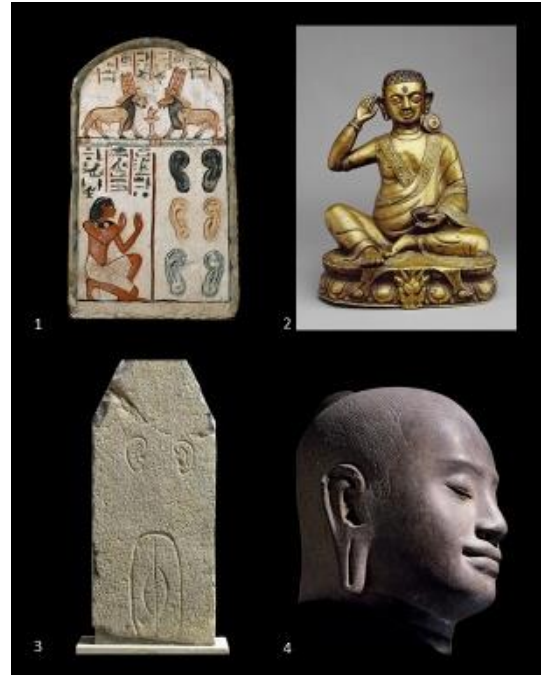


Nodal Network of amplification<sup>i</sup>



Amplification on the symbol of the EAR (ARAS Archive)<sup>ii</sup>

# Amplification

Heba Zaphiriou-Zarifi

# Amplification

“I must return to myself, to my *smallest* things... you force me to see them as large, to make them large. Is that your aim?” (C.G. Jung: *The Black Books 1913–1932*, vol. 2, para. 2)

“The *amplification* is always appropriate when dealing with some obscure experience which is so vaguely adumbrated that it must be enlarged and expanded by being set in a psychological context in order to be understood by all.” (C.G. Jung: *Psychology and Alchemy*, 1968, para. 403)

As a child I had a wooden Babushka doll, exquisitely painted. Her design was captivating: a single figurine, containing a multiplicity of smaller dolls gradually decreasing in size, each embedded in another. Revealing a primacy of connection between them, each of the successive dolls seemed like an intensification, or magnifying, of the former, contiguously evoking one another. In crescendo each portrayed the idiosyncrasies of the others. In decrescendo it simplified them, ultimately revealing the tiniest doll nestled within. This indivisible-kernel doll was enigmatic, intensely charged with essence. As a prototype, she gave purpose to the layers of dolls shaped around her.

I grappled with the mystery until some meaningful rapport was established between the ‘one’ and the ‘multiple’. A visceral knowing hinted that the parts formed a connective unit. But one day I briefly mislaid the smallest figurine and, until I found her, the series lost its entire *raison d’être*”. She was the smallest, yet she radiated outwardly via her multiple layers. This conferred broader substance to the elusively dense miniature. She gave them meaning as they gave her expansive, meaningful existence. This early perception, I believe, was my initiatory experience of amplification, linking the internal to the external, the personal to the collective.

Sound-emission requires an amplifier to confer to music its amplitude. By increasing the volume and expanding the scope and modulation, a feeling-tone message is communicated. Similarly, it is easier to capture the hidden content of psychic material when it is amplified. Instead of a literal presentation of imagery, as encountered in dreams or Active Imagination, amplification uses metaphorical language to magnify the energetic field and vibrancy of a symbol-image whilst activating the dynamism of its content.

In 1908 (CW3, para. 413) Jung posited that *interpretation* does not proceed “entirely subjectively”. To the linear chain of associations, each determined by its predecessor, extending on a discursive journey away from the symbol, thus diluting its libidinal charge,

Jungian psychology amplifies. It facilitates circular associations, controlled and contextualised. Without losing sight of the original content, it radiates outwards, whilst centripetally deepening the imago-energy, drawing us closer to the nucleus with its cryptic symbolic message.

From circle to circle of interconnected nodal points, a web is created, an archetypal pattern intimated, knitting the original meaning to the rediscovered. A field of information is developed, leading toward the centre, which is a manifestation of being. The more that amplifications increase in distinctness and scope, the more closely they circumambulate the centre. Furthermore, these central points tend to self-amplify, forming a “nucleus for an aggregation of synonyms and antonyms”, as pairs of opposites needing to be united. There, meaning is unwrapped, engulfing all the parts into a cohesive structure of completeness, bringing us to a new psychological standpoint, with the symbol now in relation to ego-consciousness. Out of the necessity of chaos a sequential and rhythmic order unfolds creatively, bridging the immanent with the transcendent. The alchemist would claim that meaning is hidden in the crevasses of matter, and that *amplificatio* is a way of releasing the spirit embedded within.

Instead of interpreting psychic images reductively back to the instinctual, Jungian psychology considers the substantive reality inherent to the image. The instinctual urge is released by perceiving the image as embedded in the instinct. In 1935, Jung expounded the significant discovery of “the tissue that the word or image is embedded in” (CW18, para. 174).

Amplification seeks through parallels the context to which a word or image belongs. It uses transdisciplinary analogy to approach the unknown manifested in a dream image and experience, and to widen the basis on which the construction rests. Myths, fairy tales, alchemy, the sciences, philosophy, psychologies, the creative and expressive arts, religion, history, ecology, astrology – all forms of culture portraying analogous symbols may become a pool for further symbolic material, replicating the entrapped information but on a wider scale with simile motifs. Meaning is found beyond the rational, and the seemingly insignificant becomes full of significance. The archetypal image of the unconscious, whose eruption from the depths calls for attention, aims at expanding ego-consciousness when integrated. Consciously employed, amplification facilitates this process.

Expansiveness increases meaningful information, and through amplification new possibilities of understanding are created. Amplification generates freedom of choice and, to the restricted psyche stuck in uni-morphous material, a reflection beyond the confinement of the habitual can

be discerned. From the personal to the transpersonal, amplification seeks parallels through transcultural traditions, connecting us to universal meaning. By leading us *outwards*, it brings us *into* greater understanding.

Amplification is an informative tool that gathers the scattered meanings of phenomena to partake in the unity of the numen. The dispersed meanings spiral toward the centre, and multiplicity is met with oneness and vice versa through amplification. The multiple and the one mirror each other, and through amplification a narrative is phenomenologically developed. A sense of belonging is made possible: no longer a loner, the enquirer now partakes in the collective fabric of humanity and the psychological tissue in which the image is rooted. Moreover, the common ground of experience is in turn enriched by the unique and the personal becoming an active partner in the co-creation of an additional layering of meaning.

Amplification connects universal meaning to resonances in the body. In working with dreams, there will be at least one suggested amplification that will reverberate most deeply with the dreamer's image, like a tuning fork hitting the right note, galvanising a transformative effect on the enquirer's psychebody. Becoming aware of the archetypal underpinning of symptoms in the body allows their metabolisation into symbolic processes of transformation. Entrapped emotions or undifferentiated psychic states can thus be released when transfigured. Amplification allows us to see the symbolic behind the symptomatic. Like Ariadne's thread, amplification leads us in and out of the yet-unexplored mystery, releasing its value for the purpose of embodying the symbolic.

Amplification is the *via regia* to Active Imagination. It eases immersion into the world of the image itself, be it a character, creature or place, thus bringing the image to life as though animated from within. The image leads and, by following the thread of associations concentrically, it starts to speak. It is as though the archetypal image, first appearing in two-dimensional black and white, is now fleshed out with personal colour and texture. Embodied, it becomes one's own again.

The unconscious offers specific images for a particular purpose in accord with our lifeline, or at least with what the unconscious has in mind. It is therefore vital to have the images amplified for integration. Amplification acts as a moderator of the ego-Self axis, connecting us to the 'other' within. To dream of an image is one thing; to discover its purpose is another – thereby enhancing the individuation process, with the Self as the guiding and organising archetype of meaning.

Amplification is therapeutic. It prevents states of extreme intensity and an overdose of intake from the unconscious. It counteracts delusional inflation and safeguards the ego from being overwhelmed by or identified with the encountered fantasy. Analogies, Jung explains, free the instinctual from the pressure of unconscious content. Amplification withers any risk of ego-Self identification, whilst maintaining a healthy ego-Self relation. It also disperses feelings of alienation when meaningful connections are depleted. Isolated in our inner incomprehensible suffering, amplification helps re-establish communion with community. It bridges ego to the unconscious, heals and rectifies any sense of aloneness, and dissipates a self-belief of omnipotence.

Like all psychic material, if overworked, the process of amplification flips to its opposing facet by enantiodromia: instead of seeking an emotional response, it becomes an intellectual exercise, which (however interesting) does not bring satisfaction or validation to the seeker. Overamplifying turns mystery into banality and the symbol into sign.

The analyst's psyche is influential during amplification as it may pick up in countertransference on the necessary amplifications, enabling the patient to contact the emotional component. The analyst may support a patient's psychological enquiry by amplifying a specific dream image, or by magnifying the flow of the entire dream using diverse parallels. Rather than applying a *reductio in primam figuram* – reducing dream images or symptoms to their underlying 'pathological' complexes – amplification used skilfully enriches the patient's experience constructively. The question for Jung is not so much about *having* complexes as it is to look at *what* the unconscious is doing with them.

By comparing like with like, an opaque psychic material may be clarified. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, posited that "by similar things a disease is produced and, through the application of the like, is cured". Amplification offers an invaluable opportunity for the *mixtum compositum* of therapist–patient to experience coherence and a common paradigm through metaphor. A bilateral integration of multiplicity into a unifying transcendent function facilitates the birth of a newly experienced centre of the personality.

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<sup>i</sup> The arrow indicates the individual parallels or amplifications. *The Psychology of C.G. Jung* (1973). Yale University Press, p. 87.

- <sup>ii</sup> 1. An ear stele absorbing the prayers of a kneeling Egyptian (Temple of Hathor, Egypt, c. 1295–1070 BCE).  
2. Tibetan yogi 'hearer' of enlightening doctrines and songs (Tibet, late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> century CE).  
3. Carthaginian stele of goddess; ears and, beneath, her divine vulva. (Tunisia, 4<sup>th</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).  
4. Cambodian king with elongated ear inviting interiority (Cambodia, 12<sup>th</sup> century CE).