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Psychic wholeness

1. Major steps or levels of depth

- ego/persona

- ego/shadow

- ego/contrasexual
archetype

- ego/self

2. Transformation of energy

a. Jung vs. Freud

b. symbols as operators

c. teleological point of view.

d. symbol and sign.

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160 , Nov. 5, 1:

Page 2

2. The transformation of energy:

The potential victory of which Jung spoke

is the movement toward what he calls psychic wholeness.

As we saw last time (sec. 1),

psychic wholeness constitutes the guiding principle of all of Jung's investigations. What makes for it? How is it to be achieved? What will contribute to it? Jung's science can be said to be a science of psychic wholeness.

What does Jung mean by psychic wholeness? He defines it in terms of energy, and the best way to understand Jung on energy is to differentiate him from Freud.

For Freud, as we saw,

all energy in the human person, at least all psychic energy, is ultimately biological energy, and especially sexual energy. It is reduced to something less than itself.. It is always explained by moving backwards, to what preceded. (Ricoeur: for Freud, we seem to have a destiny in reverse).

Energy for Freud, then, is directed to other objects only by being displaced from the sexual object (pleasure principle, primary process) to the other object (reality principle, secondary process). This displacement could occur in either healthy or neurotic fashion. The psyche has at its disposal various mechanisms of displacement: repression, substitution, symbolization, sublimation. Any one or several of these could be called into play in order to effect the displacement of energy from the sexual system to other systems.

Notice what some of the implications of this move are. For Freud, the ucs is never related to reality. It is the pleasure principle, always at variance with reality, which offers little pleasure and much work and effort and pain. The ego is the locus of the reality principle for Freud. Psychic adjustment is a matter of adaptation of the pleasure principle to reality, a stoic resignation to things as they are. (Misconceptions of Freud about: because Freud reduced all psychic energy to sexual energy, many have thought Freud meant "let it all hang out" and all your tensions will be taken care of. The truth is far different from this. He meant something quite different). The resignation to things as they are means healthy and not neurotic displacement of sexual energy onto other systems. *Therapy is meant to enable this healthy, adult stoicism, adaptation to a cruel fate.*

160,

Nov. 5,

Page 3

For Jung, on the contrary, as we have seen,

all psychic energy is neutral, undifferentiated.

It is not originally sexual, tied to a biological end, to a destiny in reverse,

but it can be directed to different objects,

and it can be transformed creatively (not displaced, BECAUSE it has nothing to be displaced FROM) in the interest of a particular goal,

which is the goal of wholeness.

Jung at first agreed with Freud

that all Energy was displaced,

but he abandoned this notion in favor of "an entirely natural and automatic process of transformation"

that had an unconscious meaning and purposefulness: wholeness.

a. Symbols as operators

We can see both the change in Jung's attitude to this process and his notion of just what this unconscious meaning and purposefulness is,

if we review again the two different positions he took toward fantasy and dreams at two different times in his life.

Nothing is more instructive regarding Jung's notion of the symbol than this contrast. (Students, I find, invariably have a hard time grasping Jung's notion of the symbol. Perhaps this is endemic of our time and age: symbols are reduced to signs, or perhaps even to ~~symptoms~~ symptoms).

Fantasies and dreams

are clear examples of symbols, spontaneous symbols.

In 1912,

Jung indicated, more or less in agreement with Freud, that fantasy-thinking and dreaming

represent a distortion in one's relation to reality, an intrusion of the non-realistic unconscious psyche into the domain of the reality principle or ego.

Fantasies and dreams are only thinly disguised instances of wishful thinking, symptoms OF the desires of the ucs, which need only to be interpreted reductively in order to arrive at a knowledge of what is going on in the ucs psyche.

In 1952, Jung rewrote this part of the book, Symbols of Transformation, and takes a far different attitude to fantasy and dreaming.

They are no longer viewed as distorted forms of thinking or as illegitimate or invalid forms of relating to reality, but rather they are a spontaneous product of the objective psyche, i.e., of a layer of the subject that has its own distinct meaning and purpose.

And they co-operate in the interests of the transformation of energy.

Cf. John Weir Perry on psychosis: the healing of psychosis is possible, by taking the fantasies of the psychotic seriously, as pointing to a reorganization of the self. Pages 20f. in The Far Side of Madness.

Perhaps these examples

serve to highlight the difference between a symptom and a symbol.

For Freud and for the early Jung, dreams and fantasies were symptoms of neurotic difficulty. they revealed the formation of substitutes for sexual energy. If they could be properly interpreted, they could provide a key to one's maladaptation to reality.

For the later Jung (beginning with his own confrontation with the unconscious), fantasy and dream

- a) had meaning and purpose of their own, symbolizing an objective desire of the psyche for wholeness;
- and b) operate to transform psychic energy in that direction. The symbol is efficacious. It not merely points to the transformation of energy and its goal, but it is an operator of this transformation, giving what it symbolizes. (Symbols are sacramental).

b. /the teleological point of view

Jung's interest, then, shifted

from the causal-reductive point of view of Freud

(what caused this distortion in the objective world view?)

to the teleological point of view

(what is the purpose of this symbolix expression? What is it intending? Where is it heading?)

More accurately,

he came to see that the teleological point of view

complemented the causal point of view,

and that both were necessary if the symbol is to be understood.

We will see shortly how they do complement one another. For the moment,

160,

Nov. 5,

Page 5

it is sufficient to indicate that the symbol is not for Jung
an inferior form of thinking, a maladaptation to reality,
as for Freud,

but "the best possible description or formulation of a relatively unknown
fact" (CW 6, p. 474).

What is the relatively unknown fact?

It is where I am heading: the self, the individual, is a goal,
something I cannot point to. The self that I would be, I am not
yet. It is more an aspiration than a fact. I cannot point to
the self I would be, but I can respond to symbols which themselves
can put me on the way, point me forward.

The sign IS SOMETHING quite different from the symbol. It stands for
something known. There is, e.g., nothing symbolic about a stop
sign, or a green light. It is univocal in its meaning, and that
meaning is quite clear and well-known. But suppose a stop sign
appeared in a dream. And suppose it appeared prominently in a
dream, as you were driving recklessly down a winding and dangerous
road. And suppose that you saw the stop sign and laughed at it,
and disobeyed it.. Then the stop sign has been converted into a
symbol. It points to something relatively unknown--stop living the
way you are living. Stop the recklessness..

Dreams are not the ~~only~~ only place for the appearance of symbols in this way.

For people who are into reading and meditating on Scripture, the
figures of Scripture ~~are~~ and the scenes of Scripture can function
in this same symbolic way. I.e., symbolizing some direction into
the future and transforming our psychic energy so as to lead us
to what they symbolize. Egs. Joe Brown directing John Melcher;
mandala; the Crucified in the course of history. Immersion in
these symbols can transform psychic energy in a certain direction.
The natural language of the psyche is symbolic, not literal or
rational. The best techniques of meditation, Christian or otherwise,
respect this natural language. Colin Maloney: dreams and spirituality,
the collaboration of psyche and Christian meditation.

For Jung, then, the psyche can produce symbols spontaneously that will
evoke the transformation of psychic energy that will put one
further down the road toward individuation.