

D0109

Theo 143, Lecture Two: Religion

①

more

This talk of the consciousness of the individual leads us, then, to a discussion of religion. We spoke of one major function of the general usage of the word, culture; namely, that it serves to help us understand epochal changes in human history - We are entering upon such an epochal change in our time. Jung said it would take 600 years to accomplish and that it would take the form of the birth of a new religion. It is essentially, primordially, a change, an evolution, in human consciousness, and its carrier is the individual, for, strictly speaking, only the individual is conscious, and he or she is always more or less conscious, more or less differentiated and integrated, more or less ready to assume the invitation to wholeness, more or less capable of a control of meaning by interiority.

What the individual does with his or her own individuality, then, is the key to his or her participation in the emergence of a new cultural epoch. And I propose as an initial definition of religion precisely this: what the individual does with his or her own individuality. I am in good company on this definition. Alfred North Whitehead, for one, has defined religion as "what the individual does with his own solitariness," as "the art and the theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things." We shall return in due time to these definitions. It is sufficient now simply to note them.

My preliminary definition of religion is also in agreement with that of Søren Kierkegaard, for whom religiousness is relating to oneself by willing to be oneself, and in such a manner as to <sup>discover</sup> exhibit the God who creates one. This definition, too, we shall study in great detail later.

My point for the moment is that these notions of religion do not turn religion into something other than the process of becoming oneself. They do not make religion primarily a collective phenomenon. Nor do they make relating to God or the divine or

the Absolute something one does over and above the process of becoming the self one is. If the divine is, and if it is to be found in human life, it is to be found in that process, and not independently of it. Religion is the self-conscious becoming of the individual as this particular individual man or woman. It is nothing other than this, nothing more than this. And this self-conscious becoming is religion, the relating of the individual to the divine.

If I am correct, or at least on the right track, in these proposals, then an interesting correlation opens up between our discussion of culture and this treatment of religion. If the sole bearer of the new culture is the individual, if the sole arena of its birth hangs in our own inner space, and if religion is what the individual does with his or her inner space, then the forms of the emergence of the new culture is religion. Religion and the culture-bearing capacity of men and women are one. The individual's participation in the emergence of a new cultural epoch is the individual's religion, and the individual's religion is his or her participation in cultural evolution: for these two terms are synonymous with a third: what the individual does with his or her own individuality.

This, then, is the essential correlation of religion and culture. Religion, as the art and theory of the internal life of man, is the principal bearer of culture. This is particularly true today in the emergence of a new cultural epoch which will be a function of the expansion and differentiation of consciousness-- an expansion and differentiation which can only be understood as what the individual does with his own solitariness, what the individual does in regard to the task of becoming the one he or she is, the differentiated totality of everything human that we all are: male and female; body, soul, and spirit; good and evil; human and divine.

This process of what the individual does in the becoming of the one he or she is we shall name, in the Jung, individuation. Individuation is both religion and the bearer of culture, according to my definitions of religion and culture. Later on in our course, we

143, 2, 3

shall study in detail what Jung meant by individuation. For the moment I wish only to indicate my use of the term in relation to religion and culture.

Now there are several problems that are liable to arise with regard to this discussion. Am I not overly privatizing the meaning of religion and the task of creating culture? Is it not unusual to describe religion with Whitehead as what the individual does with his or her own solitariness? Is it not strange to emphasize that the principal bearer of culture is the individual?

I call attention, then, to the phenomenon noted by Whitehead, that those religions in which solitariness is introduced as essential are precisely those imbued with a universal consciousness. There are other forms of religion, then, than that form defined by solitariness. There are tribal and social forms of religion.

## Theo 143, Lecture 2: Religion

This talk of the consciousness of the individual leads us, then, to a discussion of religion. We spoke of one major function of the more general usage of the word 'culture'; namely, that it serves to help us understand epochal changes in human history. We are entering upon such an epochal change in our time. Jung said it would take 600 years to accomplish and that it would take the form of the birth of a new religion. It is essentially, primordially, a change, an evolution, in human consciousness, and its carrier is the individual, for, strictly speaking, only the individual is conscious, and he or she is always more or less conscious, more or less differentiated and integrated, more or less ready to assume the invitation to wholeness, more or less capable of a control of meaning by interiority.

What the individual does with his or her own individuality, then, is the key to his or her participation in the emergence of a new cultural epoch. And I propose as an initial definition of religion precisely this: what the individual does with his or her own individuality. I am in good company on this definition. Alfred North Whitehead, for one, has defined religion as 'what the individual does with his own solitariness,' as 'the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things.' We shall return in due time to these definitions. It is sufficient now simply to note them.

My preliminary definition of religion is also in agreement with that of Søren Kierkegaard, for whom religiousness is relating to oneself by *willing* to be oneself, and in such a manner as to discover and exhibit the power that creates one.' This definition too we shall study in great detail later.

My point for the moment is that these notions of religion do not turn religion into something other than the process of becoming oneself. They do not make religion primarily a collective phenomenon. Nor do they make relating to God or the divine or the Absolute something one does over and above the process of becoming the self one is. If the divine is, and if it is to be found in human life, it is to be found in that process, and not independently of it. Religion *is* the self-conscious becoming of the individual as this particular individual man or woman. It is nothing other than this, nothing more than this. And this self-conscious becoming is religion, the relating of the individual to the divine.

If I am correct, or at least on the right track, in these proposals, then an interesting correlation opens up between our discussion of culture and this treatment of religion. If the sole bearer of the new culture is the individual, if the sole arena of

its birth pangs is our own inner space, and if religion is what the individual does with his or her inner space, then the form of the emergence of the new culture is religion. Religion and the culture-bearing capacity of men and women are one. The individual's participation in the emergence of a new cultural epoch is the individual's religion, and the individual's religion is his or her participation in cultural evolution: for these two terms are synonymous with a third: what the individual does with his or her own individuality.

This, then, is the essential correlation of religion and culture. Religion, as the art and theory of the internal life of man, is the principal bearer of culture. This is particularly true today in the emergence of a new cultural epoch which will be a function of the expansion and differentiation of consciousness – an expansion and differentiation which can only be understood as what the individual does with his own own solitariness, what the individual does in regard to the task of becoming the one he or she is, the differentiated totality of everything human that we all are: male and female; body, soul, and spirit; good and evil; human and divine.

This process of what the individual does in the becoming of the one he or she is we shall name, with Jung, individuation. Individuation is both religion and the bearer of culture, according to my definitions of religion and culture. Later on in our course, we shall study in detail what Jung meant by individuation. For the moment I wish only to indicate my use of the term in relation to religion and culture.

Now there are several problems that are liable to arise with regard to this discussion. Am I not overly privatizing the meaning of religion and the task of creating culture? Is it not unusual to describe religion with Whitehead as what the individual does with his or her own solitariness? Is it not strange to emphasize that the principal bearer of culture is the individual?

I call attention, then, to the phenomenon noted by Whitehead, that those religions in which solitariness is introduced as essential are precisely those imbued with a universal consciousness. There are other forms of religion, then, than that form defined by solitariness. There are tribal and social forms of religion.