*The Self and the Quintessence: A Jungian Perspective* by Christine Driver. Published by Routledge, London, 2020; 166 pp; £36.99. Research in Analytical Psychology and Jungian Studies.

The quintessence is an important but under-theorised theme in analytical psychology. Christine Driver has done us the service of unearthing the references to the quintessence in Jung's *Collected Works* and of contextualising the use of the concept in analytical psychology and beyond. The notion 'comes from an ancient historic view of the world which considered that the essential spark of creation was hidden in matter and that this spirit in matter was the *imago Dei* (God).' (p. 3) Like the idea of the transcendent function, it is a concept that appears marginal in Jung's texts but which upon closer investigation turns out to be ubiquitous in his theory. Driver describes her book as 'a journey into the unknowable but also the known, as we experience an emergent understanding of what the quintessence represents.' (p. 13)

The first section of the book (Orientation, themes, and the symbolic significance of number) discusses the role of number in philosophy, science, alchemy and psychoanalysis.

'Numbers enable the identification of relational patterns and the patterns formed by one (unity), two (duality), three (triangularity), four (quaternity), five (quinity), etc., are symbolically significant.' (p. 4) Jung considered the quaternity to be an important image of wholeness and the self. However, it was also incomplete and needed be 'united with the *quinta essentia* at the end.' (p. 17) The fifth represents both the beginning and end of a process.

Section two (Number as a symbol of psychological development) has chapters on duality, triadicity and quaternity. Jung discusses the dynamics of the opposites extensively throughout his work. The tension of opposites is responsible for producing psychic energy. The play of opposites, or the lack of it, within the psyche accounts for aliveness and/or psychopathology. Driver alludes to binary dynamics in the thought of Klein, Fairbairn and Balint. She describes the importance of symmetry and asymmetry in the work of Matte-Blanco and Grotstein. 'Duality is… a dynamic but results only in dichotomies and opposites, whereas the union of opposites results in a new element, a new perspective, leading to the opening up of more complex structures and interactive processes and perspectives.' (p. 38)

The transcendent function creates the possibility of triadicity or thirdness. For Jung '"the unity of our psychic nature lies in the middle" though the "reconciling third."' (p.41) Driver discusses the role of the third in Freud, Birksted-Breen, Steiner, Klein, Fonagy and Benjamin. She then develops the clinical significance of the transcendent function in Jungian clinical thinking. 'The symbol representing the "third thing" is "alive", animated, dynamic and has meaning and purpose and, as Jung identifies, the third, "no longer points back, but forward to a goal not yet reached."' (p. 50)

The quaternity contains organisation and conflict. 'Four, the quaternity, represent a level of order but also a level of psychological plurality which can be disturbing and generates a longing for wholeness.' (p. 56) The fourth embodying difference and otherness disrupts the stability of the triad. 'Dark reality and the shadow are required to break up a trinity and generate thought, imagination and actualisation.' (p. 58) Driver describes Jung's work on the Christian Trinity, in particular the exclusion of evil from the image of God. The fourth can bring the irrational reality of matter and/or the power of the numinous to a situation of

stasis. Driver presents a diagram of a quaternity of development which includes parent, child, shadow and dark reality of matter, and spirit which links and connects. She also describes the well-known diagram of the conscious and unconscious interrelationship between patient and therapist. The quaternity is a symbol of a container, as well as being an image of an interactive system. 'It symbolises all the elements as well as the way they inter-relate.' (p. 65)

Section Three (Exploring wider perspectives) consists of discussions of the self, physics and alchemy. The chapter on the self offers a survey of a range of ideas about the self in the work of Jung, post-Jungians, neuroscience and philosophy. From this array of approaches she singles out the themes of development, emergence and complexity as of particular significance. 'Whichever way we conceptualise and understand the self, what is evident is that the search for meaning, understanding and answers to existential questions about "life, the universe and everything" is an innate property of the self.' (p. 83) The chapter on physics includes a description of the relationship between Jung and the physicist, Wolfgang Pauli. They shared an interest in understanding the relationship between psyche and matter, which eventually developed into the theory of synchronicity. This leads Driver to a discussion of dark matter and dark energy. 'Dark matter is the glue holding the universe together and dark energy is what is pulling it apart.' (p. 95) The suggestion that dark matter and dark energy can be understood as symbols is exciting. This opens the possibility that they can serve as images for experiences of emptiness, void or ignorance within one's

subjectivity.

The term quintessence is used in cosmology according to the physicist, Caldwell, because it 'alludes to the hypothesised "fifth element" of Greek philosophy, the pure incorruptible substance of which the eternal and unchanging heavenly bodies were assumed to be composed.' (p. 99) While Driver acknowledges that the concept has different uses in physics and psychology, she points to an underlying archetypal teleology that 'underpins the interactive dynamics of observed phenomena.' (p. 100) It was in alchemy that Jung found 'the One born of the Four… the *Quinta Essentia*.' (p. 105) He associates it with the unconscious – individual and collective. The aim of alchemy 'was to extract the original divine spirit out of the chaos, and this extract was called the *quinta essentia*.' (p. 114) The teleological impulse of the self, as quintessence, powers individuation.

The final section of the book (The quintessence) includes two main themes. The first is a discussion of the fifth as a symbol of psychological development. It combines duality and triangularity (2+3=5) thus expressing unity as well as ambiguity and unruliness – 'a secret imperfection.' (p. 126) It also carries a meaning of emergence from the four. 'It is the integration of the third with the fourth that brings a shift to something new, a fifth.' (p. 131) This facilitates self-awareness and reflection. The second theme, the teleological nature of the self, is the heart of Driver's argument in this book. 'Teleology and the concept of the quintessence go hand in hand because the journey to express the essence of the self is a logical outcome of the properties of the teleological self.' (p. 142) The quintessence is a symbol of individuation and wholeness. It generates emergence and engagement with the *Unus*

*Mundus* – the one world. According to Jung, 'no one knows how the paradoxical wholeness of man can ever be realized.' (p. 154) It is Driver's contention that the impulse toward this realisation is hardwired into matter and psyche.

The clinical material offered in the book is very sparse. I wondered if this was because most clients are engaged in individuation processes characteristic of the regions of duality and triadicity. Perhaps there are not many analyses that have achieved the depth and duration to be operating in the realms of the quaternity, much less the quintessence. It occurred to me that perhaps some of the confusion, incomprehension and hostility expressed toward the Jungian self by psychoanalytic therapists is related to the difference between a discourse of duality/triadicity, and a discourse of quaternity/quintessence. Psychoanalysis is comfortable in the spaces of twos and threes, but becomes disoriented in the spaces of four and five. One might characterise the terminus of the individuation process as described by Driver in this book as a coniunctio of singularity and infinity.