

A medieval manuscript illumination depicting a sun with a human face and a woman in a blue mantle flying over a landscape with pyramids and castles. The sun is a large, golden, multi-rayed orb with a human face, positioned in the upper right. A woman in a blue mantle and a man in a red tunic are flying towards the sun. The landscape below features a river, several red castles, and a large pyramid. The entire scene is set against a blue sky and a brownish ground. The illustration is framed by a decorative border.

BEYOND  
FLATLAND: THE  
TROPOLOGICAL  
TURN

Dr Angela Voss

“Keep to the  
mainstream”

MA in the Cultural Study of  
Cosmology and Divination 2006-  
2011

MA in Myth, Cosmology and the  
Sacred 2014-2021

*“There is a rapidly  
developing world  
movement towards  
spiritual harmony,  
understanding and  
growth”*

(Element Books Catalogue  
c.1990)



Canterbury Cathedral from Canterbury Christ Church University

# TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

1. Paulo Freire: 20<sup>th</sup> century social movement concerned with critical pedagogy (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1968)
  2. John Dirkx, Rosemarie Anderson & William Braud, Cheryl Hunt, Elizabeth Tisdell, Wilma Fraser, Marie Angelo:
    - Restoring the soul to [adult] learning
    - Jungian/transpersonal psychology
    - Intuitive, heuristic, autobiographical, somatic, reflexive methods
    - Informed by spiritual and esoteric philosophy
    - Learning as PRACTICE (hermeneutics – creative arts, narrative, divinatory practice)
- 
- Goes against the grain of the Enlightened humanist scholar (agnostic empiricism)



‘The alchemical sisters’ by Louise Bunn  
(MA creative project)

‘Soul-work’ resists the dominant ideologies of modernity as arbiters of truth: materialism, scientific empiricism, evolutionary biology. Ows much to Plato’s Cave allegory as metaphor for awakening (*Republic* 514a-520a)

## EDUCARE

To train or mold

## EDUCERE

To lead out

*“If what we learn does not change us, then we have not really learned anything at all”*

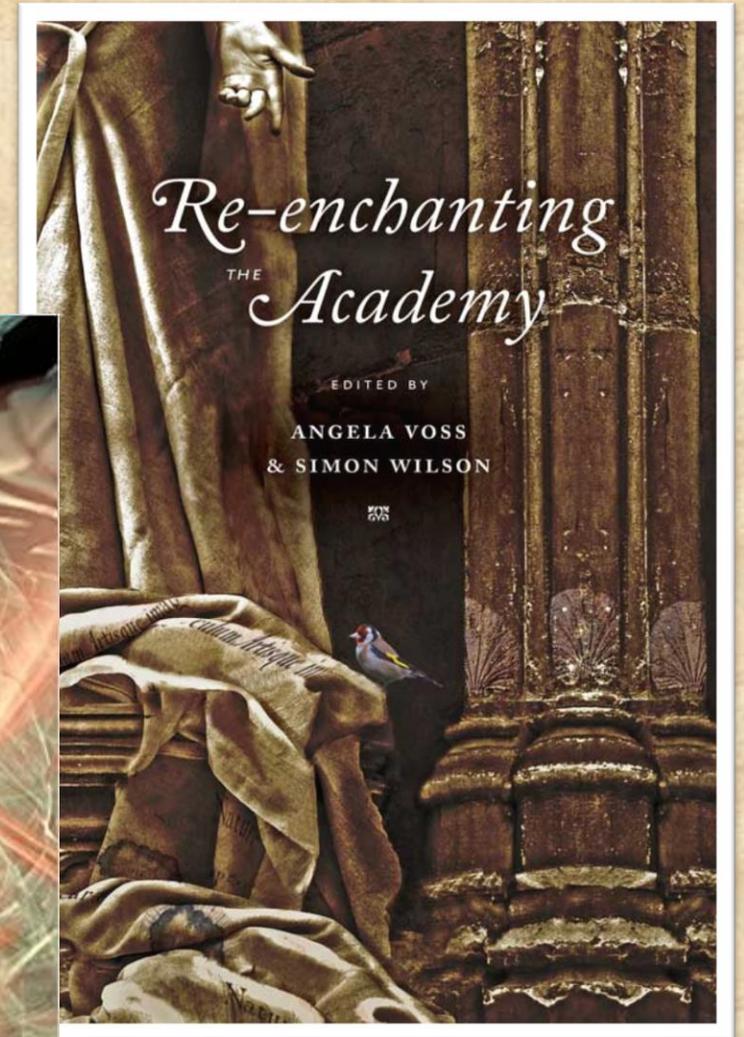
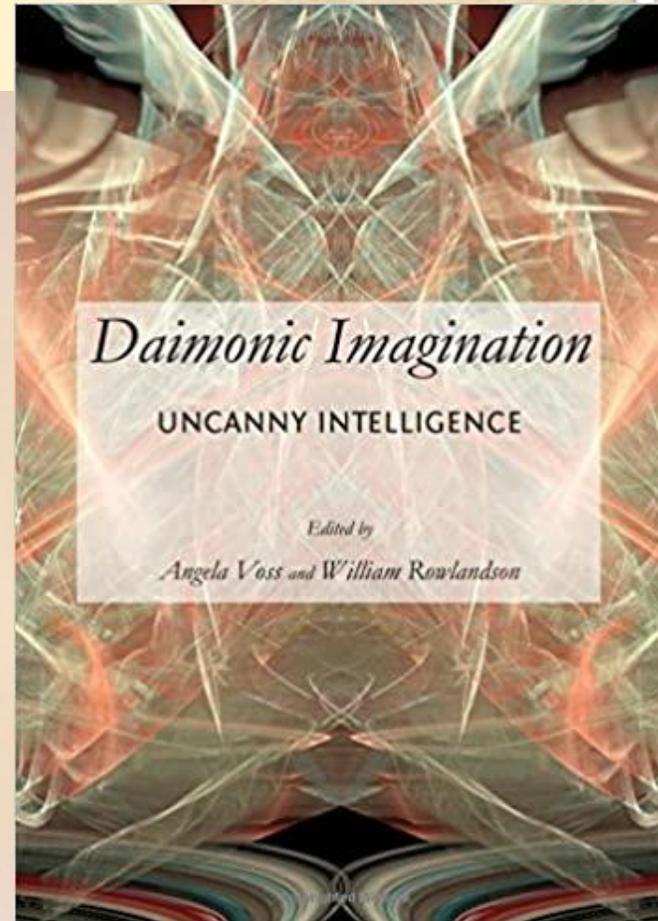
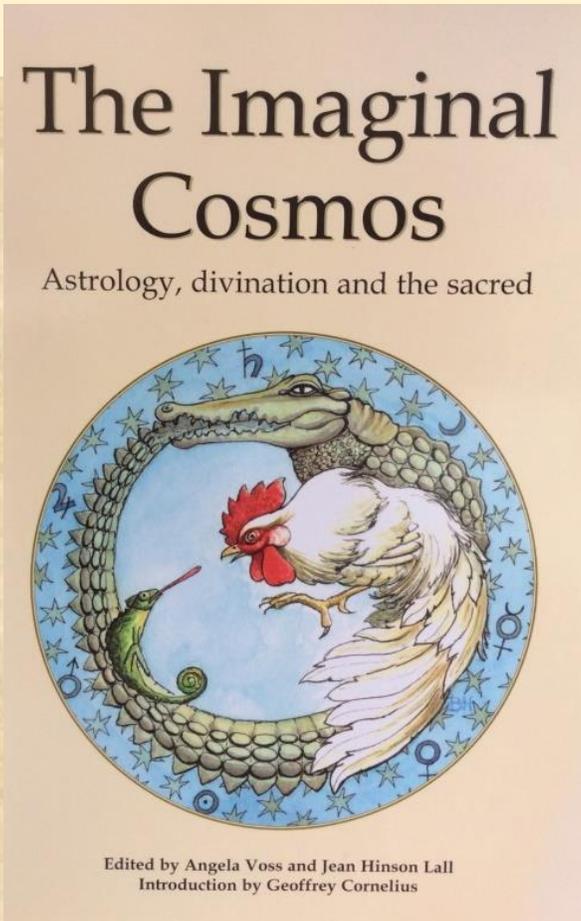
(John Carey, quoted in Voss, 2011 p. 1)



“The modern curse is the loss of a doorway into the imaginal realm, plus a forgetting that such a doorway and such a realm even exist.”

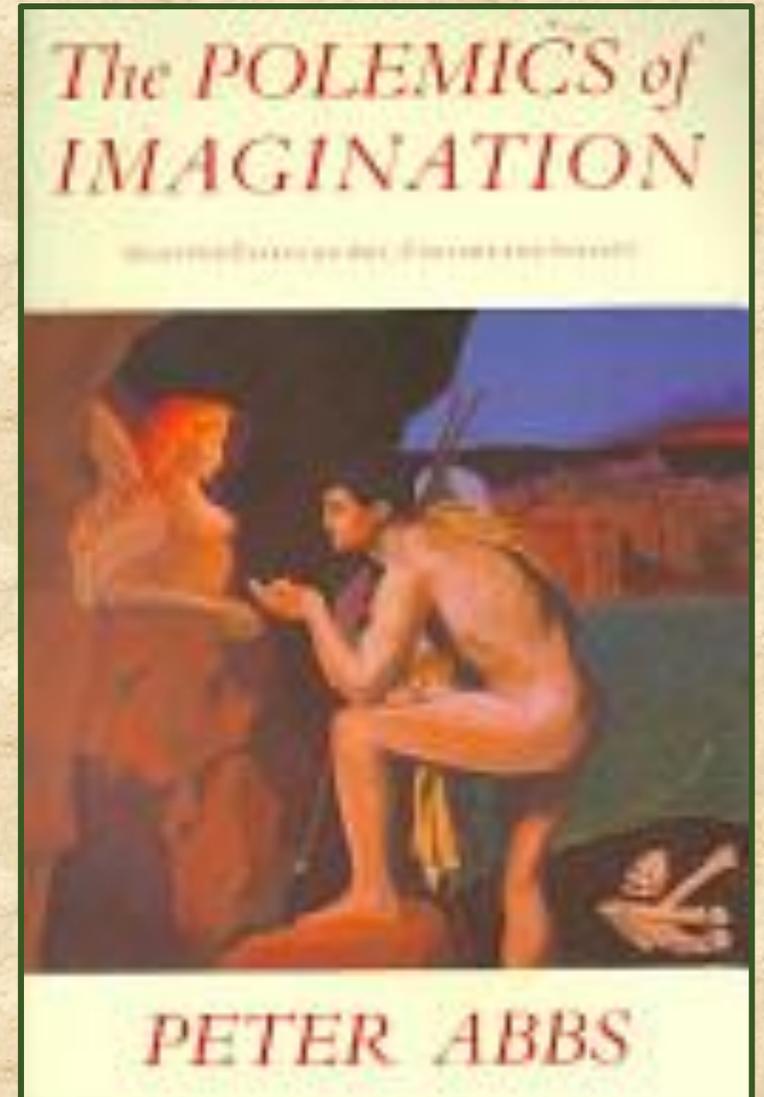
Bishop, 2010: 40

Some of our edited collections on the imaginal.  
(see [www.mythcosmologiesacred.com](http://www.mythcosmologiesacred.com) for more details)



“Why have we developed a notion of knowledge, and therefore of education, which excludes passion, fantasy, intuition, feeling, hunch, apprehension, doubt, belief, impression, dream, vision and the *symbolic forms* through which these powers or states of being can be explored and elaborated, given form, structure and living coherence?”

Abbs, 1996: 31

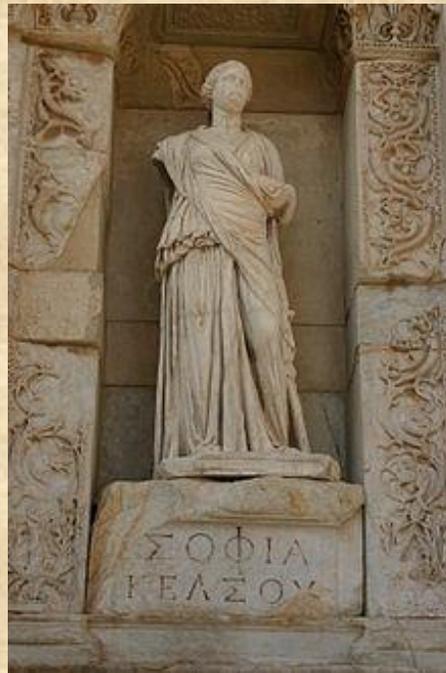


# Philo-Sophia

The 'truth' of transformation is not to be found in rational arguments divorced from philosophy and ethics.

Socratic 'know thyself' – through revealing dimensions of knowing that take us far deeper than literal thinking – requiring imaginative exploration of inner worlds, connection with the heart, and ethical action.

May even lead to spiritual revelation as learning connects with deepest desires – 'de-sidere' – the awe of looking at the stars.



Sophia at Ephesus



Hildegard of Bingen: Ecclesia and Sophia



Sophia of Canterbury by Judith Way (MA creative project)  
<https://mythcosmologysacred.com/sophia-of-canterbury/>



Antonio da Coreggio (1489-  
1534),

*Venus with Mercury and Cupid*

*The marriage of head and heart gives  
birth to eros, the deepest desire of the  
soul to return home.*

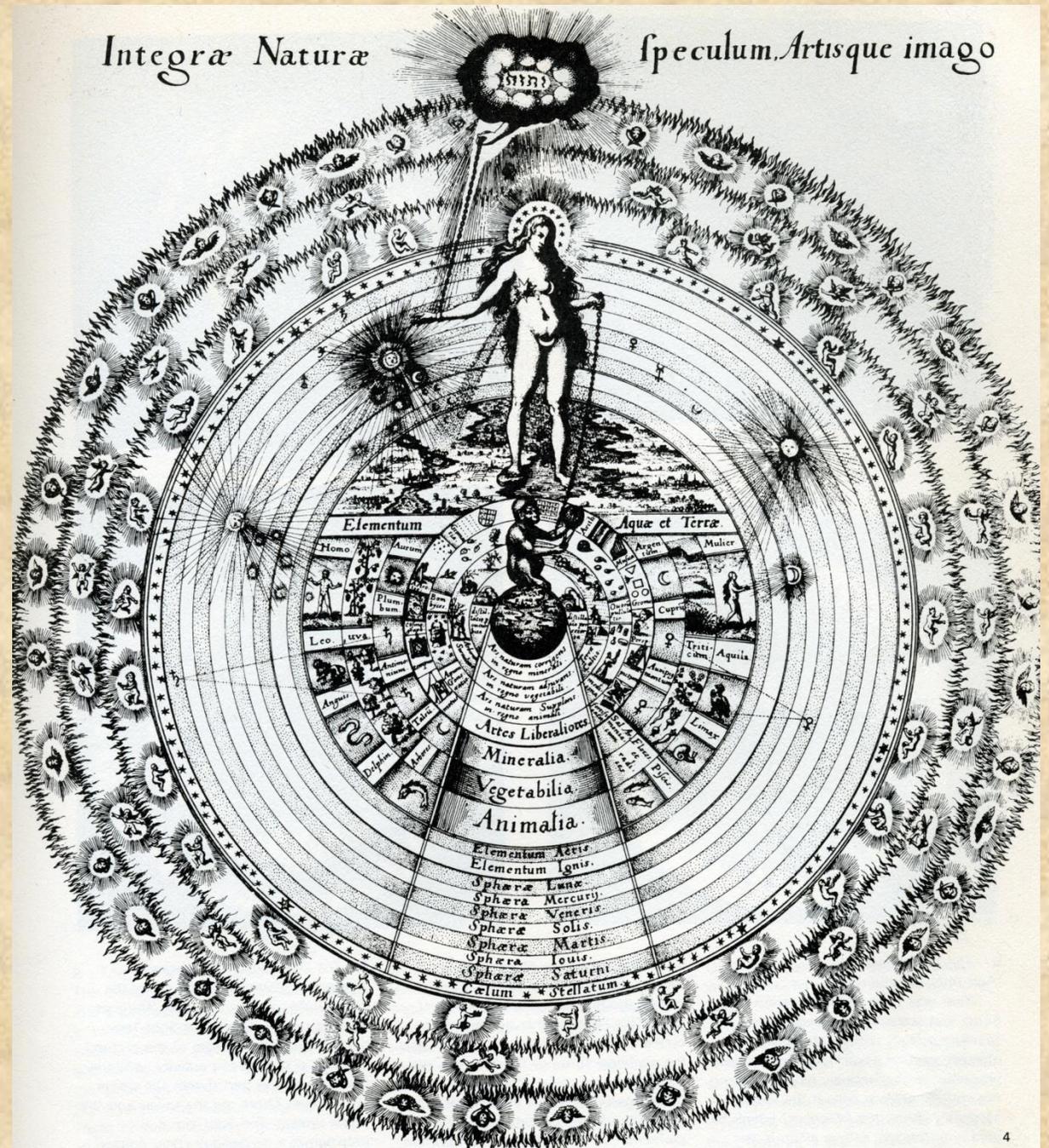
All arts create symbols for a level of reality [and ourselves] which cannot be reached in any other way.

Tillich, 1957: 42.

Robert Fludd (1574-1637)

The Mirror of the Whole of Nature  
And the Image of Art  
(in Godwin, 1991: 1)

The cosmos as an internal  
image of unity



Reduction to the literal, rational and empirical explanation denies the power of the symbolic meaning to open an inner journey.

Mould, or Jesus?



(report in the Herne Bay Gazette, Oct. 19, 2012).

## Proclus' Four Senses

4. Participation/identity

3. Reflection

2. Representation

1. Sense-object

Proclus, *In Parmenidem* 847, See Struck 2004: 237.



**Origen of  
Alexandria**  
(3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE)

1. Literal  
(Allegorical)
2. Moral
3. Mystical



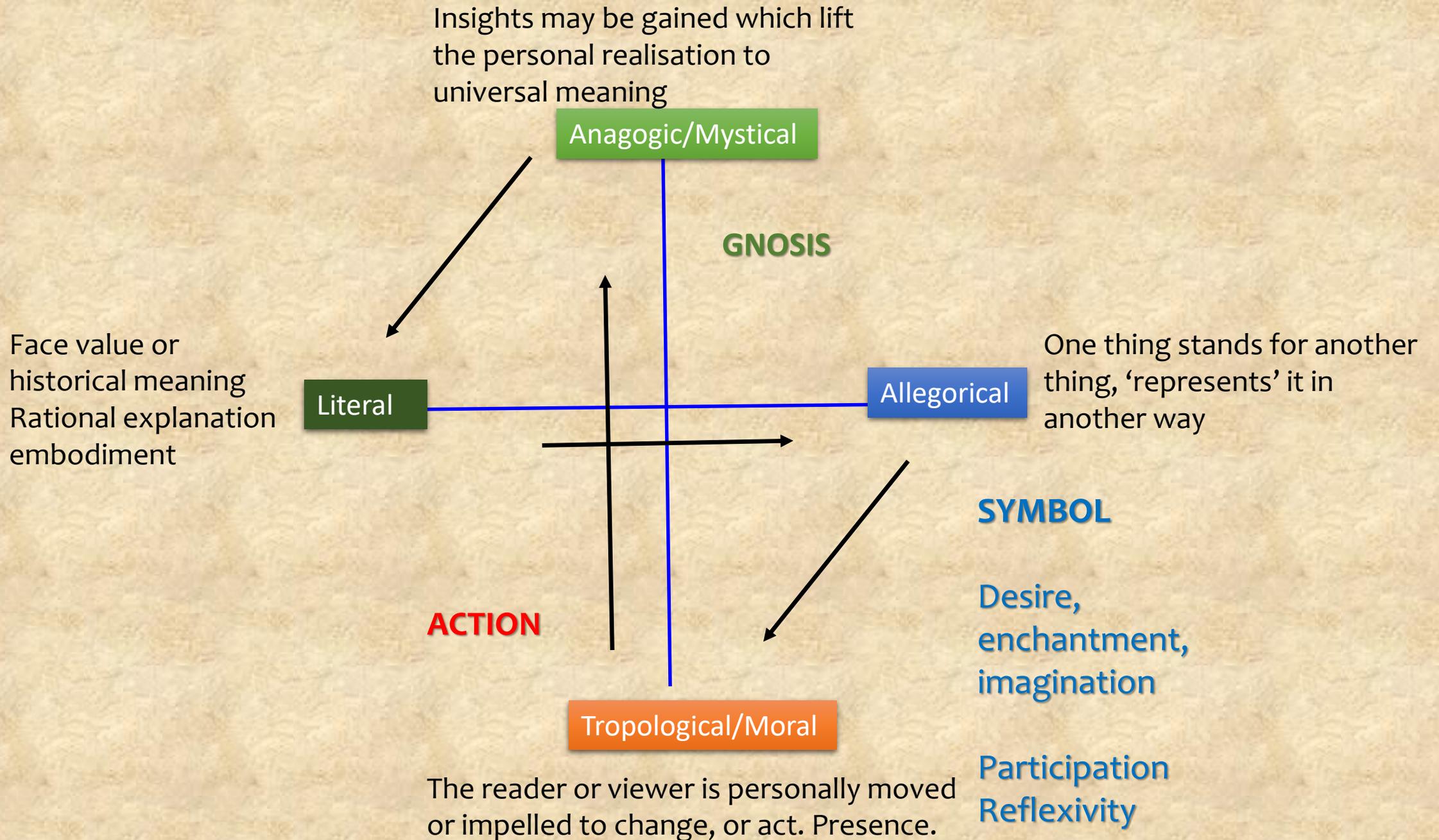
Dante Alighieri

*La Divina Commedia*

1301

Dante was the first to apply the theological levels to poetry, thus establishing the genre of 'poetic theology' which flowered in the Renaissance as the arts became vehicles for divine revelation through deliberate use of symbolic and metaphoric language.



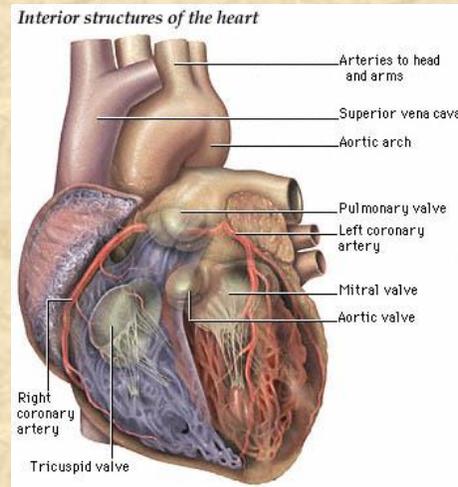


# The Fourfold Heart

The sacred heart  
of Augustine



The allegorical  
heart of love



The physical heart  
of Harvey



The moral heart of the  
Lion Heart

See Hillman, 1992.

# Divination and the Four Senses

(Cornelius, 2003: ch. 14)

## Mystery, Synderesis, Anagoge

(The natural capacity or disposition of the practical reason to apprehend intuitively the universal first principles of human action)

Unus mundus

The literal story/discourse

allegorical interpretation  
ritual method

Participation/action/realisation  
(secret mutual connivance)  
synchronicity

## *The two-way mirror metaphor: the power of imaginal vision*

When [the imagination] looks at the surface, it is a “spinner of fantasies.” When it looks *through*, it becomes “a “window of revealed truths from some deeper part of the soul or world”.



*The active imagination unlocks the tropological sense, creating a bridge between literal and spiritual vision.*

The imagination is that mode of human knowing that intuits the unknowable “what is” and turns it into the knowable “what appears” so that a primate can make some sense out of that which its sensory system was not previously evolved to know or see.

(Streiber & Kripal 2016: 116, 118)

Such symbols (as UFOs) are relays, as it were, from something invisible and structurally unknowable, something truly alien, to our own local forms of culture and consciousness. That is to say ... to the extent that it permits at least some type of communication across radically different metaphysical orders, the symbolic function renders the impossible possible.

Kripal 2010: 213



## ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- “Linking the creative evolutionary processes of the universe, the planet, the earth community, the human community, [the spiritual community] and the personal world” (O’Sullivan 2012: 170)
- Filter theory of the brain: participating in a greater consciousness *through* the personal/cultural lens
- ‘Living nature’ of esoteric and Hermetic traditions – infused with the soul of the world
- Earth and cosmos as sacred: healing the secular/sacred divide: knowing through the heart
- Heals the Cartesian split between spirit and matter
- Restoration of ‘right hemisphere’ knowing which sees the whole as well as the parts, engages the whole being in the full presence of life.



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