

“The Silent Experiment in Group Psychology”

1916

WE HAVE SEEN how the Society for Psychoanalytic Endeavors, which was created in Zurich in February 1912, formed the first foundation of a charismatic cult centered on the Lebensphilosophie of psychoanalysis and on the person of Jung. We have also seen how Jung grew into his role as a leader or prophet of a cultural revitalization movement that was anti-Christian in focus and that therefore sought to “replace religion with religion.” Jung lost many disciples in Zurich after his 1913 break with Freud, but those that remained continued to seek psychoanalytic treatment from Jung and his associates, recommended this form of treatment to others, and attended his lectures and seminars during the years of the Great War.

Insulated from the storm that raged all around Switzerland, the small group of current and former patients of the analysts of the Zurich School formed interwoven social networks that extended far beyond the borders of Zurich. The sanctuary that Switzerland provided from the war probably served to intensify the feeling of social cohesion among the Jungians and no doubt convinced them that their program for a spiritual revitalization of a mad society was exactly what the world needed. When the war ended, *they* would provide the leadership for a new spiritual awakening, with a physician and noted man of science as their prophet and *pater pneumatikos* (“spiritual father”). The social upheaval that always follows such conflagrations would even perhaps provide an opening for the Jungians to step in and grab the world’s attention, indeed to enact what the ancestors told them was “the Law of what is to come.” As Jung was to say first in 1916 and then over and over again throughout his life, “only a few are capable of individuating,” and it was those disciples in Jung’s innermost circle who were therefore the vanguard of this new nobility or spiritual elite.¹

The formal governing organ of this new spiritual elite was to be the group of current and former patients and their analysts who blurred the boundaries of their relationships by participating in the Psychological Club after its formation in 1916. Fortunately, we have what appears to be a summary transcript of a talk Jung gave in 1916 at the meeting at which the Psychological Club was founded. It has been found among the papers of Fanny Bowditch Katz, an American patient of Jung's and Jung's Dutch associate, Maria Moltzer, who underwent analysis with the two of them in 1912 and 1913. Moltzer, however, remained her primary analyst, and as is apparent from their mutual correspondence, they remained in touch long after Katz's return to America. The document concerning the Psychological Club is probably an original English transcript typed by Moltzer in Zurich and, it is assumed, mailed to Katz in America. In the upper right-hand corner of the document "Frl. Moltzer" is written in an unknown hand.

What follows, then, is the heretofore unpublished talk, thought to be by Jung. It will be obvious immediately to the reader that it is spiritual redemption that is the focus of interest among this group of people and that this is not—nor was it ever—a professional psychiatric or medical association of any sort. In 1959—with obvious reference to alchemy and the relationship of the medieval or renaissance alchemist or "adept" to his female assistant, the *soror mystica* ("mystical sister")—Jung would mention in his introduction to a posthumously published collections of the writings of Toni Wolff that "she also helped me to carry out, over a period of forty years, a 'silent experiment' in group psychology, an experiment which constitutes the life of the Psychological Club in Zurich."² Indeed, it may very well be argued that this document acknowledges that the "silent experiment" was the Jung cult of redemption and rebirth that was formalized on the day that Jung made the following remarks:

In the symbol of Christ lies an identification of the personality with the progressive tendency of the collective soul. I purposely say the progressive tendency of the collective soul in order to indicate that the collective soul has various aspects. One is a tendency which is represented by the Terrible Mother, but there is

another which contains the symbols of redemption for suffering humanity. This side of the collective soul is symbolized by Christ.

In Christ the human and the divine in man are one—for which reason Christ is also the God-man.

Through the death of Christ, His personality and His Imago living in mankind became separated. Christ died, and His Imago arose among men—and the collective soul of mankind was accepted in the symbol of Christ. Thus a new ideal arose, an ideal so strong that its power still holds mankind today.

The identification with the progressive tendency of the collective soul is characterized by the intuitive type. This type cannot live in the existing functions, and is forced to maintain his intuition until he has found his adaptation to life. For this reason he follows mainly the progressive tendency of the libido. This identification of the personality with the collective unconscious manifests itself always in the phenomenon of self-deification—be it an identification with the function of intuition, with the function of extraversion, or with the function of introversion. It is a self-deification according to the function, but the phenomenon always remains the same. It is therefore a question of the overcoming of self-deification, which might also be compared with the Death of Christ, a death of the greatest agony.

Perhaps the freeing of the personality from the progressive tendency of the unconscious belongs to one of the most painful tasks to be accomplished on the road to development to full individuality. Through the freeing of the personality from the progressive tendency arises a chaos, a darkness and a doubt of all that exists, and of all that may be. The opposite tendency of the progressive is activated, and the whole Hell of the overcome past opens, and hurls itself upon the newly gained present demanding its rights, and threatens to overpower it.

This moment brings a feeling of great danger. One is quite conscious of standing before death. The directing line, so long given one by the identification with the progressive tendency, is suddenly wiped out—and not until one has found the continuity of the new functions created in the unconscious, can one get a feeling of the possibility to live.

The separating of the personality from the collective soul seems to disturb phylogenetically certain pictures or formations in the unconscious—a process which we still understand very little, but

which needs the greatest care in treatment. The struggle with the Dead is terrible, and I understand the instinct of mankind which protests against this great effort as long as it is possible to do so.

But we human beings have not only instinct, we have also intuition—an insight into the inexorable which life demands of us, and so the struggle goes on between instinct and intuition, until both have been harmoniously united.

Here too the parallel with Christ continues. The struggle with the Dead and the descent into Hell are unavoidable. The Dead need much patience and the greatest care. Some must be brought to eternal rest, others have a message to bring us, for which we must prepare ourselves. These Dead need time for their highest fulfillment, only after full duty has been done to the Dead can man return slowly to his newly created personality. This new individuality thus contains all vital elements in a new constellation.

In studying Christ's Descent into Hell I was surprised to find how closely the tradition coincides with human experience. This problem is therefore not new, it is a problem of general mankind, and for this reason probably too, symbolized through Christ.

I will not mention these parallels further here, as it would carry me too far from my subject, and I hope to elucidate this problem more fully in a work on the Transcendental Function. It was a problem of the past, and is a problem of our time. The night, the chaos and the despair which appear before the *Menschwerdung*, has been defined by artists of not long ago. So, Goethe's Faust is enveloped in night—he becomes blind, and dies—only then the transfiguration. [It is] the Transcendental Function which reveals the completed human being of our time.

In Wagner's *Parsifal* we find the same phenomenon, only nearer to life. On Good Friday Parsifal comes back to the Gralsburg. He is entirely in black, the symbol of death, and his visor is closed. The belief in being able to fulfill the work for which he has struggled for so long has deserted him, and it is Gurnemanz and Kundry, both very much changed, who free him from his madness and show him the way to the Gralsburg.

Only after one has freed oneself from the collective soul, only after one has passed through death and the soul has been realized, can the collective problem be really solved. The further conclusion is that this problem must in principle be our problem also—the essential element in the Collective being that it pertains

to all. The Collective soul may be brought to constellation in a different way in every individual, but in principle all these manifestations are the same. When the Holy Ghost revealed Himself to the Apostles on Whitsuntide, the Apostles spoke in tongues, which means that each spoke in his own way, each had his own way of praising his own God, and yet all praised the same God.

Only after the overcoming of self-deification, only after the human being has been revealed to himself, and man recognizes the human being in mankind, can we speak of a real analytical collectivity—a collectivity which reaches out (extends) beyond type and sex.

But we have not yet come so far, we are on the way to the *Menschwerdung*. The recognition that each has to fulfill his especial task, and to go his own especial way, leads to the respect for the individual and his especial path. Only those who have been forced through their own individual laws to go their own ways, and thereby have come in conflict with the prevailing traditions, come to Analysis.

An analytical collectivity can therefore only be founded on a respect for the individual and the individual path. The difficulties which arise along the individual path in relation to collectivity can only be solved analytically, and it must follow that for those who wish to build up an analytical collectivity, it must be an inevitable duty to solve such conflicts according to the principles of Analysis.

That which those who subject themselves to Analysis have in common is their striving to solve individual problems. This mutual interest suffices for a Club. A Club can be based on any one collective element, for which reason I approve of the Club. In a Club those persons can join together who have a common road to go, and wherein they thus feel themselves strengthened in their efforts. So, small Clubs will grow up in the main Club, the so-called original groups, which again will have their own development to pass through, will be dissolved, or in time be changed into other groups. For this reason there must be an analytical Club that has perfect freedom to build an endless number of small groups, and each must respect the other. Thus the individual principle will be carried over to the collective principle, for a Club, or a small group, is, as long as it forms a unit in itself, identical with an individuality.

From which follows that I should like to have the following principles introduced into the statutes of an analytical Club:

1. Purpose of the Club: analytical collectivity.
2. Respect for the Club as a whole.
3. Respect for the small group, as such.
4. Respect for the individual and his individual purpose.
5. Where difficulties arise in the Club, in the small groups or among individuals, they must be solved according to analytical principles.
6. Where insolvable difficulties arise they must be brought before an analytical tribunal.

Nothing is new under the sun. That which I see ahead of us as an ideal analytical collectivity Goethe saw and speaks of in his "*Geheimnisse*." If it were not so long, I should be glad to read it to you now—it may not be familiar to you all.

The poem was written in 1816 and no doubt was far ahead of its time. It describes a collectivity founded on the principle of the religious acceptance of the individual path, and the *Menschwerdung*. As a symbol this Cloister has a Cross wound with roses, symbol of the resurrected life—the Tannhäuser motif of the budding staff, the Chider, or the Tree of Life.

The ancients say of the Tree of Life, "A Noble Tree planted with rare skill grows in a garden. Its roots reach down to the bottom of Hell—its crown touches the Throne of God, its wide spreading branches surround the Earth. The Tree stands in fullest beauty and is glorious in its foliage."

This Tree is the expression of a collective function, created by Analysis and life.

THE JUNG CULT AND REDEMPTION

As is immediately evident to any reader of this remarkable document, it is the manifesto of a religious movement whose goal is not only the salvation of the individual, but also of the world, and it is founded on a vague utopian ideal of an "analytical collectivity." Let us examine the meaning of this text in light of the discussion that has been presented thus far.

Jung here is still incorporating themes from *Wandlungen und*