

## The Place of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Jung's Encounter with China

### Introduction: Jung and the 17<sup>th</sup> Century

In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* [MDR] (pp. 202ff) Jung's turn towards alchemy is presented; in this area of his scholarship a deep cultural background for his mature views of the psyche emerges. Borne of inner necessity that Jung associates with a series of dreams in which he discovers another wing or annex to his house where he finds a "wonderful library, dating largely from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries." The series culminates in "[t]he crucial dream anticipating my encounter with alchemy [which] came around 1926"; Jung reports this long dream in which he is on the Italian front (WWI) returning by horse-drawn wagon with a little, peasant coachman eventually arriving at a grand manor house like the palace of a North Italian duke. The denouement comes when:

Just as we reached the middle of the courtyard, in front of the main entrance, something unexpected happened: with a dull clang, both gates flew shut. The peasant leaped down from his seat and exclaimed, "Now we are caught in the seventeenth century." Resignedly I thought, "Well, that's that! But what is there to do about it? Now we shall be caught for years." Then the consoling thought came to me: "someday, years from now, I shall get out again." (Jung 1963, p. 203)

Jung's eventual interpretation was that this "referred to alchemy, for that science reached its height in the seventeenth century." This conscious understanding of the dream was inaugurated by his receiving *The Secret of the Golden Flower* from Richard Wilhelm in 1928, forming an implicit link between ancient Chinese philosophy and 17<sup>th</sup> century European thought for Jung.

Much earlier, however, Jung also had a dream referencing the 17<sup>th</sup> century, his famous "house dream" from the time of his trip to US in 1909 with Freud and Ferenczi. In this dream, the descent to more archaic levels of the house became a leading metaphor for Jung's structural view of the psyche, especially the collective unconscious. At the start of this dream, Jung is "in the upper story, where there was a kind of salon furnished with fine old pieces in rococo style..." (ibid., pp. 158-59), which Deirdre Bair has elaborated as his having "remembered thinking that the historical period when the furniture was made must have been sometime between 1650 and 1750" (Bair 2003, p. 177)—Jung earned money to pay for his university studies after his father's death "by helping an aged aunt dispose of her small collection of antiques" (Jung 1963, p. 97; also see Bair 2003, p. 40) which he apparently did with skill. The later 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century thus furnishes the most immediate level of what is to become Jung's view of the collective unconscious. This house dream predates the original German 1914 publication of Silberer's book on alchemy and mysticism, presumably where Jung was first introduced to the possible connection between alchemy and psychoanalytic thought (later in *MDR* he comments "Oddly enough, I had entirely forgotten what Herbert Silberer had written about alchemy"—1963, p. 204); thus our understanding of the place of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Jung's psyche and in our field bears closer scrutiny.

## **A Few 17<sup>th</sup> Century Precursors to Contemporary Science and Psychology**

The period from the later 16<sup>th</sup> through mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries is, of course, often associated with the origins and rise of modern science, grounded in mathematics and physics, especially those of Descartes and Newton. While quantum mechanics and relativity theory have overthrown the ultimate validity of the Cartesian view of physical nature, for the most part we still live with the related philosophical dichotomization of mind and body. However, in the last several decades, the findings from complexity theory, especially in researches applied to the neurosciences and the study of consciousness are generating a new paradigm for the mind/body interrelationship. These results are in the main in accord with the views of a group of contemporary philosophers drawing on the emergentist tradition of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and employing the term supervenience to describe the mind's relation to the body 1. David Tresan introduced this perspective into the Jungian literature in 1996, noting the philosopher Klagge's definition "Supervience is a relationship between two realms that is weaker than reductionism and stronger than duality", i.e., in this view the mind can neither be reduced to brain activity in itself, nor is it a wholly independent agency, the mental world emerges from, or supervenes on the somatic.

Among the more important current researcher-authors in the neurosciences for an analytic perspective is Antonio Damasio. Two of his books, in particular *Descartes' Error* (1994) and *Looking for Spinoza* (2003), give an immediate sense of the significance of 17<sup>th</sup> century philosophy for modern views of the mind/body relation; Rene Descartes lived from 1596 to 1650 and Baruch Spinoza from 1632-1677. Damasio reports that he had been "looking for Spinoza" for a number of years, and his reason "has a lot to do with coincidence" going back to his adolescent reading of *The Ethics* but later realizing how much Spinoza's work on "the nature of emotions and feeling and the relation of mind to body...prefigured solutions that researchers are now offering on a number of these issues" (2003, p. 11). Spinoza was in fact one of a number of important philosophers who valued Descartes' mathematics but did not accept his dual nature theory. That Spinoza is also a spiritual ancestor, as another free-thinking Portuguese Jew, clearly enchants Damasio.

One point of relevance in this for Jungians lies in the fact that there was another prominent 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher-intellectual who Jung drew heavily upon, explicitly citing him as one of the main precursors to his theory of synchronicity, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 1646-1716. Leibniz is considered by some modern philosophers to have been "the most universal genius that there had ever been in Europe" (Broad 1975, p. 3) and like Spinoza offered a radically different view of the mind/body problem than the Cartesian solution. There was even some direct communication between Leibniz and Spinoza including "four days of intense discussion" together at Spinoza's home in the Hague in 1676 during Leibniz's visit there (MacDonald Ross 1984/1996, p. 14). The radical, counterintuitive view Leibniz put forth on the mind/body problem derived in part from his discovery of the mathematics of the infinitesimal, calculus—though there have been acrimonious debates over primacy for him or Newton; they are now felt to have independently arrived at their ideas and it is Leibniz's system of nomenclature that is still in use (Newton's fluxional system is more difficult to handle). Leibniz's alternative to Descartes' (and Spinoza's) views is contained in his theory of monads, derived from his

mathematical reflections on the “labyrinth of the continuum.” Here he seeks to transcend the conflicting views both of the atomists and those, like the Cartesians, who begin with continuities, and in the process is able to show the Cartesians mistaken in their views of the conservation of motion, demonstrating instead the correct view is conservation of energy. A detailed exploration of this theory is beyond the scope of the present article, however, in brief: monads are metaphysical points without spatial extension, being the ultimate constituents of all things including God, though only God perceives them with full clarity. The origin of these monads is not subject to *causation* but arise from divine creation, however, once begun in a “pre-established harmony,” they then have their own chains of causation while remaining in alignment with all other monads in accord with his ideas on conservation of energy. Applied to the mind/body problem this results in his statements such as “At the moment when the soul wills a bodily movement the organized mass which it animates is ready to act accordingly of itself in notice of the laws of mechanics”; “Body and soul are so adapted that a resolution in the soul is accompanied by an appropriate movement in the body”; “The tendencies of the soul towards new *thoughts* correspond to the tendencies of the body towards new *shapes and motions*. As these new motions are capable of causing the body to pass from *order to disorder*, so their representations in the soul are capable of causing it to pass from *pleasure to pain*” (quoted in Broad 1975, p. 124, italics in the original). For Jung’s understanding of these ideas in his formulation of the synchronicity hypothesis see his chapter on “Forerunners of the Idea of Synchronicity” (Jung 1952, see especially paras. 957-959). In a similar vein, Leibniz writes:

Relation is an accident which is in multiple subjects; it is what results without any change made in the subjects but *supervenies* from them; it is the thinkability of objects together when we think of multiple things simultaneously. (quoted in Kim 1993, pp. 135-36, my italics)

Several aspect of this are amazingly prescient, first, for Jungians, is the notion of all relations between mind and body being synchronistically determined 2, second is Leibniz’s use of the Latin term “*supervenit*”, for as one of the leading scholars on contemporary views of mind-body philosophy J. Kim remarks:

The first use of the term “supervene” I have found in a philosophical text is by Leibniz... Leibniz’s use of “supervene” in this context seems not inappropriate in our light: his thesis could be interpreted as the claims that relations supervene on the intrinsic properties of their relata...But Leibniz’s use of “supervene” may well have been an isolated event...I have not found any other occurrence of the term since then until we come well into the present century. (ibid.)

Kim also notes the interchangeable use of supervenience and emergence and it is the 20<sup>th</sup> Century emergentist philosophers whom he is referring to in this passage. Thus Leibniz was formulating a theory of relations that is consistent with a view of mind supervening on matter, highlighting their relationship in terms of emergent features and positing the connection as acausal; this is in close accord with a description of synchronicity derived from contemporary complexity theory for which I argued recently (Cambray 2002). Leibniz’s theory however was three hundred years in advance of neuroscientific findings.

No wonder Jung's great intuition was drawn to him!

### **From Leibniz to Synchronicity**

The story does not stop here, though Frances Yates ends her great study *The Art of Memory* with Leibniz. Similar to Jung she sees Leibniz as the last in a line of great minds to influence basic cultural development in Europe through use of the ancient art of memory employed by the scholastics (*v.i.*: Jung 1975, p. 40). Yates shows that the context in which Leibniz's calculus<sup>3</sup> emerges is the Hermetic philosophy of which her book is an extended study; conversely Yates comments that "about Newton I have nothing to say" (1966, p. 382). She continues, showing that Leibniz's borrowed the term 'monad' from Giordano Bruno and that his use of it is part of the hermetic tradition, while his calculus was to function as a principle in the art of combination of symbols, which was to be a solution for all problems. Leibniz was indeed searching for a universal language capable of such a feat. In this he was drawn to Egyptian and Chinese hieroglyphics, full of mystery and projections for 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans, for their value as memory images.

More than two centuries later, this European fascination for Chinese thought also affected Jung, not only through *The Secret of the Golden Flower* but earlier in his encounter with the *Yi Jing* (originally from James Legge's translation) and he turned to it directly in his first public proclamation of the term "synchronicity" (in 1930 at the memorial address for his friend and colleague, the Sinologist, Richard Wilhelm) where he remarked:

The science of the *I Ching* is based not on the causality principle but on one which—hitherto unnamed because not familiar to us—I have tentatively called the *synchronistic* principle. (1930, para. 81)

In the aforementioned chapter of his monograph entitled "Forerunners of the Idea of Synchronicity," Jung starts with parallels between Daoist philosophy and medieval western notion of the "theory of correspondence" (between the macrocosmic and microcosmic realms). This theory is rooted in the classical (Greek) idea of the "sympathy of all things". He proceeds to identify two philosophers who have most influenced his thinking on synchronicity, Leibniz, and drawing on Leibniz's work, Schopenhauer.

Jung uses Leibniz's idea of a pre-established harmony as a philosophical grounding for the broadest aspects of his vision, "with its absolute synchronism of psychic and physical events". He writes to J.R. Smythies (an English psychiatrist and author of papers on the theoretical bases of ESP) in 1952 regarding synchronicity:

I go back to Leibniz, the last mediaeval thinker with holistic judgment: he explained the phenomena by four principles: space, time, causality and correspondence (*harmonia praestabilita*)....Psychic phenomena, I hold, are contingencies beyond mere probability, "meaningful coincidences" due to a specific psychic condition, namely, a certain emotional mood called interest, expectation, hope, belief, etc., or an emotional objective situation like death,

illness or other “numinous” conditions. Emotions follow an instinctual pattern, i.e., an archetype....Where an archetype prevails, we can expect synchronistic phenomena, i.e., *acausal correspondences*, which consist in a parallel arrangement of facts in time. The arrangement is not the effect of a cause. (1975, pp. 45-6)

While this perspective bears obvious resemblances to the teachings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, Jung’s use of Leibniz, however, is more than a simple juxtaposition or parallelism between East and West.

### **Leibniz and China**

The primary dissemination of knowledge about China to Europeans of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was via the Jesuit mission in China. A proto-sinology developed beginning with the work of Fr. Matteo Ricci resulting in what has been termed the “Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology” by David Mungello in his 1985/1989 book *Curious Land*. This refers to the way the “Jesuit missionaries accommodated Western learning to the Chinese cultural scene and attempted to achieve the acceptance of the Chinese literati through the Confucian-Christian synthesis” (1985/1989, p. 15). Through the later part of 17<sup>th</sup> and into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century this accommodation underwent a particularly interesting modification in the hands of Fr. Joachim Bouvet, S.J. [Po Chin, 1656-1730]. Unlike his predecessors, Bouvet did not spend time in the provinces but was attached to the Manchu court in Beijing, even serving as official gift-bearer for the K’ang-hsi emperor on a trip back to Europe. In his courtly role, both assisting the emperor and attempting to build links to Christianity, Bouvet found a source that he felt would facilitate the new synthesis, the *Yi Jing*.

Bouvet was also steeped in the tradition of Christian apologetics that saw in the writing of the ancients’ elements of the “true religion”; he belonged to the group known as the ‘Figurists’. During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century this group focused on Hermetism and by the end of the century the list of ancients whom they recognized as precursors of Christianity included Fu Hsi, the legendary sage who first composed the *Yi Jing*, along with Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, Orpheus and various other wisdom figures of antiquity. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the ‘Figurists’ were also known as “*I ching-ists*” or as “symbolists” because they “interpreted the ancient Chinese texts symbolically or figuratively rather than historically”(ibid., p. 309).

Through another Jesuit<sup>4</sup>, Bouvet was put into contact in 1697 with Leibniz who already had an abiding interest in China going back to 1666-1667 —the outlines of this correspondence were published by none other than Hellmut Wilhelm (Richard Wilhelm’s son), first in an obscure journal in 1943 and then at the Eranos conference of 1951, where Jung was present<sup>5</sup> (Campbell 1957, pp. 212-232). Although Jung refers to Wilhelm’s paper at Eranos, he curiously does not include this story in his synchronicity essay or its revisions.

In detailed studies by Mungello (1977; 1985/1989) of the letters between the philosopher and the Jesuit we learn that in one of the early letters to Leibniz, Bouvet refers to the *Book of Changes*, along with his Figurist views. He writes: “[t]he shape of the system of Fu Hsi was like a universal symbol, invented by some extraordinary genius of antiquity, like Hermes Trismegistus, in order to represent to the eyes the most abstract principles of

all the sciences” (1985/1989, p. 315)—Bouvet saw the system as embracing all fields of knowledge. At the time Leibniz was seeking arithmetical expressions for a general theory of knowledge and together with Bouvet immediately saw links between the diagrams of the *Yi Jing* and his own work on binary arithmetic<sup>6</sup> (the computational basis for Boolean algebra used by all digital computers). Bouvet proceeded to send Leibniz the natural hexagram order (*Hsien-t'ien tzu-hsu*) in his letter of 4 November 1701, which we now know is attributable to Shao Yung (1011-1077 CE; a Neo-Confucian philosopher of the Sung Dynasty) but which Bouvet and Leibniz mistakenly viewed as Fu Hsi's (Fohi)—here Bouvet's Figurists leanings found a natural link with Leibniz's engagement in the hermetic tradition as described by Frances Yates. The natural hexagram order has the striking feature of being arranged in direct sequential order from 0 through 63 in base two if a broken line is taken for a zero and a unbroken line is taken as one. Leibniz's numbering of these hexagrams can be seen in reproductions of the diagrams sent to him by Bouvet (for a detailed reconstruction of the logic employed here see Hellmut Wilhelm “The Concept of Time in the Book of Changes,” especially pages 214-216 in Campbell 1957) [Figure 1—the photographic reproduction of the diagrams given in Mungello's books, a more stylized format is found in H. Wilhelm's *Change: Eight lectures of the I Ching*—a photograph of the diagrams that Bouvet sent to Leibniz was obtained from the Leibniz Archive Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek]. Thus, through Bouvet, Leibniz became the first major western intellect to encounter the *Yi Jing*.

There were about 15 letters exchanged between the two men; Bouvet's silence, halting the correspondence is not well understood and was a source of disappointment to Leibniz. Their contact, however, was enormously fruitful for Leibniz who continued to draw on his experience of the *Yi Jing*. In one of his *Discourses*, according to Mungello, he “presents a brief analysis of correspondences between Fu Hsi's recognition of the origin of things out of the binary units of one [a yang line] and nothing [a yin line] and the Christian view of Creation which Leibniz sees represented in his binary progression of 1 and 0.” The holistic approach to nature found in the Book of Changes accords well with some of Leibniz's philosophical speculations including the notion of a pre-established harmony to the universe.

However, there is an on-going debate among Leibniz scholars about the significance and degree of influence Chinese thought had on Leibniz's philosophy, especially his conception of monads and pre-established harmony. Joseph Needham, author of the famous multivolume *Science and Civilisation in China* (1954-), argues for influence deriving from holistic vision of Taoist philosophers, especially of the Neo-Confucian period, but this has been seriously challenged by students of Leibniz, such as Cook and Rosemont (in Ching and Oxtoby 1992) who acknowledge the parallels but argue for independence of formulation. More recently Franklin Perkins has attempted to turn the thinking around on this subject, as when he states

... we can rely on no example of Leibniz “synthesizing” anything from Chinese philosophy into his own. We can, however, take an angle on such synthesis by reversing our perspective. Instead of examining how Leibniz carries out this synthesis, we can examine how he projects the Chinese could carry it out. This projection takes place on two levels: in specific arguments; and in his overall vision of how to convert the Chinese. (2004, p. 169)

This line of argumentation leads to Leibniz's cross-cultural pluralism and tolerance, particularly when seeking a common ground with the Chinese in natural theology, even to the point of his advising Europe to receive Chinese missionaries of natural religion, as it is applied to government, in exchange for European missionaries of revealed religion (ibid., 154-155). This model moving towards mutual influence has the quality of an interactive field transcending a Newtonian worldview, giving it surprisingly contemporary feeling. Thus from various perspectives we can see Leibniz as an early precursor of an emergentist paradigm.

What is surprising in this is that in examining Jung's *Collected Works*, despite numerous citations of Leibniz's writings, I can find no reference to either his 1708 "Remarks on Chinese Rites and Religion" or his 1716 *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese*, both of which contain Leibniz's correlations between the *Yi Jing* and binary arithmetic. While there are likely various reasons for this omission, one may be the limited reading of the correspondence by Hellmut Wilhelm. He makes no mention of the Figurist background<sup>7</sup> and hence does not present the archetypal significance of Leibniz's hermetic imaginings but only talks about Shao Yung's 11<sup>th</sup> Century arrangement, which more recently has been traced back a bit earlier in the Sung dynasty (ca. C.E. 960), as if Bouvet and Leibniz knew it as an 11<sup>th</sup> Century document (Campbell 1957, pp. 214-18); Needham made this same error. In addition, the depth of Leibniz's interest in and valuing of Chinese religion and philosophy is only gradually becoming known since much of his work remains unpublished. Full appreciation of this aspect of Leibniz's thought is still underway.

### Summary

This brief sketch does not touch on a number of other significant points of contact between Leibniz's and Jung's ideas but articulation of those will have to wait for another article. What is essential here is the link between Leibniz's thought which bridges between the pre-scientific world and the modern so as to catch the trajectory of a holistic perspective on the worlds of matter and mind. This tradition lay fallow for more than 200 years following Leibniz's death, until the emergentist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century recovered it temporarily. For many branches of science it was again lost for decades until only recently dynamic systems theory gave it a more solid scientific footing. In psychology, C. G. Jung's theories were an implicit haven for such holism and I believe we owe it to Jung's legacy to articulate his place within this tradition.

### Figure One

#### Notes:

1. For a brief though valuable discussion of this tradition see chapter 8 of J. Kim's *Supervenience and Mind* (1993). One of the figures identified in this group is Conway Lloyd Morgan who gave the Gifford lectures in 1922 entitled "Emergent Evolution" which was subsequently published in 1927. Readers of the *Journal* may recall that Morgan was an influence on Jung's thinking about biology and archetypes, see Hogenson (2001).

2. As I have previously discussed (Cambray 2002, p. 424) the theory of self-organizing systems can be seen to be in support of C. A. Meier who in contradistinction to M. L. von Franz and C. T. Frey-Wehrin, argued that psychosomatic phenomena are manifestations of acausal connectedness; Jung himself was ambivalent about this acknowledging if Meier's position proved to be true then his view "that synchronicity is a relatively rare phenomenon would have to be corrected" (Jung 1952, para.938 n. 70).

3. Calculus is a Latin term originally meaning “small stone” (usually white or black) used for calculations and voting. The term appears as such in the literature of alchemy, which was another of Leibniz’s interests—I thank George Hogenson for first suggesting Leibniz’s double meaning to me.

4. Fr. Antoine Verjus, S.J., secretary to Louis XIV’s Jesuit confessor, Francois la Chaise (Mungello 1977, pp.41-42).

5. This is clear from Jung’s own lecture at this conference where he remarks “An example of this is the oracle method of the *I Ching*, which Dr. Hellmut Wilhelm has described in detail at this meeting” (Campbell 1957, p. 207); Hellmut Wilhelm’s 1943 original reference can be in his article in *Man and Time* (Campbell 1957), where it is listed on p. 218 as, “Leibniz and the *I-ching*.” *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis in Sinis* 16 (1943): 205-219.

6. In “Remarks on Chinese Rites and Religion,” Leibniz comments: “...the substance of the ancient theology of the Chinese is intact and, purged of additional errors can be harnessed to the great truths of the Christian religion. Fohi, [Fu Hsi] the most ancient prince and philosopher of the Chinese, had understood the origin of things from unity and nothing, i.e., his mysterious figures reveal something of an analogy to Creation, containing the binary arithmetic (and yet hinting at greater things) that I rediscovered after so many thousands of years, where all numbers are written by only two notations, 0 and 1.” He goes on to give a table showing the correlation between binary numbers and the structure of the hexagrams in relation to base ten. (Cook and Rosemont 1994, p. 73).

7. As Mungello notes (1985/1989, p. 357): “The victory of the anti-Jesuit forces in the Sorbonne censure of 1700 was followed-up by other attacks on Jesuit accommodation. These attacks were so effective that Rome eventually ruled against the Jesuit interpretation of the Chinese rites in the Papal Bulls *Ex illa die* (1715) and *Ex quo singulari* (1742).” Furthermore, because the Figurists were charged with heresy and this contributed to the rejection of the Jesuit accommodation, the Figurist aspects of the Bouvet-Leibniz correspondence were edited out of the published materials in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which may be one source for the omission of this material in Hellmut Wilhelm’s rendition of the correspondence. On the other hand, however, Arthur Waley had already published “Leibniz and Fu Hsi,” in the *Bulletin of the London School of Oriental Studies*, II (1921) by the time Hellmut Wilhelm published his work on the correspondence.

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