

D0090

## The Self and the Critique of Christianity.

Nov. 4

### 1. Introduction.

It is Jung -- not Freud, not Marx, not Nietzsche -- but Jung (perhaps along with Kierkegaard, and both in the interests of inwardness and the emergence of the individual) who has presented the most <sup>gently</sup> stinging, most far-reaching, most accurate, and most important critique of the ethos of ecclesiastical Christianity in our Prefigured by his childhood vision of God's attitude toward the Church. time. Jung's critique is from the standpoint of the phenomenology of the Self. In today's lecture, I will show how Jung's notion of the Self bears upon Christian self-understanding and radically affects it to the core, to the marrow of the bone. In the next class, I will attempt to introduce some further conceptual clarifications into this critique by taking up the semantics of the problem of evil, and will briefly indicate the very significant contribution of Sebastian Moore to the development of a new Christian self-understanding in the light of Jung's exposé of the hypocrisy of conventional Christian morality and spirituality. In the class before Thanksgiving, I will present to you Jung's understanding of the contribution of his psychology to a new religious consciousness and will discuss with you Jung's paper, Answer to Job; and in the last class of the semester

Nov. 11 (2)

I will present the work of post-Jungian authors concerning questions of archetypes, morality, and religion.

Jung calls the archetype of the Self "the archetype which it is most important for modern man to understand." (Aion, p. 266). While I agree that this is the case, I must emphasize also the difficulty of this enterprise. The Self or wholeness is no abstract idea. It is initially empirical in that it is anticipated by the psyche in the form of spontaneous or autonomous symbols of unity, totality, and centeredness. The most obvious examples of such symbols are the quaternity and the mandalas. But wholeness is empirical in another sense, over against which abstract intellectual conceptualizations fade into pale shadows. This sense is the sense of the unus mundus as experienced reality, the sense of the finite boundedness or bounded infinity of the individuating psyche, the sense of the mysterium coniunctionis of the progressive reconciliation of the opposites of matter and spirit in psyche by the transforming power of archetypal images or elemental symbols. The intellect can understand the symbols of the Self without the individual being changed by them; but this is not

Nov. 11 (3)

the sense in which Jung is speaking of understanding the Self.

He is speaking of an understanding permeated by feeling, the function of value, an understanding that is empirically rooted not just in an anticipation but in a realization, a lived process of realization, the process of individuation. And for such an understanding, a prior lived understanding and acceptance is required of the unconscious, of the shadow, of the contrasexuality and bisexuality of the subject -- for all of these are aspects of the totality that is the Self. And these are aspects modern man is least willing to accept.

2. The scientific status of the notion of the Self.

It was only toward the middle of the 1920's -- 25 years into the scientific elaboration of his psychology -- that Jung made the notion of the Self the focus of his psychology. In an early description (1928), he spoke of the Self as "strange to us and yet so near, wholly ourselves and yet unknowable, a virtual centre of so mysterious a constitution that it can claim anything -- kinship with beasts and gods, with crystals and with stars -- without moving us to wonder, without even exciting our disapprobation." At this time, too, he clarifies the scientific status of this notion by referring to it as "a construct that

Nov. #11 (4)

serves to express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp as such, since by definition it transcends our powers of comprehension."

The Self is both the beginning of psychic life and the goal toward which it is oriented. In this sense, Jung seems to glimpse the same thing expressed by Eliot in "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

All symbols of the Self -- the mandala, the stone, the Christ, the Buddha, the golden tree of life, the steadily burning flame -- are experienced as a central point, not coinciding with the ego. In fact, Jung says, "the self has as much to do with the ego as the sun with the earth."

As the Copernican revolution in astronomy involved a cosmological decentering of man's self-understanding regarding his place in the universe, so the psychological revolution begun by Freud and continued by Jung involves a decentering of the home and origin of meaning, truth, and value away from ego-consciousness to the dark reaches of the unconscious, and, with Jung, ultimately to the mid-point which is also a totality, the Self. The Self is "something

Nov. 11 (5)

irrational, an indefinable existent, to which the ego is neither opposed nor subjected, but merely attacked, and about which it revolves very much as the earth revolves around the sun." Sensing (not knowing) the self in this way is the goal of individuation. "The individuated ego senses itself as the object of an unknown and supra-ordinate subject."

In 1928, Jung said that his psychological inquiry must come to a stop with the idea of the Self, for such an idea is "a transcendental postulate which, although justifiable psychologically, does not allow of scientific proof." He calls the idea of the Self a "step beyond science," but one which is "an unconditional requirement of the psychological development I have sought to depict, because without this postulate I could give no adequate formulation of the psychic processes that occur empirically. At the very least, therefore, the self can claim the value of an hypothesis analogous to that of the structure of the atom."

Symbols of the self have another quality besides that of midpoint, the quality of totality. The self is the wholeness of consciousness and unconscious and the point of reference for the numerous fragments,

Nov. 11 (6)

complexes, and autonomous figures of the psyche.

30 years later, in 1958, Jung was able to express better the scientific status of his notion of the Self, as a result of the developments we have seen in the last two weeks. Precisely because it is a totality, the Self is, in its major portion, unrecognizable and indeterminate, except through the heuristic medium of certain symbols which grow up on it. He now refers to the notion, however, not as a step beyond science, but as a scientific postulate, but a transcendental one, in the Kantian sense: i.e., "it presupposes the existence of unconscious factors on empirical grounds and thus characterizes an entity that can be described only in part but, for the other part, remains at present unknowable and illimitable." It appears in dreams, myths, and fairytales in the figure of the "supraordinate personality," such as a king, hero, prophet, savior, etc., or in the form of a totality symbol, such as the circle, square, quadratura circuli, cross, etc. When it represents a complexio oppositorum, a union of opposites, it can also appear as a united duality, in the form, for instance, of tao as the (hermaphroditic) interplay of yang and yin, or of the hostile brothers, or of the hero

Nov. 11 (7)

and his adversary (arch-enemy, dragon), Faust and Mephistopheles, etc. Empirically, therefore, the self appears as a play of light and shadow, although conceived as a totality and unity in which the opposites are united." (PT, p. 460) From the purely intellectual point of view, it is a working hypothesis. But because its symbols possess a distinct numinosity, an a priori emotional value, it is an archetypal idea, but different from other archetypal ideas in that it occupies a central position befitting the significance of its content & numinosity.

2. The Archetype of the Self in the ~~Modern~~ Contemporary Age. Why is the Self the archetype which it is most important for modern man to understand? Jung maintains that there is a change occurring in the psychic situation of the 'Christian aeon,' and that the notion of the Self crystallizes this change and contains a potential contribution to the birth of a new religion in our time. Jung puts synchronistic stock in the fact that astrologically Pisces is the concomitant of 2000 years of Christian development, and that the emergent symbol of the Age of Aquarius is Anthropos. Symbolically, this change will mean an alteration in the Christ-image, which up to now, and through the age of Pisces has been inadequate



to the task of liberating the "true man." So too, in the East, the Buddha-image has proved unable to protect against the invasion of materialistic and totalitarian ideology. This is because these images are both too <sup>spiritualistically</sup> one-sided to be able to represent man's wholeness adequately. They are, says M.-L. von Franz, "lacking in darkness and in bodily and material reality" (135). She goes on: "At bottom it is the image of man in the Aquarian Age which is being formed in the collective unconscious. The astrological image of the Aquarian period is an image of man which, according to Jung, represents the Anthropos as an image of the Self, or of the greater inner personality which lives in every human being and in the collective psyche. . . . The task of man in the Aquarian Age will be to become conscious of his larger inner presence, the Anthropos, and to give the utmost care to the unconscious and to nature." (136)

4. Christ as Archetype of the Self. Jung's book, Aion, discusses the relations between the traditional Christ-figure and the natural symbols of wholeness or the Self. First, symbols of unity and

Nov. 11 (9)

totality stand at the highest point on the scale of objective values, higher than the contrasexual symbols, because they cannot be distinguished from the imago Dei, the image of God in the human soul, in the values they embody. They are invested with such value because they are symbols of order and occur principally in times of psychic disorientation and reorientation. They bind and subdue the lawless powers of fragmentation and darkness, and they depict or create an order that transforms the chaos into a cosmos.

How are these symbols related to the image of Christ? Christ is still, says Jung (1951), the living myth of our culture, "our culture hero, who, regardless of his historical existence, embodies the myth of the divine Primordial Man." (36) It is Christ who occupies, as it were, the centre of the Christian mandala, it is he whose kingdom is the pearl of great price, the treasure buried in the field, the grain of mustard seed which will become a great tree, and the heavenly city. Christ, then, has represented for Christians the archetype of the Self, and has been referred to by theologians and

Nov. 11 (10)

pious faithful alike as the true image of God, after whose likeness our inner image is made. But for practically all theologians, pastors, and faithful in both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant traditions, the image of God in man has not resided in the corporeal man, but in the invisible, incorporeal, incorrupt, and immortal rational soul.

Jung is convinced that "the original Christian conception of the imago Dei embodied in Christ meant an all-embracing totality that even includes the animal side of man," so that originally the recognition of the archetype of wholeness, <sup>in the Christ-image</sup> restored an original state of oneness with the spontaneous God-image in the human psyche. But the Christ-image, very early on in Christian tradition and even in some of the NT writings, came to lack wholeness, since there was excluded from it the dark side of things. Everything dark was turned into a diabolical opponent of the God-image. Christ became a symbol of the heroic ego rather than of the Self. The figure of the Redeemer became bright and one-sided. The dark side of the human totality became ascribed to the Antichrist, the devil, evil. But, says Jung, "the psychological concept of the self,

in part derived from our knowledge of the whole man, <sup>Nov. 11 (11)</sup> but for the rest depicting itself spontaneously in the products of the unconscious as an archetypal quaternity bound together by inner antinomies, cannot omit the shadow that belongs to the light figure, for without it this figure lacks body and humanity. In the empirical self, light and shadow form a paradoxical unity. In the Christian concept, on the other hand, the archetype is hopelessly split into two irreconcilable halves, leading ultimately to a metaphysical dualism." The dogmatic figure of Christ was made so sublime and spotless, that everything else turned dark beside it. It became so one-sidedly perfect that it demanded a psychic complement to restore the balance. But this complement occurred not in the Christ-figure but in the figure of Satan as Antichrist, who now came to be the archetype of matter and instinct, as Christ came to be the archetype of spirit. What was overlooked in this perversion is the truth Jung articulates in "On the Nature of the Psyche," the truth that marks Jung's contribution to a new

Nov. 11 (12)

ethic and a new spirituality: "Instinct is not in itself bad any more than spirit is ~~not~~ good. Both can be both."

Jung calls the perfectionism that developed in the Christian disposition fatal, for it has led by a necessary psychological law, to a reversal of its original intention. The portion of the totality that was excluded from the image of the Self focused on Christ has not been integrated into the individual psyche; Christianity has functioned as an enemy of individuation and has fallen prey to the same perversion that led, in the Pharisees, to the crucifixion of Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. Christianity has crucified Christ over and over again by rejecting the dark side, excluding it from the totality. Christianity has bifurcated the Self, preferring, as did the Pharisees, an ethic of perfection to an ethic of wholeness. In this perversion, the excluded part has necessarily taken its toll in the form not only of individual, but even more dramatically, of collective psychoses, of which Jung found the German experience of Nazism to be prototypical. When one comes to see that the self is not exclusively "spiritual,"

Nov. 11 (13)

its dark side turns out to be not exclusively threatening: in fact, quite the opposite. It becomes a source of vitality, energy, and wholeness. Individuation is a mysterium coniunctionis, a nuptial union of opposite halves. In this mystery the body plays a special and, to the traditional Christian, unexpected and initially alarming significance. Matter, as Teilhard de Chardin almost alone among modern Christian thinkers saw, is invested with considerable numinosity in itself. The failure to recognize this presence of the underground God splits the individual into two halves. The conscious half is identified with Christ, who then becomes an ego-ideal rather than an archetypal image of the self. The dark side, suppressed or repressed, is then projected outside, so that the world is afflicted with the impossible task of acting out the conflict that can be resolved only in the psyche of the individual.

The criterion of morality and religion, according to this conception of things, then, becomes wholeness rather than perfection. The criterion of images of Christ, presentations of the

Nov. 11 (14)

Christian message, imitations to Christian spirituality, becomes the same thing. The spontaneous images of unity, centeredness, and totality proceeding from the human psyche are the criteria against which all images of Christ and all spiritual doctrine are to be judged. Such is the radical contribution of Jung both to a critique of the Christian aeon and to the new religion which is coming into being in our time.