our personal individuality is essentially our personal relationship with the collective.

Creativity and power play a big role. This is the manifestation of Hermes in optima forma. First as herald from the gods, i.e. showing their enormous power and secondly as bringer of insights from our personal unconscious and how by removing initial inhibitions and flawed self images (shadow) we may relate to the gods in a much more healthy way.

Hermes brings light more than darkness. Individuation also involves the discovery of our true value and power and ultimately the encounter with the self. Hermes symbolizes the unity of poles, symbolized in his Caduceus: the rod with two snakes. While early in the individuation the analysand identifies with this or that in herself, Hermes helps her to see that exact opposite is also alive in her. For example: a person with low self-esteem may start to see to de-identify from the "I am not worthy" archetype and --often illustrated in dream material-- meet the opposite pole of inferiority in herself. Two important aspects are learning to tolerate ambiguity: I am not only this but I am also that. The person has to learn to stop asking the question: who am I really?

The second aspect is de-identification from the archetypes. "i am not all that I experience within". [repeat]. Hermes bridges the transitional space between ego and self, the gods and the mortal, and thus helps us to see that we are not the gods but that we experience the gods. Not all that we experience within is of our own making: *Vocati atque non Vocati dei aderunt*. Our identity is not Apollo or Demeter or Aphrodite we are how we *relate* to Apollo or Demeter or Aphrodite. A woman with a healthy psychology knows that she has Demeter in her and uses Demeter energies if she chooses from her own identity. A woman who lives and acts and thinks as Artemis and also identifies with her is permanently in a complex constellation by the archetype and suffers from the unconscious workings of the opposites of Artemis (such as Hestia).

To repeat: individuation implies accepting multi-polarity within us. This corresponds to accepting Hermes Duplex in us and brings with it that we as humans accept that we are much less than all the things that we psychologically experience within as we are not our kidneys or our liver. We are not Apollo or Artemis, we are how we relate to Apollo and Artemis. Individuation is differentiation (CW6 §757). Finally, this is important for our morality: The more one is formed by the collective the bigger the chance for immorality CW6 §761. So Hermes is also bringer of morality.