

Maps and the Basis of Symbolization

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Abstract

This paper attempts to display some of the fundamentals involved in the process of “symbolization” by examining the symbolic nature of cartographic maps. There are elements underlying all symbolization clearly discernible in such “basic” symbolic forms which are valuable for developing a feel for what symbolization is and why it plays such a central role in analytical psychology. The analogical and literal linguistic relationship psychology has with cartography is used to suggest some terms—dimensional “augmentation,” “translation,” and “conflation”—that can be viewed as describing some of the basic elements involved in the operation of a symbol. This gives us a way to approach a feeling for what symbols do in addition to the more usual concentration on where they lead to.

Introduction

Much is made in analytical psychology of the notion of “symbol” and in particular of the distinction between a symbol and a sign (Jung, 1952/1956). A sign has fixed meaning and is satisfying as a proxy for its subject but a symbol never exhausts the meaning of its subject. Indeed, it is not possible to say precisely what a symbol refer to—the symbolic form being an essential part of the manifestation of its subject.

The purpose of this paper is twofold—to study a particular type of symbol but also to look at symbolization through the medium

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of a particular type of symbol; perhaps I should rather say, through something which has a particular symbolic aspect. I will speak about maps and how they can function in a relatively clear and basic way as symbols. Maps exhibit fundamental aspects of symbolization because their essential domain is that of physical, spatial relationship—something we readily understand. Their spatial language is also close to our instinctive understanding of psychology: we commonly speak of “losing our way”, “turning a corner” in life, an “uphill climb,” and many other cartographically flavored terms which are so easy to understand—easy to understand in particular as psychological processes, even though they are expressed in terms of simple physical relation.

This grounding in such natural spatial-relationship metaphors makes maps a treasure of information about the nature of the relationship geometry we call “symbolic,” because we can readily see the relationship and thereby develop a sense of what a symbol does. Naturally, symbolic relationships in general cannot be exhausted by such an examination as I propose—the purpose of this exercise is to look at some fundamental examples of symbolic relationship which are demonstrated by the relationship of maps to their subjects.

Tangible and “Simple” Symbols

Symbols, by their very nature, are inexhaustible—a quality which is a blessing to a mind which fears the exhaustion of meaning and a curse to a mind which fears being exhausted by overwhelming meaning. Maps, because they are rooted in the physical world in a tangible way, are symbolic in a “simple” way. They are good things to return to in order to orient oneself in dealings with symbols. Naturally, for one always needs a map to orient oneself—after all, the pastime of following maps is called “*orienteeing*.” A cartographic vocabulary is useful in exploring a nascent symbol, and therefore there is a direct use for such a vocabulary in analytical psychology.

One of the main concerns when attending to forming symbols is to find the right vocabulary or attitude towards them, since a symbol is the essence of mediation and must be “held” in the right way—with the right words or with the right attitude. The language of maps can help here, as it is so grounded in our psyche along with its spatial metaphors; psychologists have long talked about “*mapping the psyche*,” indicating how natural a way of thinking this language

really is.

It may seem a little contrary to say that, precisely because maps are not essentially symbolic and thus as symbols are not the most interesting things, they are especially suited to a study which aims to examine the nature of symbolization. However, it is difficult to come to an understanding of the nature of symbolization when examining a subject where the only possible relation to that subject is symbolic. In such cases, the subject is intimately bound up with the symbolic form of relationship and the two cannot really be separated. One would not like to attempt to come to a feeling for “symbolization” by looking at symbols of the Godhead, since approaching such a subject is essentially a symbolic exercise and there is no possible contrast with a “non-symbolic” study of the same subject matter. A less “interesting” example attracts us less but also allows us a little distance from the form of relationship to the subject and thus allows the relationship itself to be the subject.

Maps can be viewed as symbolic in some respects and can also can be seen as merely signs. This makes them less interesting as symbols but more interesting as a subject available for relating to in different ways—symbolic and not so symbolic—such that we might compare the types of relationship and thereby come to some understanding precisely of the forms of relationship themselves. This contrast is familiar to us from other aspects of depth psychology—it is common to contrast a literal, concrete interpretation of dreams with a depth-psychological or symbolic interpretation. In fact, the existence of a literal, concrete style of interpretation is precisely what makes it possible to properly appreciate a symbolic interpretation.

The hypothesis we hold in symbolically interpreting a dream is that it captures something important that a literal interpretation does not capture; indeed this is essentially one of the foundations of the post-Freud trend (Jung, 1916/1960). I am claiming the same for maps—those of their functions which can be interpreted as signs do not adequately capture many important aspects. I think perhaps that part of the reason why dreams are so central to analytical psychology is that they can be interpreted concretely as well as symbolically. This fact means that it is possible to see the contrast between interpretations, which puts the symbolic interpretation into such stark relief. We only really come to appreciate what a symbolic interpretation is when it is constantly side-by-side with a competing literal, concrete interpretation. This phenomenon requires us to make

a decision about what sort of interpretation satisfies us, and such a decision is crucial in imbuing a study with meaning. Maps make this dynamic clear as they have such a well-established functional aspect (there are few things as “useful” as a map) that their symbolic aspect is so much the more obvious by comparison.

Maps are special things—people love to pore over maps of places they have traveled in the one-dimensional world of the car or foot. In English, the verb form “to pore over” is closely related to talk of maps. We “consult” maps, we “pore over” them. They are oracles and require attention, they are a special form of embodied knowledge which intrigue as well as inform. What other manifestation of information do people put on their walls (tellingly, usually in their “study”) to simultaneously play the part of object d’art and information resource? To be able to see from above is a strange delight—the feeling involved is curious; people say, “Oh, that is where I was” and there is a feeling of relatedness of place, of connecting things.

A map represents something that we know but presents it to us in a way that is importantly different. Thus, the essence of the symbolic nature of a map is in the way in which it presents, rather than that which it presents. This appears to me to be very significant and I rather think that there is something of this in every symbol—the way which something symbolizes is as much a part of the symbol as that which it symbolizes. Studying maps is a very good way to begin to come to an appreciation of how the relationship of the thing symbolized to the method of symbolization shows itself. Matters are relatively easy with maps simply because we know their subject and therefore are in a better position than with our internal and complex symbols, the appearance of which is intimately bound up with their source and is therefore not easily examined.

Symbols versus Symbolization

A crucial idea in this paper is that maps (and symbols in general) involve a representation in a dimension which is not present to a direct experience of their subject. That is, there is a very special type of perspective afforded by a map (symbol), and this is part of the essence of what it is to map, of what it is to symbolize.

Since the issue is, then, of a particular type of representation, the study of symbolization is really a different thing entirely from the

study of symbols. The study of symbolization is essentially applied epistemology in a rather Kantian framework; we are aiming to come to a feeling for the relationship human beings may have to particular things called “symbols” and we assume, with Jung and post Kant, that the nature of this relationship renders the subject essentially inscrutable (Jung, 1948/1958). In the Kantian model which Jung was influenced by, even a “pure” symbol is a phenomenal representation of the entirely noumenal.¹ So, the extent to which something is a symbol is precisely the extent to which it partakes of the noumenal and the extent to which something is a sign is precisely the extent to which it is exhausted by the phenomenal.

Of course, symbols can be amplified, but this is not an epistemological study, nor does it say anything about the nature of symbolization; rather, it accepts the phenomenal world and tries to make the phenomenological connections richer. I shall start by looking at symbolization, aided by a study of maps and then shift to an examination of the symbolism of maps themselves.

Maps as Signs, Maps as Symbols

The modern obsession with iconography has given maps in general a very important place in our lives. Maps are used everywhere as simple signs to denote a place—one commonly sees advertisements which use the outline of a country as a political icon for example—these rather crude maps are simple signs which points to a physical locality and the map is exhausted by its subject. A famous example is that of the London tube train system—the map is a topographic map, accurate only in the sense of connections and is a world-famous sign for “London.” Maps which detail the exits from a large road junction function as signs, having a purposely clear relationship to the layout of the actual road.² So, the sense in which maps are useful is the sense in which they function as signs. I will be more concerned below with the sense in which maps are enigmatic and function as symbols.

Explorers traditionally have maps, but of course to be a true explorer, these maps must be very rudimentary. Explorers need to be making the map as they go in order to really qualify for this title. They are often driven by a dislike of the habit and boredom of everyday life—they are driven to externalize this repulsion into looking outside for places that no possible habit has ever dulled,

using the simple and perfect test: has anybody been here before?

This is a different relationship to a map—that of creator. The one who makes the map has a unique perspective on the terrain that they map because they simultaneously walk the terrain for the first time and also participate in the creation of a view of it that is, in a sense, abstracted from the experience. One clear use of this is to assuage fears of the unknown; an explorer in uncharted lands is in a frightening position in the sense that they have no clear sense of the future—because time, as always, is smeared out on the surface of the world and is experienced by them as distance, distance over a ground which they do not know.

A good way to combat the fear that naturally arises in such a situation is to map the terrain as you go, feeling then that even if the future is unknown, the past—the past distance—at least is known in a very special way. This “special way of knowing” means—owning a map. This demonstrates one of the almost miraculous features of maps—their conflation of space and time. Mariners who have maps of dangerous coasts are not afraid of a future in which they will navigate the coast because they have, in a sense, their future mapped out in distances, on paper, on their map. With a map, one can turn distance into time and time into distance, that is, one can translate from one dimension into another and this is actually a very special feature of anything called “symbolization.” It is important to mention here that I do not mean “dimension” in a necessarily geometrical sense³—it is meant in the more abstract sense of “a completely different direction of measurement,” that is to say, a completely new sense of meaning. I am using specifically geometrically flavored terms precisely because it is easier to grasp the feeling for the type of new meaning introduced by a new dimension of apperception.

Uncontroversially, maps are about perspective, a perspective that we do not normally have on the roads we travel. It is fascinating to see the same things from a different—such a different—viewpoint. We are struck, I think, by the stark geometrical wonder of the perspective that another dimension gives. Our life on the surface of the planet is in this sense one-dimensional—we measure our distances by measuring the time taken and distances matter because of the time they take to cross. A distant point is only available in the future as it requires travel to reach it. With a map, distant places are available immediately to our eyes and we can directly measure the distance, in scale. We can “see” the time it would take to travel

the distance, we can, at the same point in time, see the point of departure and arrival.

It is endlessly fascinating, this God's eye view of the spaces of the world, and it is almost divine to have another dimension of perception. The two-dimensional has something utterly inconceivable to the one-dimensional and represents, in this sense, God for it. Once we have a map of a region, it no longer intimidates us. The first thing we do on arrival in a strange city is to buy a map; we feel so much the better for owning one. Just as we "wait for a symbol to arise" when we are psychologically lost, we reach for our map when we are physically lost. This aspect of symbolization which maps make so clear is what I will term "dimensional augmentation", that is, the addition of an entirely new dimension of perception which allows a completely new relationship to the patterns which are governed by the symbol. I shall say more about this below.

An example of the element of dimensional augmentation is apparent in dreams involving flying, since this involves being above patterns which one would normally follow on the ground. Flying turns a temporal sequence of experiences of place into a spatial, visual experience of pattern. The urge one often finds to escape some situation in dreams of flying can be seen psychologically, in this sense, as part of the natural urge towards symbolization, to see from above. There is nothing particularly essential about flying either; dreams of flooding where one then swims or boats on top of the water, looking down at the underwater land below, have a similar element of dimensional augmentation. One might characterize such dreams reasonably then as containing an ingredient of the urge to symbolize.

Space and Time Translation

Another important way in which the symbol operates and of which maps provide a clear example is the translation between dimensions. The translation between the dimensions of space and time, for example, always provides a real, new perspective for the psyche. All symbols work in this way to some extent—classical mandala symbols can contain, in the space of a page, all of the ages of a man, that is, they present time in space by showing the different times as different places on the page. Conversely, a dream, symbolically understood, can take simultaneous facts and smear

them out over time, thus presenting space as time. One can see Jung's famous "house" dream (Jung, 1963) as having this shape: in the dream, Jung is in a particular place (space)—his house. This house exists in its totality at the same moment in time but the dream presents it in a temporal sequence, as an exploration.

Such essentially symbolic translations represent a great shift in perspective which can open up entirely new experiences and orientation to experience since the symbolizing relationship treats the dimensions of space and time as interchangeable. This is a slightly more explicit way of expressing the idea that a symbol is a "condensation of experiences" over a long historical and inter-generation period.

An example of such condensation is the symbol of the Mithraic god Aion, which Jung treats explicitly by devoting a work to its amplification as a representation of the explicitly time-related word "Aeon." This is a clear example of the conflation of space with time which symbols engender. Of course, a great deal of work is required to amplify such a complex symbol and to work out the ways in which the translation between space and time can be made apparent. With maps, it is not so difficult—they allow us to easily translate distances into times and times into distances because they are "basic" in the sense of dealing with simple, physical phenomena, as opposed to complex psychological phenomena.

Often, a different emphasis is given to an existing dimension by a symbol. It is rather a conflation of different dimensions which takes place, where one dimension is used to speak about another, with both of them being understood to be necessary to the symbolic presentation. It is not necessarily space and time which are so conflated as in our examples of translation—we often find conflation between rather more obviously "spatial" dimensions when symbols show a movement from, for example, "down" to "up" represented as a more linear journey.

This is apparent in the famous Zen "Bull" picture series of the journey to enlightenment where the ten pictures symbolize in a linear, journey-like form but are depicting a movement completely orthogonal to the physical traveling depicted (a movement "upwards" in a psychological sense) (Reps & Senzaki, 1998). This series of pictures is a "map" in the sense that it shows the route of a specific journey and so is like a map we sketch for others to show how to get from one place to another. It is not a "general" map which depicts an

area with multiple possible goals, it is rather a map of how to reach a goal from “here”. It shows in some sense a “route”, rather than a “terrain” and the description of a route involves an element of linearity which is naturally represented by temporal or spatial progression. That is, symbols often conflate an inner, hidden movement with a geometrically related, visible outer movement. Again, we see the symbolic interchangeability of dimensions, which provides a new perspective. A good example of this is the Pilgrim’s Progress, which typifies the shape of many esoteric teachings—the “journey” which depicts a progression over time or in space but which is “really” about an internal psychological progression (Esther Harding, 1956).

The Practice of Psychology

More concrete analogies can be drawn between the practice of psychology and the practice of map-following and map-making. How can we see this symbolic activity of dimensional augmentation, translation, and conflation in practice?

We can illustrate the case with the practice of free association. What is “free” in free association? If the associations were truly free from all constraint of direction, they would not obey patterns and it is precisely patterns that we assume and indeed seek in this method. The freedom is, rather, the freedom to wander where we will within our habitual patterns. Of course, we will wander along the paths that are well-trodden and therefore fail to directly encounter the things which constitute our troubles because they do not lie on the paths—our paths have evolved to lead around them and that is why they are troubles in the first place. So, free association generally only points out our troubles by the spaces on the topography of our internal map that the paths do not cross.

These spaces are difficult to see in the one-dimensional view that we have as we wander, associating, round our paths. To see the lesser-trodden areas, we require a map as this adds another dimension to the process of perception. Here, to have a map is to have a way of looking at things that adds an extra dimension to the perception of the problem. It shows, crucially, relations between things which are not apparent without this extra dimension. It is very common after walking in the countryside to look at a map later on for an understanding of exactly where one was and which route one took; that is, one is looking for the relations between the places

encountered whilst walking.

There are different ways to do this. In the case of perusing a physical map, the extra dimension is one of space, looking down from above providing a third dimension that displays the relationships between the places in the two-dimensional world below. How do we augment the dimensions of the experience for our “free associations”? This is precisely what the “association experiment” method is designed to do—it provides a map of the associative terrain, and with the help of the extra dimension of time, in the form of response times, we can obtain a new perspective on the terrain which we commonly experience as “flat” as we wander through it. It is reasonable, therefore, to regard a finished association experiment chart as partly symbolic which accords with the fact that it requires care to analyze and cannot be exhausted of meaning by analysis.

Maps and Analytical Work

If we speak of maps as symbols, we must have some sense, some idea of what their subject is psychologically, even though, qua symbols, their subject is necessarily inscrutable. So, in a less theoretical manner, I would like to address the utility of map symbolism in analytical practice—we are shifting from an examination of symbolization to an examination of the symbolism of maps.

It is not always a pleasant thing, to be given a map, as one sometimes feels that a magic has been withdrawn. Knowledge has taken the place of the excitement of the unexpected turn in the road and for good reason: maps are for those who need, or want, to gain a different perspective. In the absence of this need, a map is a bringer of the mundane, because it makes things plain and removes mystery. It is only when the mystery of travel has become a burden or has turned sour due to the frustrations of habitual paths leading us to dead-ends that we need a map. This reflects the often-repeated idea that symbols arise as a result of need—there is little need for a symbol when one is satisfied with phenomena. Maps are experienced as symbols when they stand for the whole of something, from the viewpoint of an extra dimension. A map can be taken in as a whole and we can take in a map of a familiar place in one glance and have the entire set of associations for that place sweep us at once. A map is a synthesis, very much a gathering of the disparate perceptions

into a feeling for the geometry of an area.

Maps have the characteristic of taking some experiences occurring in time, one after the other and showing them all at once as a spatial, geometrical pattern. The original experiences are partly lost in this move to the map—the phenomenology of the moments that the map collects together is “summarized,” and in every summary, there is some loss. It is often the case, particularly so with the internal psychological life, that the details contain, indeed are, the very essence of what it is to travel the roads that furnish us with them. So, any summary of experience will always omit something. But note that it is omitted only after it has already been experienced—we sacrifice the details that make our life and hope to gain as a result of this sacrifice a viewpoint that will make sense of the future details in which we strain to find an order. If we have not lived through the details of life, this sort of viewpoint is of no significance to us—or worse, is of merely intellectual significance: maps are of less interest to us when they depict areas where we have not been. So, a symbol brings together some details, sometimes the most disparate details, and provides us with an order that satisfies us, allows us to summarize in a way that loses these details in order to gain a viewpoint impossible for us if we remain on the level of these details.

As an example, when a patient dreams of being frightened and alone in a small, leaking boat afloat on a rough ocean, this “summary” loses the details of life which contribute to this feeling tone. However, such a dream gains in the way in which it powerfully says “overwhelmed”—something which not even the sum of the details of life can do. The dream gathers up a history of events in time, removes the element of time and gives one image—an image in space, of a place or situation. Poetically, we might say that the events which the dream summarizes are superimposed on top of each other and so form a timeless but very emotionally condensed and intense image. This new image has a quality which the collection of things summarized do not: it can move the psyche.

There is, as with a map which looks down from above, a “rising up” in appreciating a symbol that allows us to look upon our details and see the patterns. This rising up is precisely the rise out of the one-dimensional world of forward travel into the two-dimensional world of related paths that a map shows; indeed we have seen that in such a way, a map can act as a symbol—one that unites the details

of the geography in a way that lends us a different view.

Maps perform this “rising up” function in an obvious, physical manner but the feature of progression of dimensions remains true for all symbols. It is not clear in which sense a symbol that arises in response to a mass of psychological detail summarizes or shows relations, as is indeed clear in the case of a map. That is, it is not clear by direct analogy with the geometrical nature of such an example: our symbols organize and summarize with a loss, just as maps do, but this loss is often felt as a relief since it is precisely the mass of seemingly unorganized detail which oppresses us. The real difference, as with all analogies from the physical or geometrical to the psychological, subsists in the deeper meaning of what it means to “see” the patterns in a different way.

With a map, we can see that a path simply leads round in circles but in analysis, this “seeing” is more akin to feeling. Indeed, to merely “see” something about one’s patterns is often a very small victory, easily swept away by a strong habit—seeing that one always does something is very often a precursor to really struggling with this pattern, for “seeing” psychologically can be taken in a rather shallow, intellectual manner. In the psyche, it is feeling that is closer to the “seeing” that a map allows: when one feels the shape of one’s patterns, then one has begun to have a different viewpoint, one which looks from the advantage of an extra dimension as it can move about and feel its way around these patterns without moving through them. This is the psychological thrust of the necessity of augmentation with another dimension: a new dimension provides a direction of movement utterly alien and incomprehensible to the dimension below it—“up and down” simply do not exist, are inconceivable on a two-dimensional plane and therefore provide a radically different, even miraculous perspective on the flat two-dimensional world.

This feeling is precisely the raising to another dimension of inner perception where patterns that hitherto were the unperceivable forms of our movements can become the contents of experiences that show us these forms. This move from form to content is constitutive of all psychological development—simply, we come to notice our patterns. If they are oppressive patterns, it is harder for us to continue to travel according to their dictates because they are no longer part of the ineluctable geography of the terrain. Psychology calls this “bringing into consciousness.”

In analytical work, to start with, we can ask simple questions—

the same questions as we ask of travels—which direction and how long? What did you think or feel and for how long? Soon, this is not enough and we must move up a dimension and begin to ask “for what purpose?” This question is fundamental in analysis and can provide a viewpoint from which patterns previously measured precisely become clearer. When one asks about the purpose of something, one asks about how it relates to other things—it is essentially a question about relationship. So, when we ask a patient to explore the purpose of something in their psyche, we are asking how this thing relates to other parts of their psyche.

This is intimately related to the sort of movement a map makes in presenting its subject by looking down upon it, making the subject two-dimensional and so making certain relations between places visible, palpable, and able to be experienced. Such a question is, in fact, the introduction or movement towards the augmentation of dimensions in the apperception of the subject; it is asking the patient to take the role of “explorer” and to begin to catalog relationships, to build a map.

This active role of the explorer is important in analysis since a symbol is nothing in itself, just as a map is nothing without a reader. The critical element is the relationship of the individual to the symbol, the reader to the map. “Symbol formation” is often viewed as an automatically benevolent event, but this is not the case. Jung was very careful to point out an analogous temptation when discussing dreams, and he was quite explicit in pointing out that schizophrenics often have marvelous dreams, full of symbolism, but that this means nothing since there is no relationship to the dreams in such cases (Jung, 1984).

There is work involved in making our maps, and this is the difference between the map-maker and the map-follower. Analogously, there is work involved in analysis—the work of relating parts to other parts by augmenting, conflating, and translating between the dimensions in which one experiences one’s psyche. Asking “for what purpose?” is the difference, perhaps, between looking at a map in order to plan a route and looking at a map to determine why a river takes a particular route. A deeper understanding of the land is gained by the latter viewpoint. Indeed, the questions of length and direction are raw material. They are the mere information for a study that seeks to understand the “why” of the lay of the land. Thus we lose the details in a symbol because the details become mere data for a

further level of understanding. Always, the initial raw material is a ladder to the later understanding of the “why?”. The numinosity of the symbol is then the entry of another dimension of representation and interpretation.

However, the addition, the augmentation, afforded by the symbol must be another dimension, another direction of interpretation and not simply something further in a direction that we already know, since a quantitative increase, however large, can never be felt as numinous as its measurement can be taken; we cannot, however, measure in a direction that we cannot even comprehend, and thus true numinosity is only possible where there are real symbols, real movements to an extra dimension of apperception. Nothing essentially mysterious is meant by this notion of “dimension”—it can be taken in a purely mathematical manner—it is simply the possibility of a completely different direction of “measurement,” so utterly unlike anything we have ever experienced that we feel a qualitative difference in our new viewpoint.

The cartographic attitude is useful in exploring dreams—one looks for patterns in the construction of the journeys one makes in them, the types of figures and their roles. Many dreams are cast in the form of a journey or have a journey-like narrative and such dreams are informatively examinable as a map of relations and if we are sure to pay attention to the questions that a cartographer might ask, we can see the relations between things “from above.” The order of the journey, the particular type of route, the “turns in the road” either literally or narratively, the mode of transport and what this tells us about the roads traveled, the destinations and distances: such elements of a dream constitute almost an illustrated map in themselves, the relations being apparent from the psychological geography.

Even with single dreams, the first questions to ask are often the questions of a cartographer, because they are precisely questions about relationships between things. A sequence of dreams is a different sort of thing, but the essence is partly about seeing relationships by seeing patterns, that is, by mapping from a different perspective, using time as the medium. I have seen people attempt to do this in a fascinating way by laying out transcribed dreams in date-order on the floor and highlighting themes with colored pens, joining these with lines. This is an attempt to map out and relate themes that occur over time by translating them into a primitive

spatial language. It is an attempt to relate things by a more obvious mapping and can be a very useful exercise.

Physically and spatially bringing sentences with similar contents from different dreams together on the same page performs this function—the translation of time into space in order to see from above the relations between things. This sort of work is related to symbolization—it is a re-presenting and synthesizing of things in a radically different way in order to see relationships. This essential link between maps and symbols is not readily apparent if we do not see that the simple physical-relation aspects of traditional maps are only a special case of presenting relations by adding a new dimension of perception.

Projection and Maps

Symbolization is closely linked to the notion of projection, and this allows us to examine the lessons we might learn from maps from another direction. Archetypal manifestation is the essence of both symbol formation and projection: the extent to which a projection is not accurate is the extent to which the contents of a projection partake of a larger reality which cannot be contained by phenomenal reality (von Franz, 1978). So, just as maps might show us “basic” elements of symbolization, they might also demonstrate relatively clearly the process of “projection.” In fact, the term “projection” is a technical term in geometry and cartography which shares a great deal of common meaning with the psychological sense of the word. This is such an important point, this place where the geometrical and psychological touch, that I intend to deal with it in a little detail.

A map of the world, the sort of thing we often have on our walls, is geometrically a “projection” of a three-dimensional object onto a two-dimensional surface. In fact, we classify our map projections very specifically—the most famous is the Mercator Projection, and this is typically the one we have on our walls. However, there are many others—the Peters Projection, sinusoidal projections, many different types of “equal area” projections, Gnomonic projections, etc. (Monmonier, 1990). All of these look different and present us with a unique two-dimensional image of the three-dimensional object.

Map projections differ in how they distort reality. It is mathematically impossible to accurately project an object which exists in N dimensions into less than N dimensions: one must

compromise and choose between distortions. More concretely, if one were to cut open a ball and try to flatten it out on the floor, one must, somehow, get rid of the wrinkles which would prevent it from lying flat. The choice of a map projection is often, then, a political affair, since the choice of distortion depends on which aspects you would like to represent accurately and which you are prepared to distort. For example, the traditional Mercator projection quite strongly distorts the size of the northern hemisphere by using a non-linear scale above the equator. This was partly chosen because this sort of distortion makes planning shipping routes on such a projection easier—they can be drawn as straight lines instead of the curved ones they would naturally be on the surface of the globe (Wood, 1992; Monmonier, 1990).⁴

The way that we project our maps is open to all sorts of biases, which may be important for understanding the cartographer. For example, it is well known that during the Cold War the maps used to teach world geography in American schools exaggerated the size of Russia by a large percentage, physical size being a good way of reinforcing fear of an aggressor. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the map was changed to underrepresent the size of Russia by 10-20%, a good way to reinforce the insignificance of a fallen enemy (Monmonier, 1990). Indeed maps have been used since time immemorial to augment the size and therefore importance of the nation who commissioned the map. This has clear parallels in analysis—the things which we exaggerate and the things which we ignore are significant because they are, essentially, distorted, and distortion has a cause.

When we look at the language used to describe the distortions inherent in map projections, it is barely a hair's breadth from a description of psychological projection. In psychological projection, we distort. We over- or underemphasize aspects of the object, color the object with associations, and immerse ourselves in a pattern with it in a way which is not entirely (or mainly) related to the object itself. Even the distortions involved in projection can be discussed in terms which are used directly to talk of projective distortions in maps. We may talk about the loss of a "sense of scale," "exaggerations," or a "loss of perspective," all phrases which can be moved smoothly, with little change of meaning, between psychology and cartography. In the case of maps, we can measure the distortion; but in psychology, it is felt.⁵

We can ask about the scale of a map or of the psyche's response to something, that is, how much psychological movement is required to deal with a situation. This is also integral to having a sense of how long a process might take: something usually of more use to the analyst than the patient. Our sense of scale can be distorted; that is, just like many map projections, the distance between some points is measured in a manner not comparable with the manner in which the distance between others is measured. This leads to a "nonlinear" scale where some distances are exaggerated and some are underrepresented by comparison.

This is really a fundamental type of projective distortion which we see a great deal in practice—patients who in some areas of their life over- or underestimate relationships in manifold ways. This is, essentially, having a map of reality with a variable and largely unconscious scale so that reasonably adapted measurement (relationship) is hindered. For example, perhaps in the vicinity of father figures, the distance between the patient and the figures is sharply increased; thus there is a distortion of scale, with the "real" distance feeling so much greater. Psychologically, we would say that a father complex distorts the emotional field or an archetypal field manifests symbolically as negative father images. Essentially we are saying that the terrain of our psyche is at this point distorted; that the projection of the archetypal world into the lower-dimensional phenomenal world inevitably involves distortion and we are looking at this specific distortion as it manifests around the image of "father."

Summary

Epistemologically, maps are more obviously related to the Kantian categories of space and time—we would expect such fundamental structures to cut across many of the images which organize our psychological life. It is for this reason that the symbolism in maps is "basic," because it is related to fundamental structures which govern the very essence of possible experiences. We can always begin with such abstract and fundamental structures. However, one also cannot go very far with them, and this is why I initially referred to maps as basic but also as relatively uninteresting. They provide an insight into where to start and what the basic images of exploration are, but they do not say anything about where to go in

a particular case. To speak more loosely, maps are images which synthesize one or more possible journeys in a way which provides a meaning not present in the journeys themselves. Tracing a journey we have completed on a map gives us a new feeling and a new perspective. It does not merely re-create the meaning we felt during the journey. This is essential to the relation to the symbolic: it results in something new.

Maps show in a relatively clear way part of what is involved in symbolization and can ground our attempts to identify and use symbolization by indicating the basic shape of the relationships it requires. They give us the fundamentals in a form which is easy to recognize, hopefully thereby to help us to further recognize symbolic forms which are not so simple.

Notes

¹ It is well to point out that “noumenal” is contrasted with “phenomenal” and bears no relation to the word “numinous.” The latter is derived from the Latin *numen* (“presence”) whilst “noumenal,” “noumenon,” etc., are from the Greek for “know” or “mean” and are generally used in philosophy to refer to the reality apart from how it merely appears to the senses, which is the phenomenal. Jung adopted the term “numinous” after it was coined by (Otto, 1923), and the phenomenon/noumenon distinction is most commonly associated with Kant’s First Critique.

² This is an important fact about signs as opposed to symbols—signs tend not to lead to surprises or anything unexpected. They are “literal” in that sense.

³ Strictly speaking, I suppose I do; the more advanced geometry becomes, the more it approaches this more abstract sense of “dimension” as an orthogonal direction of measurement. I am really only trying to emphasize that I do not mean it in the colloquial, vaguely geometrically flavored sense in which we typically use the word.

⁴ Both authors discuss in detail the political motivations behind several of the projections and how they have been used to influence opinion.

⁵ In fact, von Franz (1978) speaks of such feeling for projection coming through precisely such things as exaggeration.

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