
Introduction
to Wolfgang Pauli's Dialogue
with C.G. Jung

Late in 1930, Wolfgang Pauli's world was falling apart. Only two years earlier the brilliant young genius had been appointed to the chair in theoretical physics at ETH, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, in Zürich. At that time he must have been one of the youngest professors in the world, only 28 years old. The year 1929 had been one of momentous change: he had taken the decision to leave the Catholic Church and in December the same year he had married the cabaret performer Käthe Deppner in Berlin. However any serenity on the surface was deceptive. As early as February 1930 he intimates to his Swedish friend and colleague Oskar Klein that all is not well with the marriage. He describes the matrimonial ties as very loose and gives him to understand that nobody would be less surprised than he himself if his wife were to leave the home.² In November the separation duly happened. She left him for a chemist whom she had already met before she married Pauli. Characteristically Pauli responded with sarcasm: 'If it had been a bullfighter I could have understood. But a common chemist...' ³ But despite the bantering tone, Pauli was devastated. The divorce marked the start of a profound crisis in his life. History records that it was in fact his father who recommended him to consult the man for whom Zürich was world-famous: the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung.

It is this encounter of the quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli (1900–1958) and the depth psychologist C.G. Jung (1875–1961) that is the subject of this book. However it will deal with much more than merely the personal relationship between the help-seeking Pauli and the 'healer' Jung. For I wish to show that Pauli's interest in Jung's psychology cannot be seen as solely the consequence of his personal crisis. After 1934, when Pauli stopped undergoing analysis, he gradually developed a deepening philosophical interest in Jung's psychology as a method of contemplating the world and mankind. I also wish to show how in Jung's *Weltanschauung* he found perspectives which related to and developed the philosophical questions which had occupied him from the beginning of his intellectual life and in particular the problems which he had encountered in connection with the development of modern physics. The main question that I shall attempt to answer is: Why was Pauli interested in Jung's psychology and in what respect? What most people find remarkable is that a theoretical physicist, and one with a reputation for being extremely critical, could become interested in the ideas of the 'mystic' Jung. A descrip-

² Pauli to Klein, 10 Feb. 1930 [242], *PLC II*, 4. See also p. 7.

³ Charles Enz, 'Rationales und Irrationales im Leben Wolfgang Paulis', *Der Pauli-Jung Dialog und seine Bedeutung für die moderne Wissenschaft*, eds. Harald Altmanspacher, Hans Primas & Eva Wertenschlag-Birkhäuser (Berlin, 1995), 24. Henceforth referred to as *Der Pauli-Jung Dialog*.

tion of Pauli's personality therefore becomes essential – an account that is both biographical and also focuses on his role in the evolution of quantum physics.

Pauli's early philosophical schooling, his critical epistemology and his close contact with his mentor Niels Bohr are all relevant to an understanding of Pauli's later interest in Jung's psychology and view of the world. At the same time this meeting of a representative of matter and a representative of the soul has also to be seen against the background of the development that had taken place in both physics and psychology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is moreover necessary to consider the meeting in the context of the peculiar intellectual atmosphere of Europe at the turn of the century and between the wars. Pauli's meeting and dialogue with C.G. Jung also represents a confrontation between two different intellectual temperaments – a confrontation that played a big part in the development and intensification of the philosophical outlooks of the two men.

I will mainly focus on a presentation of Pauli's own version of his philosophical background and interests. I think we must start here before we embark on a critical evaluation of his standpoint (which will not be included in this study). My contribution will be to place Pauli's self-image into a bigger historical-philosophical context. I will also tackle the question of whether there exists a direct link between Pauli 'the physicist' and Pauli 'the Jungian', or whether these two must be considered as two completely different beings arbitrarily brought together by the circumstances of Pauli's personal life. In my opinion this is a difficult question to answer, but I intend – without claiming to be exhaustive – to shed some light on it.

The Innermost Kernel

Depth Psychology and Quantum Physics. Wolfgang

Pauli's Dialogue with C.G. Jung

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