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SOME NOTES ON JUNG: AUXILIARY TO READING OF MEMORIES, DREAMS, REFLECTIONS AND TO LECTURES

I am convinced that it is necessary to distinguish, in studying Jung, between his science of the human psyche and his own personal myth, that is, the personal story that determines the ultimate interpretative framework or overarching worldview within which he interprets his scientific findings. MDR gives us this myth, while Jung's science is contained in his Collected Works. The lectures will summarize Jung's science, while reading MDR will give you an avenue to his myth. The following set of notes is intended, not as an exhaustive commentary of MDR, but as a set of questions and suggestions that arise in my mind from trying to come to terms with his overall worldview. In fact, I am limiting my explicit references to MDR to the first three chapters, even though my comments bear upon the whole of Jung's myth.

In Chapter One, we are given an introduction to the psychological and religious atmosphere of Jung's childhood. It becomes clear from the beginning of this book, written from the perspective of old age, that the conventional Christianity with which he was closely associated because of his father's profession as a clergyman, never took hold with him. Ecclesial Christianity for Jung was never differentiated from his emotional resonances to his father; neither, for that matter, was the Christian God.

His experience especially of religious ceremonies at cemeteries, where people who had been around were now put into the ground, with reference to the Lord Jesus taking them to himself, gave him a distrust of this Lord Jesus. Jesus was early associated with the gloomy men in black frock coats, top hats, and shiny black boots, who busied themselves with the black box in the graveyard. Jesus took to himself people who never returned. There is something sinister about this Jesus. Associations with Jesus as devourer arise: the man-eater, who took people so as to prevent Satan from devouring them.

Connected with this is Jung's first conscious trauma. He saw a Catholic priest coming toward him down the road, and thought it was a Jesuit--Jesuits until very recently were all but outlaws in Switzerland. Jesuits, of course, were connected with Jesus, and so another element is added to the complex of Jesus as sinister, as connected with intrigue, as somehow not to be trusted.

And at this same time, Jung had the earliest dream he could remember, one which, he says, was to preoccupy him all his life. In this dream he goes down a stairway into a deep hold in the ground, finds there a door covered with a heavy green curtain, in the center of which is a platform. On the platform is a golden throne, and standing erect on the throne, is a huge phallus, with a single eye at the top, radiating light that lit up the room. From the perspective of his old age, Jung is moved in remembering these events to indicate that that they constellated for him into a conviction that there is more to the reality of God and the meaning of Jesus--cf. the ambiguity of his mother's statement, "That is the man-eater" in his dream--than Christians were willing to admit. There are underground forces; there is a relation of God to the subterranean depths; there is an uncanny possibility that God is not to be thought of as existing in a dimension of pure spiritual light; there is the suggestion that God resides in the depths of the material darkness of the earth, and that Jesus has a frightful underground counterpart that has to be taken into account if the whole story is to be known about Him and about God.

The setting of Jung's dream is important: it is under the earth, and there is a green curtain closing off the door to the room. There is a strange mystery hidden in the unconscious, lying hidden behind the curtain of the color of life and vegetation. The religious notions associated with this secret will be closely tied to the earth, and the most significant of religiously powerful symbols will be taken from nature and imitate nature. There is prefigured in associative imagery a conception of God as high and low, as spirit and matter, as loving and frightening, as light and dark, as good and evil; and of Christ as being only one half of the story about God. We see here, too, Jung's

absorption with the dark side of reality, and what would become his desire to find in the dark side the secret of life, to wrest from nature itself what Christians call grace, deliverance, the tree of life. Or, perhaps more accurately in light of his final statements, his urge to redeem life from matter, from the unconscious. And it may be that we see prefigured in this dream the final ambiguity and inconclusiveness of this "myth."

We are given more than hints in Chapter One of the dark mystery and ego-instability of Jung's childhood. "The nocturnal atmosphere had begun to thicken." "... something queer going on." "... an inescapable world of shadows filled with frightening, unanswered questions which had me at their mercy." We see, too, his affinity for stone and for non-living matter, and the plasticity of his powerful imagination, "accompanied by a feeling of curious and fascinating darkness." We see the closeness of his conscious ego to the unconscious, his fascination with a world which seemed eternal and all-absorbing, a world from which he always had to wrench himself away if he was to make his way in the world of the conscious ego. He was led by his uncertainty and confusion to create his secret: the little manikin carved out of his ruler, with frock coat, top hat, and shiny black boots like the man at funerals, and fitted with a bed, a coat, and given a stone and a library. This expression of a secret that was haunted by his preoccupations made him feel safe, and at one with himself. The possession of such a secret was "the essential factor of my boyhood." It belonged with the dream of the phallus and the image of the Jesuit, in a mysterious, secret realm cultivated by his powerful and polymorphous imagination. Cf. page 22:

"The little wooden figure with the stone was a first attempt, still unconscious and childish, to give shape to the secret. I was always absorbed by it and had the feeling I ought to fathom it; and yet I did not know what it was I was trying to express. I always hoped I might be able to find something—perhaps in nature—that would give me the clue and show me where or what the secret was. At that time my interest in plants, animals, and stones grew. I was constantly on the lookout for something mysterious. Consciously, I was religious in the Christian sense, though always with the reservations: 'But it is not so certain as all that!' or, 'What about that thing under the ground?' And when religious teachings were pumped into me and I was told, 'This is beautiful and this is good,' I would think to myself: 'Yes, but there is something else, something very secret that people don't know about.'"

What was this something else? Jung would later refer to it in such terms as the breath of life, the creative impulse, the life-force, psychic energy, the unconscious, instinct. But as a child, he did not know what he was doing when he performed his ritual with the manikin; like the natives of Australia, who had similar soul-stones, and secret gods, and scrolls, he first acted without reflecting on what he was doing. He later realized that what he had done as a child is what people in archaic cultures have done for ages, and this helped him form the conviction of archaic psychic components innate in the human psyche across cultures, that he would call archetypes. These things were never known consciously by the child, Jung, and even at the age of 83, he did not fully unravel the tangle of his earliest memories. But unconsciously something was developing, and it involved a distrustful attitude to the Christ of conventional Christianity, along with a fascination with the idea of God, whom Jung could pray to without distrust. God was "secret," and allowed for a certain affinity with Jung's own secret in the attic. God is somehow connected with all of these early experiences. We are reminded of Spinoza's Deus sive natura (God, that is, nature): a secret God, found in (as) nature, discovered not by faith but by a secret kind of knowledge, strange and hidden, for the initiates.

The next two chapters raise the issue of what Jung here calls Personality No. 1 and Personality No. 2. These correspond to what in his scientific theory he will call ego and unconscious (instinct). Personality No. 2 is where the secret abides; it is the natural mind, uncontrolled by reflexive techniques, guided by imagination and affect, association, symbol, multiple meaning, etc. It lives in the centuries, is connected with the past, so that when we are born, there is a part of us that is old. It is neither

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absurd nor ignorant. But it is dangerous. All children are close to No. 2. No. 1 emerges clearly when one moves from "Previously I had been willed to do this or that," to "now I willed." That is, it emerges as one moves into youth, where the difference between the two psychic systems becomes pronounced. The reality of No. 2 was never to fade away for Jung, nor to become completely split off from No. 1. But in his youth, its thoughts, which were about such topics as religion, evil, and the devil, led him more and more into depression, for "everywhere in the realm of religious questions I encountered only locked doors, and if ever one door should chance to open I was disappointed by what lay behind it."

No. 1 emerges clearly between his 16th and 19th years, when "I began systematically pursuing questions I had consciously framed." He began pursuing questions of his career, and was moving more and more in the direction of science, the study of nature and concrete things. He reveals how he was helped by two dreams to make his decision. But the most important emergence of No. 1 came as the result of the important dream related on pp. 87f. the dream, that comes from No. 2 (the depths), is supporting No. 1 (the life of consciousness). No. 2 had something to do with the creation of dreams, and yet was sending a dream that was to help No. 1. No. 1 is "ego," and during this stage of life, ego is all-important; and No. 2 knows this.

God is connected by Jung with No. 2. Jung liked God, but not Jesus. God, we have seen, was a mysterious being, and so bore a certain analogy to the secret. Perhaps the most significant event in the early development of Jung's notion of God--as seen retrospectively, at least--was the fantasy of God defecating on the cathedral. How did Jung interpret this experience? He experienced the fantasy as though it were a terrible sin to think such thoughts, even the sin against the Holy Spirit, which cannot be forgiven. He was tormented by the thought that he was being forced to think a terrible thing, something inconceivably wicked. And he began to believe that God himself was forcing him to sin. God had placed Jung in this situation, and was compelling him to sin. And after he thought the terrible thought, he experienced, not damnation and shame, but bliss, happiness, grace. Jung interpreted all of this as the will of God; God demanded that he think this thought, and then rewarded him for thinking it. He began to think, "God could be something terrible," "a dark and terrible secret." He became even more solitary: "I know things and must hint at things which other people do not know, and usually do not even want to know." What did he know? That "God wants to force me to do wrong, that He forces me to think about nations in order to experience His grace." God is the cause of evil and of good, and of both together.

It was No. 2, the dark side, that knew God directly, immediately. Whatever happened in No. 2, Jung thought, was the doing of God. No. 2's secret knowledge, connected with dreams and the night and intimate participation in nature, was divine knowledge. And so one's knowledge of God is direct, first-hand knowledge, not a knowledge had by faith. In Church people were "exhorted to believe that secret which I knew to be the deepest, innermost certainty (the existence of God)." Faith is the wrong way to reach God; one can reach God only by doing His will without reservation, and doing God's will amounts to following whatever No. 2 said. The will of God is sometimes terrible; it causes people to sin; it brings evil upon people, as in the book of Job. So God is to be feared as well as loved; for God is angry, dark, wrathful, foreboding, as well as loving, good, and benevolent. The dark side of God, his wrath, his strangeness, will later be interpreted in such a way that God has a shadow, an evil and unconscious side, and even in such a way that the human being reaching for consciousness has something to teach God, and is redeeming God from unconsciousness.

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Jung also had to face the question, he tells us, whether the devil had not done the thing that he was attributing to God, and he realized that he had to answer this question. His answer eventually would be that the dark side of God, the fourth person in God, may be the devil; and so both God and the devil had acted in his life.

Combined with these unusual experiences and reflections is the fact that Jung found no life at all in the Church, no experience of grace in the people he knew there, no connection at all between the Christian religion and God as he was coming to conceive Him. What would have happened if his experience of Christianity had been one of living faith, faith related to experience, the faith of people who knew the experience of grace and of evil, but who knew these were not the same thing? Jung asks the believing Christian, Is your faith not lifeless, without experience, without conviction, without joy? Show me that you know your God.

What Jung would always identify as faith is what he experienced in Church, where, he found, men would talk about things that they had never experienced, about grace and doing the will of God. God was being talked about, we might say, solely from the standpoint of No. 1, and so doing the will of God had nothing to do with experiencing God in the depths of one's being. It was solely a matter of carrying out precepts and prescriptions that were clearly laid down, clearly known, and that had nothing to do with the depths, the undertow, the infra-structure, No. 2. Faith for Jung would always mean religious living cut off from this undertow of life; a matter of No. 1, of the ego, of the persona. It would mean religious living without deep conviction, afraid of transforming experience, purely formal and external, without roots. Faith was responsible for the unhappiness he saw in his father, for the gloomy men at cemeteries, for the emptiness Jung felt at his communion. Jung would always oppose to faith a knowledge of the secret that he had from No. 2. This knowledge was the only way to reach God. The will of God could not be known by faith, for faith was purely a matter of No. 1, and No. 1 did not have the experience of the temple where God resided and made His will clear.

This will of God, moreover, was not the same as what people of faith thought it to be. Sometimes, what would come from No. 2 was very different from what Church-going people thought was God's will. Jung's logic always ran something like this: What comes from No. 2 is God's will. But what comes from No. 2 is sometimes terrible, sinful, and abominable. Therefore God's will is sometimes terrible, sinful, and abominable. And if this is true of God's will, it must also be true of God Himself. And yet God yearns to be redeemed of his own contradictions, as does No. 2 yearn for integration. And so the task of individuating man is to redeem God from the contradictions, the conflicts, that make Him be at war with Himself. Thus to reconcile good and evil in God by reconciling it in ourselves, in whom God is coming to consciousness.

Theologically, what we must ask is whether we can introduce a third alternative to the religious possibilities that Jung speaks of: first, a faith divorced from the undertow, with no depth of conviction; secondly, a religion identical with the voice of No. 2, rendering No. 2 conscious and integrated; and third, a religion where the love of God moves downwards in our consciousness, penetrating and transforming and unifying the whole personality, informing not only the decisions and knowledge of "No. 1," but also transforming No. 2. In Christian Scriptural terminology, the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit both have their human roots in what Jung calls No. 2. But they are dialectically different from one another, as much as are sin and grace. An experiential religion that discriminates what is from God and what is not from God represents a third alternative to those proposed by Jung.