

# The Wheel Image of Niklaus von Flüe as Symbol of the Subtle Body

Sketch of a Twenty-Year Research Effort

[ extended by new research results in August, 2003]

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**In honor of [Marie-Louise von Franz](#) on her 82nd birthday,  
January 4, 1997**

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## 1. Introduction

In her seminal book, *Die Visionen des Niklaus von Flüe*<sup>1</sup> (*The Visions of Niklaus von Flüe*) Marie-Louise von Franz demonstrates that the peasant, politician, and soldier, rooted in medieval Switzerland, is "an absolutely unique and uncommonly original phenomenon among the saints of the Catholic Church."<sup>2</sup> His remoteness in the Swiss mountains contributed materially to his visions long remaining hidden from the higher clergy and consequently not, as those of most of the cloistered mystics, having been "purified" by confessors and superiors. Since the visions of this extraordinary Christian mystic carry "the stamp of unconventional authenticity"<sup>3</sup>, [Marie-Louise von Franz](#)'s proof is fateful that in them the latent heathen world of Germanic mythology lying behind Christianity is erupting. Surprisingly, the amplification of the motifs of the visions then reveals that the Germanic god Wotan, and with him the principle of synchronicity, was already constellated in Niklaus von Flüe five hundred years ago.



C.G. Jung also dealt with the Swiss saint in a short essay<sup>4</sup>. Jung writes: "It is nice to think that the only outstanding Swiss mystic received, by God's grace, unorthodox visions and was permitted to look with unerring eye into the depths of the divine soul, where all the creeds of humanity which dogma has divided are united in one symbolic archetype."<sup>5</sup>

In the following discussion I will sketch how this "one archetype" that appears to lie at the foundation of all the religions of our world is symbolically represented in Niklaus von Flüe's wheel image. (See figure 1.) From the perspective of the psychology of religion, this wheel image corresponds to a renewed image of God in which the world soul -- the objective psyche or the collective unconscious of C.G. Jung -- is redeemed by humankind, and along side the world soul the principle of synchronicity takes the place of the Christian God. The empirical human being experiences the inner, microcosmic liberation and redemption of the divine world soul from matter in the process of the introverted transformation of drive energies which serve in structuring the deified breath body for life after death.

[Remark of August, 2003: In the meantime I have seen that we must distinguish the macrocosmic world soul as well as the microcosmic body soul from Carl G. Jung's collective unconscious. The latter belongs to the realm of Logos, the former to the realm of Eros. The principle of Logos we can compare with the particle aspect, the Eros with the wave aspect of the matter of physics.

As synchronicities I define today events, in which outer Logos, i.e. some sort of a "knowledge of matter", meets inner Logos, i.e. the preconscious knowledge (Jung) in an acausal way. Therefore by finding the meaning of synchronicities, we can come

closer to this absolute or preconscious knowledge, and this realization leads into a much more meaningful life. This process the revolutionary depth psychologist called the individuation process.

The world soul and the body soul, however, belong to the realm of Eros in its original meaning of connectedness, and are therefore comparable with the wave principle of quantum physics. The union of Logos and Eros, of the "particle" and the "wave", the medieval alchemists called the *coniunctio*, the sexual union of the divine masculine principle with the divine feminine. This union is described by the Hermetic alchemists, as for example by Paracelsus, his student Gerardus Dorneus and Robert Fludd (see [The Return of the World Soul](#)). A few years before his death, Carl G. Jung confessed that he was not yet able to understand this process. He writes to the physicist and Nobel laureate Wolfgang Pauli: "**The problem of the coniunctio must be kept for the future; it is more than I can cope with**, and my heart reacts if I exert myself too much along these lines." [Atom and Archetype, 2001, p. 101; emphasis mine. See also my remark about synchronicity and the Pauli effect, below.]

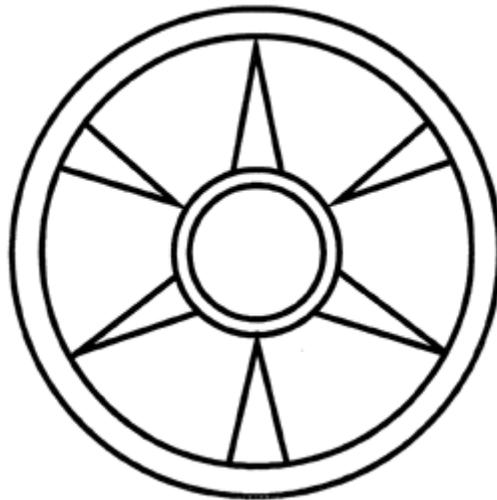


Figure 1: The Wheel Image of Niklaus von Flüe.

## 2. The Visions of the Terrible Face of God and the Wheel Image

Niklaus von Flüe was born in the year 1417 in Sachseln, in the vicinity of Lucerne, and died at the age of 70 in the year 1487. He claimed to have had visions already in the womb. This series of visions continued during his earthly life and concluded with the so-called vision of the terrible countenance of God. (See figure 2.) This last of Niklaus's visions known to us came to him some ten years prior to his death. According to the report of the Humanist Bovillus, the countenance carried a

"terrifying expression, full of anger and threat"<sup>6</sup>, and consequently was early on associated with the Christ of the Apocalypse (Revelation 1: 13ff)<sup>7</sup>. Above it carries a three-fold crown and below a tripartite beard. The six "sword blades without handles" that alternately pierced and exited this face appeared just as terrifying as the facial expression: One of the blades proceeded from the forehead and pointed upward; two additional pierced the eyes (and ears?); two more come out of the nose; and the last pair pierces the mouth<sup>8</sup>.



Figure 2: The Vision of the Terrifying Countenance of God

As Jung already saw<sup>9</sup>, this vision is completely undogmatic, indeed even heretical, for the God of the Christian could and can be only good since by definition the Church fathers eliminated the drive component that still characterized Yahweh.

However, as I have shown in my book, [\*\*Die Gottsucher - Eine Vereinigung der christlichen Mystik und der Quantenphysik in der Synchronizität C.G. Jung\*\*](#)<sup>10</sup>, the heretical character of this vision does not only refer to the summum bonum but also to the clearly double-triadic structure of the sword blades, which are further emphasized by the double triad of crown and beard, by above and below!

Contents of the collective unconscious break into consciousness in this terrifying way only when consciousness has not yet grasped an important aspect of transformation. Viewed psychologically, we must consequently conclude that Niklaus obviously had not yet understood an important content: namely, the actual essence of the double-trinitarian aspect of the new image of God that was constellated in him which had already emerged in his earlier vision of the lily being eaten by the horse.

Then we also know that he attempted to reinterpret that double trinity as the trinity of the Church fathers<sup>11</sup>. As Jung emphasizes<sup>12</sup>, he had no other option, for otherwise he would have been regarded as a heretic and dealt with accordingly. Personally it seems to me, however, that Niklaus von Flüe knew much more about the significance of his wheel image than he disclosed.

The suspicion that he could fall into the hands of the Inquisition perhaps explains why he cloaked himself in silence regarding this vision much more than about the other ones<sup>13</sup>. Consequently his silence compels us to extract the knowledge concerning the renewed image of God implicit in the symbol of the wheel image with the help of C.G. Jung's amplification method.

The three sword blades directed downward penetrate the mouth and eyes, and perhaps also the ears, of the Face of God. Regarded psychologically this destruction of "God's sense organs" (!) signifies that the preconscious knowledge in the collective unconscious wants to show Niklaus that the dogmatic Christian image of God has changed and renewed itself in him: **Since the outward-directed sense organs of the central nervous system are destroyed, the renewed image of God can obviously be experienced only by way of the inwardly directed vegetative nervous system.** Moreover, the destruction of the sense organs is also intended to show Niklaus that in the last years of his life he must live in a state of the deepest introversion.

[Remark of August, 2003: Along with Carl G. Jung I also distinguish between the content that theologians call "God" and the term "image of God". The former is defined with the help of intellectual assumptions while the latter is a deep inner empirical experience. Jung's image of God was what he called the collective unconscious with its center the (Logos-)Self. My image of God is bipolar: the masculine Logos and the feminine Eros. In the process of the *coniunctio*, described above, these two divine principles unite and by this create, in an acausal act, new living matter. This process can only be described by a theory that contains depth psychology as well as physics and parapsychology, as the physicist and Nobel laureate Wolfgang Pauli already has seen fifty years ago. See [Wolfgang Pauli and Parapsychology](#)]

Niklaus von Flüe turned the terrifying face of God into his famous wheel image<sup>14</sup> (see figure 1). When we compare his original vision with his wheel image<sup>15</sup>, the first thing we notice is that there appears to have been a pronounced tendency in the Swiss national saint **to abstract from the anthropomorphic face of God** with the help of his wheel image and **to replace the anthropomorphically conceived Christian God with a concept of energy transformation.** The symbol of the wheel is suited to this purpose like no other since its deepest symbolism may well lie precisely in this transformation of energy. Already here the unconscious obviously reveals through Niklaus that a renewed God image is constellated, the essential content of which is the double-trinity structure and the energy transformation that takes place in it.

However, precisely this energetic image of God, abstracted from all human resemblance, was also constellated in the Christian alchemists as well as in Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism, as I documented in my book, *Die Gottsucher*. In addition I pointed out there that this renewed Deity, that ultimately corresponds to the medieval concept of the world soul and provides compensation to the Trinitarian God of the Church Fathers reappears 450 years after Niklaus in the symbolism of quantum physics as the so-called quark-antiquark-sextet. (See below.) Hence the problem confronting the medieval mystic turns out to be extremely current.

Niklaus von Flüe designated the "sword blades" of the original vision as "spokes" in his wheel image. But if we orient ourselves more to the image than to the word, we

see that he sketched neither spikes nor swords, but distinct lance (or sword) points. The two sets of three opposed lance points makes it immediately clear that, in his wheel image, Niklaus followed an unconscious drive in emphasizing the double-triadic aspect of the number six. By emphasizing the oppositional nature of the two triads he unconsciously but definitively broke away from the Christian Trinity and expanded it into a double trinity. Viewed structurally, this naturally corresponds to the Seal of Solomon, the emblem of the alchemists (see figure 3b), as well as the central symbol of the heart chakra of Tantrism (see below).

### 3. The Seal of Solomon and the Pelican of Alchemy

The Seal of Solomon (the "Star of David") symbolizes the goal of the alchemical opus<sup>16</sup>. The latter consisted in transforming the purely masculine, Trinitarian God image of Christianity, represented by the upward-pointing equilateral triangle. ***The alchemists sensed that the Church Fathers' definition of an eternally unchanging God could not be ultimate wisdom.*** They sensed that a transformation of the image of God had commenced in the unconscious in the course of the Christian Aeon. Consequently they came to the extremely heretical conclusion that ***the Christian God ages, falls ill, and dies, and descends into matter, into the human body, or into the realm of human drives.*** This death of God created a situation in which ***every single human being had to take part in the renewal of the God that had become immersed in matter.***

Since Paracelsus this prima materia that was to be redeemed, transformed, or refined had likewise been imagined as trinitarian, as was the Christian God. Moreover, it turned out to be a ***feminine divine principle*** that waited in matter or in the drives on the human body for its liberation. This world soul ardently awaited human beings to redeem her, and was represented by the downward-pointing equilateral triangle, an abstraction of the female pubic area. Interpreted in terms of depth psychology and the drives, we discover that the Paracelsian antitriunity was concerned with the principles of aggression, exploration, and sexuality (see ***Paracelsus and the Renewed Image of God***).

As a consequence of freeing and redeeming this divine feminine trinitarian principle from the human body, the divine male principle should also have transformed into a new trinity, which would have meant the definition of a renewed, upper God image. In this way the renewed upper image of God could have united in a coniunctio with the redeemed, lower trinity. This union, which corresponds to the redeemed world soul, was expressed in the symbol of the Seal of Solomon.

The transformation of the upper God image would have meant that the purely masculine Christian Trinity would have had to be replaced by one comprised of the three principles of Logos, meditation, and Eros. (See figure 3b.) However, since the alchemists consciously cleaved to the Christian Trinity, they were stuck in a religious-psychological conflict between the lower, drive-based trinity and the upper, Christian one. (See figure 3a.) Since thereby they also excluded the feminine principle of Eros from their masculine image of God, they were consequently able to transform drive energy only into the two principles of Logos and meditation. By projecting the psychic energy into extraversion following the discovery of America, the interest in meditation finally also disappeared so that Logos remained the sole principle.

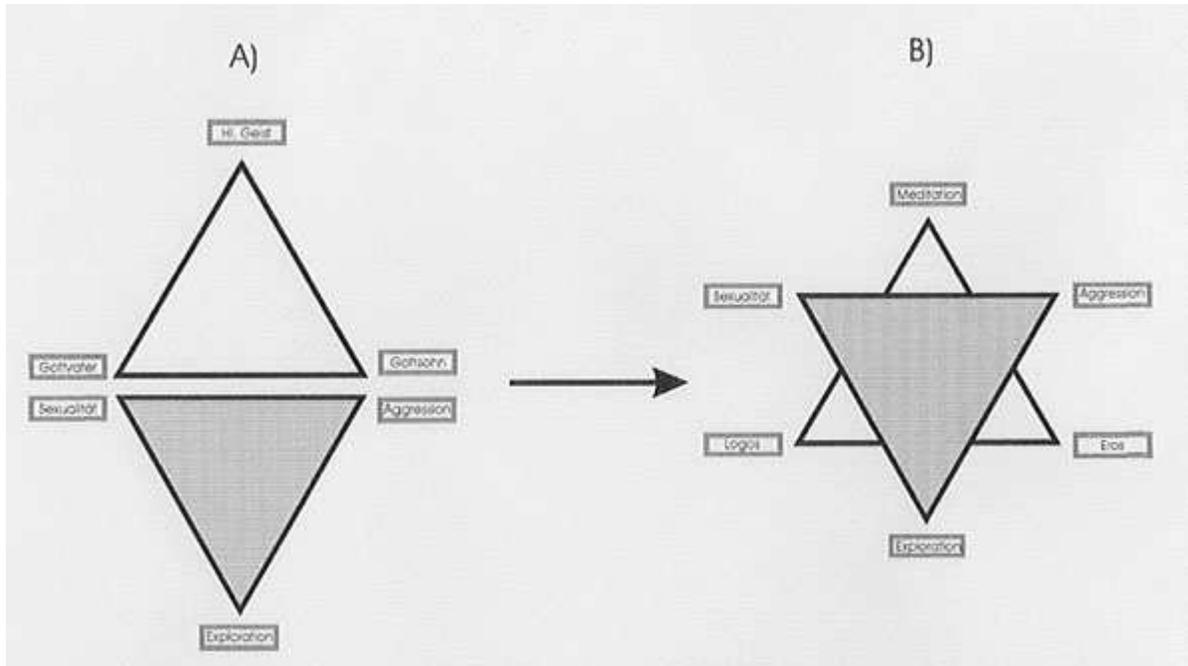


Figure 3: The Alchemists religious/psychological conflict and its solution.

The only student of Paracelsus to suspect that this most profoundly feminine principle had to be included in the renewed upper trinity was Gerhard Dorn (Dorneus). He suggests a continuation of the alchemical opus that was to begin with what he called the *unio mentalis*<sup>17</sup>. The *unio mentalis* signifies a union of spirit and psyche - he calls them animus and anima. In order to achieve this union, however, the body must first be "mortified" or "mummified." In our psychological parlance we would express this notion by saying that the body, moved by the drives and by compulsions, must be deliberately quieted, a demand lying at the foundation of every serious form of meditation and imagination. C.G. Jung's Active Imagination is a modern form of this *unio mentalis* (see C.W. 14, § 705-7).

In the second step of Dorn's opus, in what he called the *unio corporalis*, the unification of the *unio mentalis* with the previously "mortified" body was to be achieved. As a consequence of this procedure the dead body comes to life again and an exchange of attributes takes place: the body becomes psychic and the spirit-psyche becomes material. With my *Symptom-Symbol-Transformation* or *Body Centered Visualization* I created a modern version of this *unio corporalis* (see [Die VISUALISIERUNG psychosomatischer Symptome oder Symptom-Symbol-Transformation](#)). My hope is that it will be the beginning of an Archetypal Psychosomatics based on Carl Jung's Psychology.

The process of the exchange of attributes is represented by the alchemical pelican. (See figure 4.) This double bellied container has, in its upper part, two characteristic tubes that lead back into the lower part. During the process of boiling and vaporizing a liquid the pelican was tightly closed so that the vapor was conducted back into the

liquid and thus condensed. This affected the so-called circular or rotary distillation<sup>18</sup>, and of course it was crowned with success only when the pelican remained tightly closed. According to the alchemists' conception, this procedure brought about an ever more highly concentrated distillate, which thereby became the essence of the prima materia which, for its part, was the goal of the entire procedure.

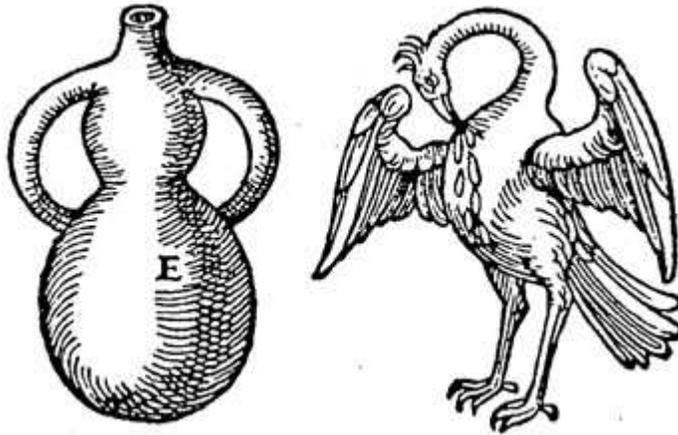


Figure 4: The alchemical pelican and the Christian pelican

However, the process depicted in the Pelican also corresponds to the concretization of the alchemical dictum, **"Make the fixed volatile, and the volatile fixed..."**<sup>19</sup>. In modern psychological language, this exchange of attributes refers to the phenomenon of synchronicity discovered by Jung: the relatively simultaneous appearance of meaningfully-related inner and outer events. In the phenomenon of synchronicity, a psychization of matter and a relatively simultaneous rematerialization of psyche takes place, since "psyche behaves as if it were material, or matter as if it belonged to our psyche"<sup>20</sup>. In the most constructive case, such synchronicities lead to a creative process in the individual; their destructive variant has entered the history of physics as the so-called Wolfgang Pauli-effect.

[Remark of August, 2003: In the meantime, I have seen that we must distinguish Jung's synchronicity from the Pauli effect. In the former no physical energy exchange takes place. Therefore Jung combines the inner and the outer event by their common meaning. The Pauli effect, however, can only be explained when we assume that a transformation of psychic energy (yin) into physical energy (yang) and vice versa takes place. Jung had a hunch about this difference towards the end of his life (in 1949), but did not publish about it. In a letter, he talks of **a special sort of synchronicity, the "synchronistic effects with a vitalizing characteristics which are not only synchronistic but let us suppose that psychic energy influences living and dead objects..."** {my transl.; RFR} Then he hunches that this has to do with a **relativization of space and time and with the "subtle body"**. (See also **A New Melody, a New Genesis**, § 14).

If we bear in mind that Jung always avoided the term "synchronistic effect", because it is a contradiction per se - synchronicity is by definition acausal, an effect by definition causal - we can see that he began to doubt his concept of synchronicity himself. Therefore ***we are forced to find an extension of the synchronicity concept*** which I try with the distinction between processes happening only in the Logos realm (yang) and other processes that occur as an exchange of attributes, i.e., "Logos energy" (yang) transforms into "Eros energy" (yin), and in a parallel process yin transforms into yang (see ***Die mystische Hochzeit (coniunctio)...***, section 6.4.5)].

On the basis of the Christian legend of the pelican, in which the pelican rends its breast in order to awaken its dead fledglings to new life (a symbol of the lance of Longinus), it (the pelican) was also equated with the divine Heart of Jesus. Since, however, the alchemical pelican describes an eminently introverted procedure (the *vas bene clausum*), it follows that the heart, i.e., Eros and introversion unconditionally belong together.

If we abstract the meaning from the concrete pelican of alchemy and take it purely symbolically, we see that it describes a procedure that takes place in a completely introverted way: Taking the drives as the object of specific imagination techniques, the modern alchemist sets in motion the process of psychizing the matter of the body [yang -> yin] to which, on the basis of the synchronistic modus of this process, also belongs a parallel process of rematerializing the psyche [yin -> yang]. In this process the matter newly created by the individual [yin] in an introverted act of creation is to be understood as subtle or breath-like. It corresponds to the subtle body, created in this life for the life after death, which, in turn, is the microcosmic aspect of the redeemed world soul. I call this modern parallel to the alchemistic *coniunctio* the ***microcosmic or inner synchronicity*** in order to distinguish this energetic event, observable only in the deepest introversion, from the outer-inner synchronicity Jung discovered. It corresponds to the function of introverted Eros and provides the actual counterweight to the macrocosmic, external aspect of causality related to matter (Logos).

The qualitative aspect of the number three corresponds to the concept of energy<sup>21</sup>. The Seal of Solomon holds an ambivalent energy concept. In addition to physico-chemical energy (or the external, physical aspect of matter), it also contains what Jung called objective psychic energy (or inner, microcosmic, "subtle" matter), which in quantum physics reappears as the so-called "negative energy" with its peculiar properties.

[Remark of August, 2003: Meanwhile I have seen that Jung's objective psychic energy is only the yang part of the energetics of the unconscious. The corresponding macrocosmic yin part is the alchemistic world soul; the microcosmic part is what I call the body soul (or soul body or subtle body).]

The practicing alchemist always vacillated between the macrocosmic procedure of energizing matter (the liberation of physical energy; [2003: yang]) and the microcosmic psychization of the matter of the body (liberation of objective psychic energy [2003: of the body soul; yin]). But the emphasis on Logos and extraversion had as a consequence that the extraverted procedure gained the upper hand in the 17th Century so that the liberation of objective psychic energy [2003: of the body soul] from the matter of the body (possible only with the aide of the introverted

process) disappeared from the domain of science after the time of Paracelsus. The macrocosmic liberation of physical energy became the sole pursuit and goal of science, a development that has led in our times to the contemporary delusion of energizing matter (e.g., in the atom bomb, the squandering of fossil fuels, mobility, and so on).

***But the neglect of introversion and of Eros also carried the consequence that the two primary symbols of the alchemical opus -- the Seal of Solomon and the pelican -- could not be united in a single symbol. Granted, the Seal of Solomon has the double-triadic structure necessary for the exchange of attributes (i.e., the bipolarity of the concept of energy), but it lacks a link that can transform the one form of energy into the other. This transformation can take place only in the pelican, that is, in the human heart, and therefore only through introversion.***

***However, the pelican -- the symbol of the heart and of introversion -- depicts the phenomenon of the exchange of attributes, i.e., of synchronicity, but it lacks the necessary double-triadic structure (which the Seal of Solomon describes).***

#### **4. The Transformation of Energy in the Wheel Image**

Let us return to the wheel image of Niklaus von Flüe. As we clearly see, the "spokes" correspond to the "sword points" of the original vision. Since "outer" and "upper" as well as "inner" and "lower" are psychologically equivalent symbolic concepts, we can say that the two opposed lance triads of the vision correspond to the alchemical Seal of Solomon.

Now, in revising his vision, Niklaus added to the double-trinitarian symbolism the two double circles, one inner and one on the periphery. Hence we must ask ourselves a question: What content that does not appear in the vision of the terrible countenance of God appeared so essential to Niklaus that, in the course of working on the original vision, he added to it (in the form of the double circles)?

During his vision Niklaus experienced the sensation -- which undoubtedly made him extremely anxious -- of his heart nearly bursting into tiny fragments<sup>22</sup>, and he was so overwhelmed that he fell to the ground. Niklaus's psychosomatic reaction gives us the first hint that his heart was affected by the vision of the terrifying countenance of God and therefore is associated with the wheel image.

In the so-called pilgrim's tract, the anonymous pilgrim mentions that Brother Klaus had taught him to interpret the inner circle of the wheel image "as the clear mirror of the living God"<sup>23</sup>. In Sufism<sup>24</sup>, the Moslem mystical tradition, the heart is "the mirror in which God can see Himself"<sup>25</sup>, and therefore it is the meeting place between the divine and the human<sup>26</sup>. This agrees with the fact that in mysticism in general the place of encounter with the divine is the human heart<sup>27</sup>.

In its purified condition, the Sufi's heart corresponds to the astral body (the breath body, the subtle body, the body soul, see also below), which has the ability to

ascend to heaven<sup>28</sup>. In order to attain its purified state, it must first be "broken"<sup>29</sup> (!) and wants to run away<sup>30</sup> (because it suffers unconsciously). Yet it must become "a ruin"<sup>31</sup> (Brother Klaus's feeling that his heart was about to shatter into little fragments) so that the extra-divine influences in it can be destroyed. Having it out with one's drive nature is called the "uninterrupted polishing of the iron mirror of the heart"<sup>32</sup>, and this activity results in *the Seal of Solomon in the heart*<sup>33</sup>.

Here I must point out that the drive nature is not repressed, as for example in the Christian Sacred Heart mysticism; rather, the Moslem Sufi mysticism makes the refinement of the content of the drives into a conscious task<sup>34</sup>. Already early on, when Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was asked how his Shaitan (i.e., Satan, a synonym for his drive nature) behaved, he answered, "My Shaitan has become a Moslem and does only what I command him to do."<sup>35</sup> One can scarcely cite a more impressive depiction of the integration of the shadow and of the drives.

From these amplifications we see that Sufism is replete with archetypal symbols similar to those in the Christian mysticism of Niklaus von Flüe. This might well be the reason why today's youth feels such an affinity for Sufism (and for Tantrism). That the Swiss national saint was seized by the same archetypal transformation symbolism may not be so well known. The prophet does not count for much in his own land -- above all not in Switzerland.

The amplifications from Islamic mysticism, however, show above all that by the "Mirror of God" (in the Pilgrim's Tract) which Niklaus equates with the inner double circle of the wheel image, he means the human heart. Here, in the human heart, is obviously where the transformation of the Christian image of God is to take place<sup>36</sup>.

The three lance points are pointed to this center, that is, directed at the heart so that a three-fold piercing of the heart results. Since this heart possesses both human and divine qualities, this symbolism is reminiscent of the central motif of the Sacred Heart of Jesus mysticism, the lance of Longinus, which opens the heart of the God-Man Christ. Granted, this official Christian mysticism lacks the confrontation and coming-to-terms with the drive nature. Paracelsus in his alchemical studies made the first attempt at transformation of these instinctive energies and, as we have seen, found the suitable transformation symbol in the pelican.

According to Niklaus the outer double circle of the wheel image signifies the "visible things and the effects they evoke in us"<sup>37</sup>. This expression, of course, refers to the external world perceived by the five senses and their influences on our psyche. If we equate these "visible things" with the material aspect of the cosmos in general, we also include the human body and its drives. The result is that the three inward-directed lance points in the wheel image obviously are rooted in the material or bodily sphere and penetrate the heart.

By adding the two double circles to the double trinity of the original vision, a decisive shift took place in Niklaus. In contrast to the Heart of Jesus mysticism -- which denies the connection between the human-divine heart and the body and its drives and hence represses the transformation of drive energy, resulting in a sentimentalized romanticism -- Niklaus accomplishes a union of the bodily and the drive spheres with the heart.

As the examination of the pelican symbolism has shown, the word "heart" signifies a total introversion and synchronicity. Viewed psychologically, Niklaus's uniting of the drive sphere with the heart therefore means that drive energies are turned inward (introverted) so that the inner synchronistic process described above is set in motion.

With this the Swiss mystic created the necessary precondition for the introverted working through of the energetic impulses stemming from the drive triad. But at the same time -- consciously or unconsciously -- he became a Christian heretic since he was ready to acknowledge his drive nature as the prima materia of an opus in which the latter was to be refined into the quintessence.

According to the statement in the vision, influences obviously proceed also from these externals, the "things of the senses," but which destroy the "sense organs" of the old image of God. A renewed image of God therefore appears to be essentially associated with a blindness, deafness and muteness in relation to the exterior<sup>38</sup>, which manifestly means that the renewed Deity intends to exert no causal influence on the outer world, i.e., on that aspect of creation dependent on cause and effect.

From the psychological point of view, the exclusion of the human sense organs from the equation is always compensated by a concentration on the "inside of matter," that is, on the vegetative body. The externals that destroy the sense organs -- the "things of the senses and the effects they evoke in us" -- that Niklaus symbolizes by the two outer double circles thus effects a concentration on the vegetative nervous system. By adding the outer double circles to his vision of the terrible countenance of God, Niklaus von Flüe achieved nothing less than a deification of the vegetative nervous system, which placed him at the pinnacle of heresy.

The lance points proceeding from the heart appear to touch the bodily world (the outer double circles in the wheel image) in some way. Since Niklaus attempted to reduce the energetic double trinity of the renewed God image that was arising in him to the Christian Trinity, he could not yet recognize -- in contrast to Paracelsus, the Sufis, and the Tantrists (see below) -- that the lance points coming from the heart serve the creation of the divine breath body, i.e., a more subtle form of bodily matter. Yet he experienced this transformation process with all the certainty of bodily sensations. Moreover, he appears to have had an unconscious premonition of this nexus, for he links the outward-extending lance points with the virgin birth and with the host<sup>39</sup>, thus with two concepts of Catholic dogma that have an inner relation to those of the astral or breath body and to subtle matter.

Now we understand why Niklaus, following an inner urgency, did not simply draw one outer and one inner circle, but two double circles: The outer double circle intends to make clear that a new, subtle matter -- the divine breath body itself -- is constructed from the material body via the vegetative nervous system, and the inner double circle shows that this formation takes place synchronistically (in the inner, "subtle," aspect of the heart, that is, in anahata, which I will discuss below in greater detail).

As the reader can easily see from my exposition, the two double circles of the wheel image correspond to

***the two double circles of the wheel image correspond to the symbolic content of the pelican, i.e.***

***the process body => heart => introversion => synchronistic event => exchange of attributes => body soul (soul body, subtle body),***

whereas

***the double triad of the "spokes" correspond to the symbolism of the Seal of Solomon, i.e.,***

***the double triadic structure and the bipolar energy concept***

***With the wheel image, Niklaus von Flüe succeeded in uniting the Seal of Solomon and the alchemical pelican in one symbol*** in which now the two triads of the Seal of Solomon are linked in such a way that the transformation of energy can take place. Since the hub of the wheel image corresponds to the heart, the exchange of attributes takes place in the heart; i.e., in total introversion. And only in introversion -- in the absolutely sealed pelican -- is the formation of the divine feminine principle of Eros possible.

Therefore both a psychization of matter and a relatively concurrent rematerialization of objective psychic energy in a subtle (breath body) form of matter can take place. Thus the wheel image becomes a more complete symbol than the double triad of the Seal of Solomon since in the former the formation of the breath body is possible according to the introverted synchronistic modality. Hence it also becomes a symbol of what I earlier defined as inner synchronicity, which serves the deification of the human body, i.e., the formation of the subtle body.

As we saw above, the microcosmic or inner synchronicity corresponds to the functional principle of introverted Eros. Obviously Niklaus, in the deepest introversion, succeeded in uniting the third aspect of the renewed God image -- the Eros principle -- and the attendant formation of the breath body.

That Niklaus von Flüe lived an extraordinarily intense Eros is attested by the fact that in his solitude he developed such a deep capacity for relationship that he soon became the advisor of hundreds of people whose souls he could read intuitively. As we can gather from the reports of his contemporaries, at times his hermitage was veritably besieged by supplicants and his fame as an advisor spread across half of

Europe. Thus the Swiss saint ultimately became the model of the archetype of the priest-physician, again intensely constellated, an advisor in both psychological and spiritual questions<sup>40</sup>.

But in a decisive way he also aided Switzerland that was threatened with civil war at that time: Without leaving his retreat, he became the successful mediator at the Stans Convention, thanks to his radiant Eros. Consequently he is regarded as the real father of the Accord of Stans of 1481, a peace treaty between rural Inner Switzerland and the cities which created a new order in the relationships among Swiss citizens. This Accord provided the basis for Swiss civil life for the next three hundred years, and was so infused with Eros that it survived even the turmoil of the War of Reformation. Without Niklaus von Flüe, therefore, Switzerland in its present form would hardly exist<sup>41</sup>.

Further we know that during the last twenty years of his life, Niklaus did not eat anymore<sup>42</sup>. It is apparent that, with the aid of the synchronistic Eros principle, the formation of the breath body had as a consequence his lack of need for any earthly nourishment in this life. His contemporaries also report that he was seen at various other places, especially at the shrine of the healing Black Madonna in Einsiedeln<sup>43</sup>. In parapsychology this phenomenon is called translocation or bilocation. He himself tells that he left his body and in this way went from his hermitage to Sachseln<sup>44</sup>, reminiscent of the out-of-body experiences. Niklaus is also said to have had the gift of "cardiognose"<sup>45</sup>, that is, he saw directly into the hearts of his fellows and was able to point out their evil deeds clairvoyantly. All these phenomena can be explained only with the aid of Jung's synchronicity principle, and they also appear in the developmental process of the Sufis<sup>46</sup> and above all of the Tantricians<sup>47</sup>. Therefore we shall turn to the latter in order to show that in the Christian mystic Niklaus, in addition to Moslem mysticism, Buddhist and Hindu mysticism, concerning with the formation of the breath body, was constellated, too.

## **5. The Wheel Image and the Creation of the Subtle Body in Tantrism**

As we have seen above, the motif of the destruction of the "divine sense organs" leads to a deification of the vegetative body. The concept of the deification of the vegetative body is one of the central motifs of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. In addition to the gross material view of the world and the human body -- the sthula aspect -- the Tantrist recognizes yet another dimension -- the so-called suksma aspect<sup>48</sup>. The latter has a divine quality and can be experienced only inwardly.

With the help of an introspective-searching attitude, the Tantrist have discovered that this divine energy concentrates in seven centers of the vegetative human body. The sthula aspect of these centers corresponds to certain plexes of the vegetative nervous system; the suksma aspect aligns with the chakras associated with these plexes. (See figure 5.)

As I have shown in *Die Gottsucher*<sup>49</sup> the lower chakras correspond, expressed in psychological terminology, to the drive triad of exploration, sexuality, and aggression. Tantrism therefore aims at the same introverted coming-to-terms-with the drives which is, as we saw above, a central motif in Sufism and in Paracelsus's alchemy.

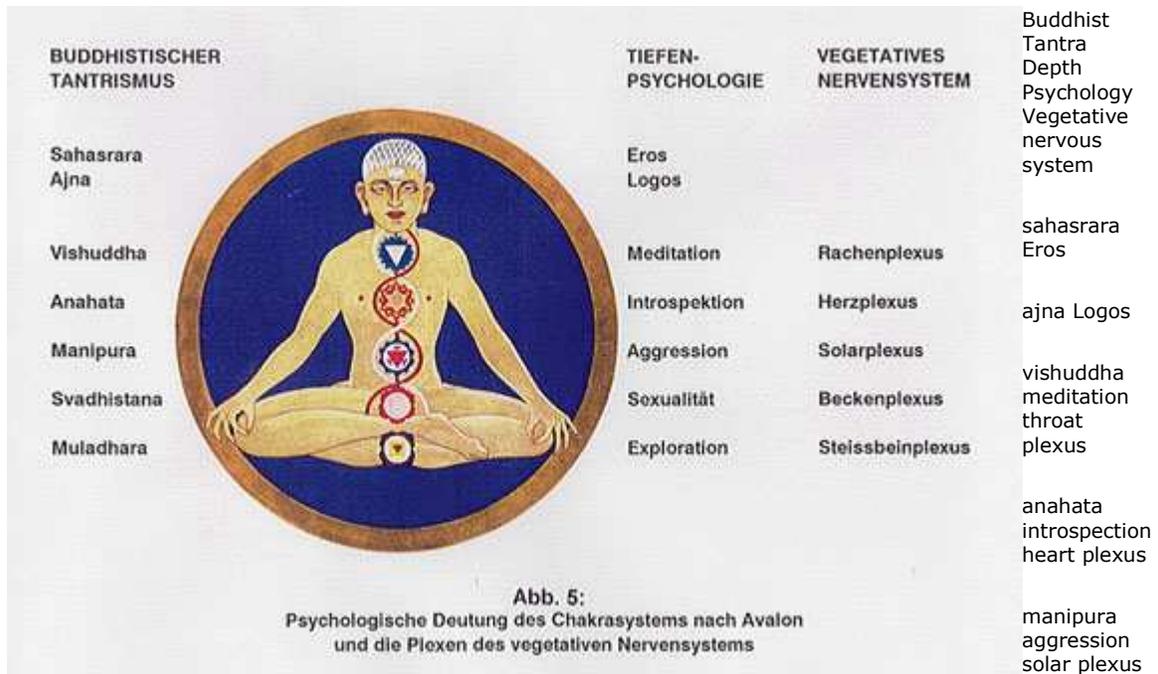
In order to attain the goal of refining the drive energies, the Tantrist opens the chakras in an introverted, meditative process, proceeding from below upward<sup>50</sup>, and causes the energy contained in them to flow into the chakras above the diaphragm, but especially into the anahata chakra. The image associated with this, particularly in Hindu Tantrism, is of the Kundalini serpent ascending from below and penetrating the chakras. When the three qualitatively different energies are set free in this introverted process, the Kundalini finally pierces the anahata chakra, the suksma aspect of the vegetative heart plexus. In this manner the first step is taken toward forming the subtle body<sup>51</sup>.

[Remark of August, 2003: With the help of my work with clients I have - already at least 15 years ago - seen that ***we in the Western civilization are not allowed to imitate this Tantric process***. In order to do so ***we must first consciously quit the brain and enter the belly, because we have already performed a limited part of the Tantric process once, and are now identified with the 6th chakra at the front***. I have shown the relative ideas in two articles: [Neotantrism and Body Centered Visualization](#) and [Bilder aus dem Bauch - Tantrismus und Alternative Psychosomatik](#) (in German).

Niklaus von Flüe was not at all an intellectual. He was a simple peasant and a mystic; therefore he did not need to first quit the brain. Similarly, the consciousness of the Buddhist and Hindu Tantrist was situated in the belly, therefore the Kundalini had first to rise.]

It is immediately apparent that this symbolism corresponds to that of the three lance points in Niklaus's wheel image, which, proceeding from the physical, penetrate the heart.

If we interpret the center of the wheel image as the heart, we note that the three remaining lance points proceed from it. This also agrees with the Tantric symbolism: three additional chakras are situated above the anahata which likewise will be penetrated by the Kundalini serpent after it has broken through the heart chakra (see figure 5). In this manner the higher aspects of the breath body are constructed<sup>52</sup>. The trinitarian aspect of this breath body immediately reminded us, of course, of the renewed upper Trinity of the alchemical opus, and its qualitative content -- the three upper koshas -- are reminiscent of the principles of meditation, of Logos, and of Eros.



svadhasthana sexuality abdominal plexus

muladhara exploration coccyx plexus

Figure 5: Psychological interpretation of the chakra system according to Avalon and the plexes of the vegetative nervous system

Anahata, the suksma aspect of the heart, thus forms the center of two opposed triads. The lower three chakras obviously contain the suksma aspect of what I have called the drive triad, i.e., in psychological language that aspect of exploration, sexuality, and aggression that can be experienced in introversion; the three upper chakras contain the renewed upper Trinity of Logos, meditation, and Eros, so that anahata ultimately links the lower and the upper trinities. It follows that the heart chakra also contains the Seal of Solomon (cf. figure 5), the union of the instinctive with the spiritual/psychic Trinity which is found in the human heart. This union of the double triadic symbol with the heart, however, corresponds to the structure of the wheel image.

Through a meditative process [dhyana<sup>53</sup>], Buddhist Tantrism<sup>54</sup> also endeavors to construct the two principles of creative cognition (prajna) and active compassion (karuna). Clearly, the Eros and Logos principles are to be constructed with the aid of meditation. This meditation refers to the "drive energies"<sup>55</sup> that the Tantrist wants neither to unite nor to negate, but rather seeks "to purify and transform in the fire of cognition so that they become forces of enlightenment."<sup>56</sup> Buddhism also structures these drive energies as a lower trinity, the introverted aspect of which is visualized as the three lower chakras, muladhara, svadhasthana, and manipura. Moreover, there is the idea that the sushumna, the central channel in the spine that links the chakras (see figure 5), penetrates the chakras. It is apparent that here, too, the

energies in the exploratory, the sexual, and the aggressive drives are first of all channeled into the anahata chakra which in turn is penetrated by the sushumna.

If then, proceeding from anahata, the three upper principles are developed through a further transformation, a unification of prajna and karuna takes place, and this "is the perfect path of enlightenment."<sup>57</sup> That is to say, when prajna, "the still, all-embracing, all-receiving and all-generating Eternal Feminine is joined with the dynamic-masculine principle of active compassion (karuna), the all-pervading force of active love . . . , then perfect Buddhahood has been attained. For understanding without feeling, knowledge without love, cognition without compassion leads to pure negation, to petrification, to spiritual death, to nothing but vacuum; whereas feeling without reason, love without cognition (blind love), compassion without knowledge leads to vagueness and complete disintegration. But where both strands are joined, where the great synthesis of heart and head, feeling and reason, highest love and deepest knowledge has come to pass, there wholeness is created, perfect enlightenment attained."<sup>58</sup>

## **6. "Was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält" ("What holds the innards of the world together")**

This union of Eros and Logos with the aid of meditation (imaginatio) also corresponds to the goal of the alchemical opus, the creation of the incarnated God-Man in the empirical human being, which, of all Paracelsus's students, only Gerhard Dorn described, as we have seen. Following his unio corporalis, in which the inner synchronistic exchange of attributes takes place, he goes one step farther, describing the goal of the opus in the typical mythologizing language of the alchemists<sup>59</sup>: After the lapis -- a synonym both of the deified breath body as well as of the renewed God image -- has been formed through the alchemical procedure, "a dark red liquid, like blood, sweats out drop by drop from their material and their vessel."<sup>60</sup>

Of course we immediately think of the similarity between this process and the symbolism of the wheel image in which the three "lances" pierce the heart which is naturally associated with letting the blood of the God-Man. But also the central motif of the Sacred Heart mysticism, of Longinus's lance piercing the heart of Christ, comes immediately to mind. Yet as Jung emphasizes, this process cannot represent a return to the Sacred Heart mysticism. Because the alchemical lapis is formed through human effort and, moreover, is rooted in the realm of human instinctual drives, it cannot correspond to the historical Christ. According to Gerhard Dorn's statements, the stone sweating blood therefore symbolizes the *putissimus homo*, whom Jung interprets as the "most authentic" and "unfalsified" human being in contrast to Christ, who represents the *homo purissimus*, the pure God-Man, i.e., free from all sin. As Jung explains, Dorn's goal of the blood-sweating lapis has to do with *the God-Man of the future incarnated in the very ordinary human being*, the alchemical *Servator cosmi* or *Salvator macrocosmi*, who shall come at the beginning of the apocalyptic period and "who shall bring about what the sacrificial death of Christ has obviously left unfinished, namely the deliverance of the world from evil."<sup>61</sup> And Jung draws the conclusion that, from the viewpoint of depth psychology, the incarnated God-Man has to do with the union of the principles of Eros and Logos which is effected by working on the human drive nature, that is, obviously via a meditative principle.

The goal of incarnating the *putissimus homo* therefore corresponds to the formation of a renewed God image which alchemy attempted to represent in the double trinity of the Seal of Solomon with the aid of which the redemption of the World Soul -- entrapped in matter, in the human body, and in its drives -- was supposed to come to pass<sup>62</sup>. However, as we have seen, alchemy failed due to the fact that it clung to the Christian Trinity. Therefore it was not able to see that the Double Trinity would have to consist of a renewed upper Trinity - which I interpret as the three principles of Logos, meditation, and Eros - which would be distilled out of their material mirror image, the lower trinity of aggression, exploration, and sexuality. Further we have seen that this abstract God image lacks the energetic aspect, that is, above all a point binding the opposites together in which this transformation could take place. Therefore alchemy could not yet unite its two primary symbols, the pelican and the Seal of Solomon, in one unified symbol.

Niklaus von Flüe's wheel image was the first to contain the idea of **energizing the abstract God image**, an idea inherent in both the Tantric and the Sufi processes. And only by energizing the image -- which, viewed empirically, corresponds to a dimmed consciousness coming to terms with the human drives in introversion -- is it possible to create the precondition for the redeemed world soul (or *putissimus homo* or the *Servator cosmi* that Jung mentions) to be able to penetrate the realm as an experiencer through human consciousness. Moreover, the wheel image shows us that the macrocosmic redemption of the world soul corresponds to the formation of a microcosmic, deified breath body in which the two Trinities are bound together via the symbol of the heart, i.e., through the experience of inner synchronicity.

In this manner the  $2 \times (3+1)$  structure of the wheel image arises out of the double trinity of the Seal of Solomon, i.e., a very specifically structured ogdoad<sup>63</sup>. Precisely this structure turns up today in the so-called meson octet<sup>64</sup> of quantum physics, which in turn arises from the double-triadic quark-antiquark sextet (see figure 6). **But the meson octet describes nothing less than atomic force itself which binds together the elementary particles of every atomic nucleus. From another point of view, "Was die Welt im Innersten zusammen hält" -- what holds the innards of the world together -- is Niklaus von Flüe's wheel image.**

### Das Quark-Antiquark-Sextett und das Mesonen-Oktett

Verteilung der einfachsten Mesonenfamilie und der sie konstituierenden Quarks in einem Koordinatensystem  $I_3$ - $Y$ , mit  $Y$  = Hyperladung,  $I_3$  = dritte Komponente des Isospins

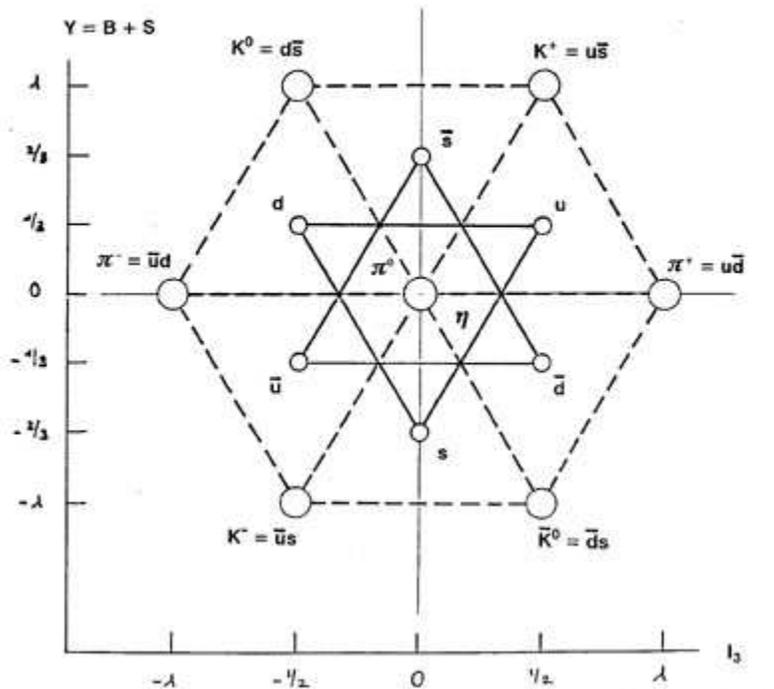


Figure 6: The quark-antiquark sextet and the meson octet:

**Distribution of the simplest meson family and the quarks that constitute it in a coordinate system  $I_3$ - $Y$ , with  $Y$  = hyper charge,  $I_3$  = the third component of the isospin.**

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<sup>1</sup> Franz, Marie-Louise, v.: *Die Visionen des Niklaus von Flüe*, 2. ed., Zurich, 1980 (not yet published in English)

<sup>4</sup> Jung, CG: *Brother Klaus*, CW, vol. 11, § 474-87

<sup>5</sup> Jung, CG: CW, vol. 11, § 487

<sup>10</sup> Roth, Remo F.: *Die Gottsucher: Eine Vereinigung der christlichen Mystik und der Quantenphysik in der Synchronizitaet C.G. Jungs*. Frankfurt (1992).

<sup>13</sup> "It appears that the saint cloaked himself in secrecy more here than regarding the other phenomena so that even his trusted friends and contemporaries knew nothing exact about it and consequently chose to remain silent." Stoeckli, A., *Die Visionen des seligen Bruder Klaus*, Einsiedeln, Switzerland, 1933, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> In this connection I must point out explicitly that the medallions with Christian content painted together with the wheel image on the wall of the church in Sachseln are not from Niklaus' hand, but rather are a later addition. (cf. von Franz, *Visionen*, p. 121, note 22, and Stöckli, *Die Visionen des seligen Bruder Klaus*, p. 42ff.)

<sup>16</sup> see Roth, Remo, F.: *Die Gottsucher*, chap. 4

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Roth, *Die Gottsucher*, chapter 2.

<sup>22</sup> von Franz, *Visionen*, p. 115. It is also told of Muhammed, the founder of Islam, that his heart was torn asunder.

<sup>24</sup> In Niklaus there are a large number of symbols that also play a great role in Sufi mysticism.

<sup>36</sup> As we will see below, the heart here refers to the breath-body (or astral body), which in Tantrism is called anahata. In anahata the gross material aspect of bodily substance is transformed into the subtle aspect.

<sup>38</sup> On the basis of this insight I have developed what I call the Body Centered Visualization or Symptom Symbol Transformation process, an imaginative method based on C.G. Jung's active imagination and Paracelsus's insights, in which the inner images are sought that correspond to the symptoms or to a somatic illness. This method consists in a conscious "blindness" vis à vis the somatic symptom (what psyche sees as "external") with the purpose of extracting the symptom's inner image that arises from the vegetative nervous system. The interpretation of such images appears to set in motion a negentropic process that exerts a healing effect. On the basis of this approach, moreover, it is possible to develop a new, archetypal psychosomatics based on Jung's psychology. (For more on this see Remo F. Roth, *Hat AIDS einen Sinn? (What Does AIDS Mean?)*).

<sup>39</sup> That the phenomenon of the renewed upper Trinity is associated with the astral body in this way ought to give quantum physics something to think about. Quantum physics, with its three antiquarks -- anti-up, anti-down, and anti-strange -- postulates a renewed upper Trinity. Obviously, negative energy, appearing behind antimatter, is related to the subtle body.

<sup>42</sup> According to Niklaus's statements, attested by his confessor, attending Mass and watching the priest during communion was sufficient to keep his body alive! Obviously the saint had found a pathway to synthesize negentropic (life-sustaining) energy, a further indication that he had unconsciously succeeded in constructing the subtle body.

<sup>45</sup> Von Franz relates the gift of cardiognose with the development of the Eros principle which makes possible direct access to the "preconscious" or "absolute knowledge" of the collective unconscious.

<sup>49</sup> See Roth, *Die Gottsucher*, Ch. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Since the Tantrist localizes "consciousness" in the belly at the beginning of the process, energy flow from below upward results. The contemporary occidental individual, in contrast, identifies all too much with consciousness that resides somewhere in the region of the head, for which reason he or she must first submit to a process moving from above downward. This process corresponds to the fall of the God-Man.

<sup>62</sup> As I have shown in *Hat AIDS einen Sinn? Behandlungsmöglichkeiten der HIV-Infektion auf der Grundlage tiefenpsychologischer Imaginationsmethoden* (English: *What Does AIDS Mean? HIV Treatment Possibilities on the Basis of Imaginal Methods in Depth Psychology*), the human immune deficiency virus (HIV) corresponds symbolically and phenomenologically to the World Soul (Purusha). Therefore liberating it from the human body by imaginal methods offers a highly promising depth-psychological approach toward treating HIV infected persons.

<sup>63</sup> This ogdoad, of course, is reminiscent of Jung's typology with its eight possible functions in which the inferior function, the link with the collective unconscious or the world soul, occupies a special place.

<sup>64</sup> see Roth, Remo, F.: *Die Gottsucher*, chap.6