



Alchemy and Psychotherapy: Post-Jungian Perspectives

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Alchemical symbols are part of popular culture, most recently popularised in the Harry Potter books. Alchemy intrigued Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology. It inspired him as he wrote 'the Red Book' - the journal of his voyage of internal discovery. He devoted much of his life to it, using alchemical symbols as metaphors for unconscious processes. *Alchemy and Psychotherapy* explores the issue of alchemy in the consulting room and its application to social and political issues. This book argues against the dominant discourse in contemporary psychotherapy - scientific materialism - and for the discovery of spiritual meaning.

Alchemy and Psychotherapy has four main sections:

'Alchemy and meaning' - looks at the history of alchemy, particularly the symbol of the *coniunctio* - sacred marriage - a metaphor for the therapeutic relationship.

'The symbolic attitude' - explores working with dreams, fairytales, astrology and the body: each of which is a symbolic language.

'The spirit and the natural world' - discusses the concept of 'burn out' - of therapists, our ecological resources, the mystical aspects of quantum physics and the philosophical underpinning of symbol formation.

'Clinical Applications' - shows alchemy's use with victims of abuse, those struggling to secure gender identity, in anorexia and in 'social healing' - atonement and restorative justice - which apply the idea of the *coniunctio*.

Alchemy and Psychotherapy is illustrated throughout with clinical examples, alchemical pictures and poetry which emphasise that alchemy is both a creative art and a science. Bringing together contributors from a wide range of disciplines, Dale Mathers and contributors show that therapy is both art and science, that the consulting room is the alchemical laboratory, and that their research is their creative engagement. *Alchemy and Psychotherapy* will be a valuable resource for practitioners, students at all levels of psychotherapy, analytical psychology,

psychoanalysis and creative, art-based therapies and for creative practitioners (in film, literature and performing arts) who draw on Jung's ideas.

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Alchemy and Psychotherapy: Post-Jungian Perspectives From Routledge Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1634457 in Books
- Published on: 2014-03-15
- Released on: 2014-03-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1

- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .70" w x 6.14" l, 1.03 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

"A unique, coherent and multi-faceted volume. For those who find the Jungian use of alchemy bewildering, the book brings clarity and much-needed explanation. For those already into alchemy, the sheer range of topics covered and the vigour of the writing – from philosophy of science to religious experience to clinical practice – will make for an indispensable resource. Now that the intellectual and cultural climate in the West demonstrates the shifting, relative and mutable nature of things like science, bodies, sexualities, health and illness, we are justified in asking, together with these authors: Why does anyone need to be afraid of alchemy?" - **Andrew Samuels, Professor of Analytical Psychology, University of Essex**

About the Author

Dale Mathers is a member of the Association of Jungian Analysts, and a psychiatrist and humanistic psychotherapist. He teaches analytical psychology in the UK and Europe and is in private practice in South London.

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