

Stone Beings & the Imaginal Realm

The alchemists wove [intuitive imagining] . . . and scientific “fact” into a single world. They could not, or perhaps did not care to interfere with their own imaginative activity. For example, by considering silver as “seed” of the moon or copper as “seed” of Venus or lead as “seed” of Saturn, they disregarded the distinction between the organic and inorganic kingdoms. To the alchemists, “seeds are living forces with encoded intentionality . . .” These ore-bodies were not dead matter to be pushed around, but vital seeds, embodiments of soul; not objective facts, but subjective factors.” In this way the alchemical view “incorporated into its theoretical premises what modern science is now stating as new: the observer and the observed are not independent of each other.”

—Roberts Avens, *The Imaginal Body*
[Quoted phrases are from James Hilman.
Emphasis is mine—RS]

The transformation of lead into gold is the release of soul into its imaginal realm—its liberation from entrapment in the leaden literalism of scientific fact, or the suffocating dogma of a philosophical ideal.

—Roger Brooks, *Pathways Into the Jungian World: Phenomenology and Analytical Psychology*

At this point, we have come quite a good distance along the path of the Alchemy of Stones. Now that we are getting closer to the “top of the trunk” of our alchemical tree, where things begin branching out into a variety of different activities, I think it’s a good time to take a look around. I want to unpack some thoughts about the realm we have entered in preparation for exploring it further.

I have asked you to imagine—and to proceed from the viewpoint—that all of reality has consciousness at its foundation. By “consciousness,” I refer to awareness—both “conscious” and “unconscious.” We can say that matter emerged as an expression of this consciousness. Or we may agree with the Buddhist perspective of “interdependent co-arising”—the idea that matter and consciousness arise simultaneously, and cannot exist independently.

From the alchemical viewpoint, as described in the Roberts Avens quote above, a world arising from consciousness is one in which imagination is naturally at home, and in which imagination would naturally have an influence on “physical matter”—the stuff from which scientific “facts” are derived. In truth, imagination is fundamental to all of our experience of reality. As Jung said,

Aquamarine crystal reveals its inner “face” in its reflection

