

The Subtle-Imaginal Body

It is clear enough . . . what the ultimate aim of alchemy really was: it was trying to produce a corpus subtile [subtle body], a transfigured and resurrected body, i.e., a body that was at the same time spirit.

—Carl Jung, *Collected Works* 12, para 511



There is another possibility, that of the subtle body, a fine material veil of the soul, which cannot exist so to speak without a body. This is the “corpus glorificationis” (glorified body), the transfigured body, which is our future portion.

—Carl Jung, ETH, Lecture XIV, page 115.

In the quotes above, Jung indicates that the building of the subtle body was, in a sense, synonymous with the creation of the Philosophers’ Stone, the ultimate goal of alchemy. He also hints that the manifestation of the subtle body is our destiny—our “future portion.” Thus, it would be hard to overestimate the significance of the fact that working with stone energies can enhance and strengthen the subtle body. It is also interesting to note that Jung viewed the subtle body as something that must be *produced*. It is not simply a given, but is something that we only have in *potential*. It is rather like an embryo, which can, but may not, fully develop. In the case of one’s subtle body—unlike a physical embryo—the process of development must be done consciously and intentionally. Fortunately, because of the Stone Beings and Sophia, we do not have to do our work alone.

Before committing oneself to a lengthy and somewhat tenuous inner process, it is fair to ask ourselves, “Is all this for real?” I have certainly asked myself that question at many points on my path, and when I have truly looked, the answers I have discovered have always encouraged me to continue. So let’s look at this question together.

ABOVE: Painting by William Blake: Saint Peter, Saint James and Saint John with Dante and Beatrice