



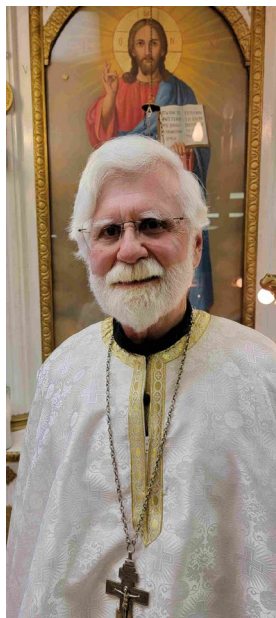
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Symbols and Archetypes in Visionary Art: An Orthodox Dialogue with C. G. Jung

Abstract

An exercise in contrasting perspectives, this article applies symbolic theology to a consideration of visionary art, with reference to St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Maximos the Confessor, and other Orthodox and non-Orthodox voices - and in contradistinction to C. G. Jung, whose epistemology is reductionistic, his methodology syncretistic.

Whereas Orthodox theology affirms one master Archetype - Jesus Christ, the Logos and progenitor of all symbols - Jung identifies many. The Orthodox understanding of the symbol as a conveyor of divine energy and therefore *transrational* is contrasted with Jung's understanding of symbols and archetypes as *irrational* psychic manifestations. The Orthodox distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies (the *logoi*), as well as the etymological meaning of the symbol as that which reconciles,



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prove useful in addressing Jung's shortcomings as a reader of visionary art.

Keywords

Orthodox Christian theology, symbolic theology, C. G. Jung, aesthetics, psychology

Introduction

In the early years of the 20th century, psychology, as defined by Freud and Jung, was held to be a new science capable of circumscribing the totality of human experience, resulting in an anthropological holism which, in Jung's case, continues to impact upon contemporary "spirituality" through the writings of Jungian popularizer Joseph Campbell and such entertainments as George Lucas's original *Star Wars* trilogy (1977-1983)¹ and Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* trilogy (2005-2012),² as well as modern art,³ modern dance,⁴ and modern and postmodern music, the latter perhaps most notably in opera - as in Sir

¹ See Stephen Galipeau, *The Journey of Luke Skywalker: An Analysis of Modern Myth and Symbol* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 2001).

² See Ask My Animus, "Taking Carl to the Pictures," *Or, Ins Kino Mit Carl. Film Reviews from a Jungian Perspective* (blog), October 7, 2006, <http://takingcarl-tothepictures.blogspot.com/2006/10/batman-begins.html>.

³ See Phyllis Braff, "Jung as the Root of Abstract Expressionism," *New York Times*, December 7, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/12/07/nyregion/art-jung-as-root-of-abstract-expressionism.html>.

⁴ Martha Graham, a founder of modern dance, studied Jung extensively under the guidance of her son-in-law Joseph Campbell. See Agnes de Mille, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham* (New York: Random House, 1956, 1991), pp. 250, 277-79.

Michael Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*⁵ and John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*.⁶ And so it is that a problem intrinsic to much creativity in our times can be traced to Jung's reduction of all theological, ontological, and aesthetic considerations to the psychological, which, as he maintains, "alone has immediate reality" (CW 8, Para. 747).

Given his profound influence on culture and art, it is incumbent upon us to identify where Jung deviates from Christianity - and to acknowledge where he speaks truly. As Church dogma was clarified in dialogue with heretics - and as Jung rejected such dogma, preferring to explore alternative worldviews - our dialogue with this key modern thinker may bear fruit.

Drawing upon paradigms of the Far East, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Origen, and Christianity, as well as dream imagery, Jung's symbology is involved and syncretistic. Adding complication, Jung is often elliptical, his tone oracular, and he does not hesitate to probe the occult, where angels fear to tread. Jung speaks on visions and visionary art often, extensively in his 1945 lectures on Gerard de Nerval's *Aurelia*,⁷ but his essential ideas are put forward in two key essays: "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry" (Zurich, 1922) and "Psychology and Litera-

⁵ Tippett speaks of "the first illumination" of this opera as a Jungian epiphany in which "the collective, magical archetypes take charge - Jung's *anima* and *animus*..." [Eric Walter White, *Tippett and His Operas* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1979), p. 45].

⁶ The central theme of *Dr. Atomic* (2005) concerns the Jungian shadow or dark side versus the opposite energy of light. See Karlyn Wood, "Batter My Heart..." The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal, vol. 25, no. 1 (February 2006), pp. 51-77, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jung.1.2006.25.1.51>. John Adams speaks of the influence of Jung on his life and work in his memoir, *Halleluia Junction: Composing an American Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), p. 120.

⁷ See C. G. Jung, *On Psychological and Visionary Art: Notes from C. G. Jung's Lecture on Gerard de Nerval's Aurelia*, ed. Craig E. Stephenson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

ture" (Berlin, 1930; expanded and revised, Zurich, 1950). Focusing on these essays, I shall discuss Jung's understanding of symbolic language and his theory of psychic balance as relating to such terms as "the shadow," "wholeness," and "the God image," while consulting other Jung texts for clarification and Orthodox texts for contrast. Finally, I shall make suggestions regarding the usefulness of certain Jungian ways of speaking about visionary art. But before turning to Jung, we must appreciate the foundational Christian significance of the symbol in human / divine relations.

Symbolic Theology

When preparing to enter the Orthodox Church over 30 years ago, having been raised in the Roman Church, I was dismayed when talking with my priest and noting that some Christians consider the Eucharist as not being "real" but only a symbol, contrary to what Rome maintains.⁸ His response startled me: "*Only a symbol? Symbols are all we have!*"

⁸ "When attempts at a 'rational' explanation of the Eucharist arose in the West in the beginning of the eleventh century, Berengar of Tours proposed a distinction of what is 'mystical', i.e., symbolic, on the one hand, and what is 'real' on the other. In his teaching the sacrament is *mystice non realiter*. The council that condemned this doctrine (Lateran 1059) answered that it is *realiter non mystice*, i.e., real and therefore not mystical, not symbolic. This is the dead end into which scholasticism inevitably falls. Its essence lies in the gradual departure from the original understanding and perception of time, and together with that the gradual 'expiration' of the eschatological essence of the Church and the sacraments. Beginning with the thirteenth century, writes Louis Bouyer, the Eucharist in the West came to be 'buried under untraditional formularies and interpretations'" [Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), p. 223].

Symbols are all - and they are all-sufficient.⁹ For we live in a world of symbols, and God reveals himself in metaphorical language - which is to say that God relates to us by symbolic means, just as we relate to one another - but with one signal difference. Whereas the human word conveys a thought, a sensation, a feeling, representing an invitation to relationship, a way of vicarious entry into another person's mortal life, the Word of God is infinitely more, being an invitation to direct, eternal relationship with that human / divine Person who is both revealed and hidden,¹⁰ whose sign is the Cross.

⁹ In *For the Life of the World*, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann decries what is "hopelessly missing today in both doctrine and institution, and this not because of human sins and limitations, but precisely because of a deliberate choice: the rejection and the dissolution of the symbol as the fundamental structure of Christian 'doctrine' and Christian 'institution' (Crestwood, N.Y., St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 148. Of interest is an article by Fr. Raymond Maloney, S.J., appearing in a Roman Catholic publication. Speaking of the development in the West from ancient times to the Middle Ages, Fr. Maloney states, "[With this transition] many of the thought forms of [the ancient] world passed away, and in particular that sense of 'ontological symbolism'...Platonic thought forms gradually gave way to Aristotelian ones, and with the loss of the ancient sense of symbolism, medieval thinkers lost the key to the sacramental synthesis of the Fathers" (italics mine), [*The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, Del: Michael Glazier, 1987), p. 347].

¹⁰ "Cf. Dionysios, *Ep. 3*: 'The Word of God remains hidden after His manifestation, or to speak more divinely, even in His manifestation' (1069B; 159, lines 6-7); and Qu. 28:1: 'Scripture calls God a lion, a bear, a leopard, a panther, a man, an ox, a sheep, the sun, a star, fire, wind, and a thousand other things - and whereas he Himself is none of these things, He is nonetheless contemplated according to the meaning of each term.' For Dionysios, *Ch 2.1-5*, all such symbols are 'similar' to God and at the same time infinitely 'dissimilar' to him (9-17; 136D-145C)" [as appearing in St. Maximos the Confessor, *On the Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: Responses to Thalassios*, trans. and intro. Fr. Maximos Constatas (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), p. 35, footnote 112]. Similarly, in the collection *On Faith*, "Hymn 31," St. Ephrem the Syrian says, "It is our metaphors that He put on - though He did not literally do so; He took them off - without actually doing so; when wearing them, He was at the same time stripped of them. He puts on one when it is beneficial, then strips it off in exchange for another; the fact that He strips off and puts on all sorts of metaphors tells us that the metaphor does not apply to His true Being" [St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, Intro. and Trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), p. 46]. In Greek and Syriac patristics, metaphorical language

Symbols attest to realities beyond what is apparent to the unawakened eye, and they appeal in mysterious, even perilous ways. Symbols look for a response - and they are to be approached "with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). For they are "earthen vessels" containing "treasure" of "transcendent power;" and they "shine out of darkness...in our hearts" (2 Cor. 4:7) - and *from* our hearts, as Christians are to shine out as "the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14). For even the human soul is a symbol, a "cave" bearing light that is "divine and inextinguishable," as St. Gregory of Nazianzus says in a poem [PG 37.446-447].¹¹ And it is Christ God who is "the light of our souls and bodies," as we say in our daily prayer before reading Holy Scripture. He is "the Presence behind the veil" (Heb. 6:19). Indeed, the Church accepts all matter, the entire cosmos as "the created flesh of the uncreated Word."¹²

That veiled power of symbols and types is to be experienced as Truth. This is a central theme of our poet theologian St. Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 307-373). Sebastian Brock comments:

When Ephrem explores the infinite number of symbols and types in Nature and Scripture we must be constantly aware that, although human understanding of them is essentially fluid and variable, what they all point to is an objective reality that Ephrem calls "Truth." Furthermore, the presence in the types and symbols of what he calls the "hidden power" or

has both cataphatic and apophatic value, revealing of the divine activities or energies but never the divine essence or nature. Thus, the Fathers understand God in substance to be "no thing," absolutely beyond all categories of thought and being. This is to say that in essence God is "super-natural," "super-essential," while the divine energies sustain all of creation.

¹¹ *Poemata Moralia*, XIV, as appearing in Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), p. 122.

¹² Christos Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, trans. Peter Chambers and Norman Russell (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), p. 259.

“meaning” lends to them some sort of inner objective significance of reality, which is different from that outer reality which the scientific observer would call objective. The presence of this “hidden power” accords a deeper meaning and significance to whatever outward vehicle that symbol may be attached to, even though that vehicle (which may be a person or an object) will normally not be aware of the indwelling presence of this “hidden power”:

Lord, Your symbols are everywhere.
Yet you are hidden from everywhere.
Though Your symbol is on high,
Yet the height does not perceive that You are;
Though Your symbol is in the depth,
It does not comprehend who You are;
Though Your symbol is in the sea,
You are hidden from the sea,
Though Your symbol is on dry land,
It is not aware what You are.
Blessed is the Hidden One shining out!

(Faith 4:9)¹³

God declares his power and glory in the poetry of Scripture, the writings of the Fathers, the communal poetry of our worship, and our chants and hymns. Hieratic images of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints on our iconostases and on our icons in our homes are *symbols*, divine revelations - holy, visionary art communicating transformative power - *if* we respond; *if* we live in that moment of wonder, centering our *nous* upon godly realities

¹³ Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985), p. 55.

and exercising our sympathetic imagination;¹⁴ *if* we live the Truth of these symbols - and *as* we bear the Cross. Then in time God becomes “all in all” - by the power of grace conveyed, “*all things are subdued unto him*” (1 Cor. 15:28).

I have long reflected upon a passage in our prayer to the Spirit of Truth, affirmed to be “everywhere present, filling all things.” And I thought that if William Wordsworth could say,

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things,¹⁵

it is an affirmation consistent with the Church’s experience of the Holy Spirit - this “motion and a spirit,” this “presence,” as he says, that “rolls through all things.”

¹⁴ To imagine in this sense would be to allow God to permeate our very being. Such imagination would be a redirecting of our attention, a continual readjustment to human/divine reality and a process of “sympathetic identification,” so that we begin to “mold” ourselves to the shape of that reality and become, more authentically, icons of Christ. The Latin verb *imaginari*, “to picture oneself,” conveys the proper sense. The sympathetic or synthetic imagination “pictures” itself in God, as God “pictures” himself in us. It is actualized in the process of accurately “mirroring” God. It is both *mimitikós* (mimetic) and *συνθετικός* (synthetic) in that it works toward a creative and thoughtful realization or assimilation of the divine image, involving the totality of our personal humanity, so that we might become like Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵ “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798.” *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, eds. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York, London, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 149.

Like St. Ephrem's "Hymn on Faith," "Tintern Abbey" says that *all things* come together to constitute a unity of divine symbols - "These beauteous forms,"¹⁶ all differentiated but in relationship constituting a single reality. And turning from St. Ephrem to St. Maximos, both of whom see God "filling all things," we note only a difference in terminology. For what Wordsworth calls presence, motion, and spirit, St. Maximos identifies as God's uncreated energies, "the *logoi* or principles of beings... creative, governing, and providential, which created the world and maintain it."¹⁷ The *logoi* speak of the universal cosmic reality, the *Logos* - this *presence* intuited by Wordsworth, this God in whom "we live and move and have our being, as also some of your poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring,'" as St. Paul says, addressing the pagans at the Areopagus (Acts 17:28).

Wordsworth was a Christian.¹⁸ But as his theme concerns Nature, and in that his language lacks the precision of our theological poetry, he has often been taken for a pantheist. Nevertheless, regardless of his apparent ignorance of those distinctions the Eastern Fathers make between the divine essence and the divine energies, in this famous poem, Wordsworth speaks with conviction of an omnipresent, beautiful God who is "far more deeply interfused," both hidden and revealed.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 147.

¹⁷ Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktios, *The Mind of the Church*, trans. Esther Williams (Levadia, Hellas: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1998), pp. 102-103.

¹⁸ See William A. Ulmer, "The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1800," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 95, no. 3 (July 1996), pp. 336-358, published by University of Illinois Press.

Jung's Response to Nature

Late in life, at his retreat at The Tower in Bollingen near Zurich, Carl Gustav Jung had his own intuition of primal unity with Nature:

At times, I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and I myself, living in every tree, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons.¹⁹

This imaginative, “spiritual” response is a self-projection in which Nature is perceived to be a symbol of the self and the self of Nature. Here, the symbol in Nature affirms its presence within *if* one is susceptible and *if* one “feels” its presence - as Jung says, “At times I feel as if...” And yet one must ask, are openness and sensation sufficient? In feeling deeply, do we see truly? How does one properly *understand* this experience of primal unity? What is its meaning? And might there be other presences moving *outside* of our being and impinging upon the psyche - certain “principalities and powers” (Col. 2:15)? Does the symbol *always* speak of the *logoi*, the providential, governing, and creative divine energies - God’s uncreated grace? Can the symbol deceive? Might what one perceives be an illusion, what the Fathers call a fantasy (*φαντασία*)? Or worse, might it be something *diabolical*?

Do symbols *always* ring true?

¹⁹ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, ed. Aniola Jaffs, trans, Richard and Clara Winston, (Vintage Books, undated), p. 275, <http://www.softouch.on.ca/kb/data/Memories,%20Dreams,%20Reflections.pdf>.

Jung's Psychology of Visionary Art

In his essay "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," Jung defines the true symbol:

The true symbol... should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way. When Plato, for instance, puts the whole problem of the theory of knowledge in his parable of the cave, or when Christ expresses the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven in parables, these are genuine and true symbols, that is, attempts to express something for which no verbal concept yet exists.²⁰

A true symbol expresses "something real but unknown."²¹ Sphinx-like, such symbols speak of truths relative to but subversive of the mundane; they bring to bear what is beyond reason by relating us to that mystery they embody. A true symbol's significance consists in its enlightening power, so that we may begin a process of change, that we may heal and become whole. Plato's cave metaphor says that our days are false, for we move about in a world of shadows; knowing this, we may begin to relate in truth to what is real. Paradoxically, Christ's parables of the Kingdom of Heaven often end with a vision of hell - the darkness of burning fire to those who do not make proper use of their eyes and hearts. True symbolic language revels in the paradox of existence. Our assumptions about life are false, and conversely - if viewed from the "other side" - what is seen to be trite and meaningless bears truth. Still, we who are confronted with symbols see them as "through a glass darkly" (I Cor. 13:12). We are at a

²⁰ Carl Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Bollingen Series XX: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 70 [NOTE: Both essays, "Psychology and Literature" and "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Literature" are included in this anthology and henceforth are referred to by title and page number in this anthology].

²¹ "Psychology and Literature," p. 94.

nonplus if our recourse is to discursive reason. Even those of us who are susceptible see in any true symbol a potential reality with which to engage. For the true symbol is a “co-creation” to be experienced, not grasped. Its meaning lies hidden in our response.

In discussing the process of composition, Jung speaks of two types of art - the first springing “wholly from the author’s intention to produce a particular result.”²²

The raw material of this kind of creation is derived from the contents of man’s consciousness, from his eternally repeated joys and sorrows, but clarified and transfigured by the poet.

There is no work left for the psychologist to do;²³ while the second “leaves room for analysis and interpretation.”²⁴ Jung calls the first “psychological,” because it “remains within the limits of the psychologically intelligible,” while calling the second “visionary,” as “the experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar.”²⁵ Works of this second type are most pregnant, for they deal with the stuff and matter of the true symbol, as “they express something for which no verbal concept yet exists:”

These works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand is seized; his pen writes things that his mind contemplates with amazement. The work brings with it its own form; anything he wants to add is rejected, and what he himself would like to reject is thrust back at him...Yet in spite of himself he is forced to admit that it is his own self speaking, his own inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he would never have entrusted to his tongue. He can only obey the apparently alien impulse within him and follow

²² “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” p. 72.

²³ “Psychology and Literature,” p. 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

where it leads, sensing that his work is greater than himself and wields a power which is not his and which he cannot command. Here the artist is not identical with the process of creation; he is aware that he is subordinate to his work or stands outside it, as though he were a second person; or as though a person other than himself had fallen within the magic circle of an alien will.²⁶

“As though he were a second person.” But who is the implied first person? And what if this “alien will” be that of an incarnate God experienced by the artist as interior, even “his own inner nature,” as Jung says - or is it Wordsworth’s “motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things” - or might it be the artist’s *logos*?

On the other hand, what if this “alien will” be that of a chthonic “god,” a destructive force working within the artist and through him to bring about the demise of others? Is God “alien” to us? Does God draw us into his “magic circle?” Does a poet inspired by God write *automatically*?

According to Jung, definitive answers do not come easily - or they may not come at all. While psychological art deals with “the foreground of life” and “never rends the curtain that veils the cosmos,” visionary art deals with “primordial experiences” which

rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world and allow a glimpse into the unfathomable abyss of the unborn and things to be. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the darkness of the spirit, or of the primal beginnings of the human psyche? We cannot say that it is any or none of these.²⁷

²⁶ “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” p. 73.

²⁷ “Psychology and Literature,” pp. 90-91.

The power of such works consists in “the visionary experience it serves to express.”²⁸ Responding to such works, our intuitions point to things that are unknown and hidden, that by their very nature are secret...They are hidden from man, and he hides himself from them out of religious awe...What if there were a living agency beyond our everyday human world - something even more purposeful than electrons...and is what science calls the ‘psyche’ not just a question-mark arbitrarily confined within the skull, but rather a door that opens upon the human world from beyond, allowing unknown and mysterious powers to act upon man and carry him on the wings of the night to a more than personal destiny?²⁹

Visionary art has power to horrify or to mystify, to terrify and to enlighten. It shocks us out of our complacency, providing a glimpse into our innermost self - the heart where demons and angels dwell, as *The Homilies of St. Macarius* affirm.³⁰ It reveals aspects of what Jung calls “the night-side of life” - for “prophets and seers are nourished by it” (here Jung cites Augustine and Isaiah).³¹ And Jung’s “medium” artist is discommoded. He may fancy “he is swimming, but in reality, an unseen current sweeps him along.”³² This “unseen current” Jung takes to be “the collective unconscious,” which he defines as

a sphere of unconscious mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind. I have called this sphere

²⁸ Ibid, p. 92.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 95.

³⁰ “The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet there are also dragons and there are lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil...But there is also God, also the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the Apostles, the treasures of grace - there are all things” [*Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, Homily 43, 7, trans and ed. George Maloney, S. J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 222].

³¹ Ibid.

³² “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” p. 74.

the collective unconscious, to distinguish it from the personal unconscious...The collective unconscious is not to be thought of as a self-subsistent entity; it is no more than a potentiality handed down to us from primordial times in the specific form of mnemonic images or inherited in the anatomical structure of the brain.³³

In his essay "Instinct and the Unconscious," Jung states, "The instincts and the archetypes together form the 'collective unconscious.'"³⁴ For those "mnemonic images" to which he refers in the above passage are inherited from "primordial times" and are therefore seen to be archetypes.

Jung defines the archetype as a primordial image, "be it a *daemon*, a human figure, or a process" flowing on "a deeply graven river-bed in the psyche" and "suddenly (swelling) into a mighty river... whenever that particular set of circumstances is encountered which over long periods of time has helped to lay down the primordial image."³⁵ As archetypes are "remnants of the joys and sorrows... of our ancestral history," they speak "with a thousand voices;" and responding to the archetypes in dreams and art, we are "no longer individuals but the race."³⁶

Notice Jung's use of the ancient Greek form *daemon* (*δαίμων*), referring to "a divinity or supernatural being of a nature between gods and humans" or an "inner or intendent spirit or inspiring

³³ Ibid, p. 80.

³⁴ *The Portable Jung*, ed. and intro. Joseph Campbell, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 52.

³⁵ "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," p. 81.

³⁶ Ibid, pp. 81-82.

force,” as in Socrates’s *daemon*.³⁷ But in the patristic understanding, it is “a demon, a devil, an evil spirit.”³⁸ From a Christian perspective, therefore, any daemon imaged in art would be problematic, although Jung maintains that an archetype is neither good nor evil:

It is morally neutral, like the gods of antiquity, and becomes good or evil only by contact with the conscious mind, or else a paradoxical mixture of both. Whether it will be conducive to good or evil is determined, knowingly or unknowingly, by the conscious attitude. There are many such archetypal images, but they do not appear in the dreams of individuals or in works of art unless they are activated by a deviation from the middle way. Whenever conscious life becomes one-sided or adopts a false attitude, these images ‘instinctively’ rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seers to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or the epoch.³⁹

But if an archetype is “morally neutral,” Jung allows that not all archetypes are morally equal. And their suggestibility is realized depending upon how they are taken in and given expression. Archetypes must be activated, for they are phantom-like, sketched-out in the psyche. The archetypes are real to the extent that they exist “mythologically” as potentialities, and so they must be brought into existence. Jung is saying that the actuality of any given archetype depends upon the artist’s *response* to it – “by (his) conscious attitude.” And this involves “*a deviation from the middle way...to restore the psychic balance.*”

³⁷ *Oxford Lexico*, powered by Oxford University Press, 2022, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/daemon>.

³⁸ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W. Lampe, D.D. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 328.

³⁹ “Psychology and Literature,” p. 104.

What is this “middle way,” what is this “deviation,” and what constitutes “psychic balance?” Aristotle defines virtue as a mean between two extremes, and the Greek Fathers accept this, while understanding virtue ontologically, as humanity’s grounding on prelapsarian nature through kenotic love.⁴⁰ But Jung defines the middle way as a “Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” to allude to a title by the artist William Blake whom he held in high regard as a visionary. In *Aion* (1951), Jung sees Christ as the psychological equivalent of light and The Anti-Christ as that of darkness.⁴¹ They are mythical complementarities, and our becoming fully human or “whole” would necessitate coming to terms with “a deviation from the middle way” - one or several of the archetypes rising “to the surface” in dreams and works of art to facilitate what Jung considers to be a process of “psychic balance,” an

⁴⁰ “Aristotle’s doctrine of the virtues and vices as settled dispositions of the soul (ἕξεις) and his doctrine that moral virtue is a *mean* (μεσότης) between two extremes, which are the vices, developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (II. 1105b19-1107a26), occur frequently in the ethical writings of the Greek Fathers throughout the Byzantine period and later. They are the most widely used Aristotelian doctrines” [Constantine Cavarinos, *Orthodoxy and Philosophy* (Belmont, Mass: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2003), p. 217]. In the 7th century, St. Maximos reflected upon the received Byzantine tradition in *Thalassios*, where he calls out *philautia* (φιλαυτία), love of self, as that which leads to ontological fragmentation, while the intellect, seat of reason (λόγος), “cuts off all the extremes and deficiencies of nature, which were contrived by self-love through the voluntary inclinations of each person, transforming our incomparably gentle nature into a savage beast, and dividing the one essence of human nature into multiple and opposing parts... By removing these extremes, the intellect bears and brings to light an *unwavering mean*, in accordance with which the natural laws of the virtues were written in the beginning by God” (italics mine) [Maximos the Confessor, *On the Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: Responses to Thalassios*, trans. and intro. Fr. Maximos Constatas (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018) 40 [8], p. 233].

⁴¹ In his essay “Answer to Job,” a late work first published in 1952, Jung alludes to an argument made in *Aion*: “Before this heresy (i.e., Manichaeism), Clement of Rome taught that God rules the world with a right and a left hand, the right being Christ, the left Satan. Clement’s view is clearly *monotheistic*, as it unites the opposites in one God” (*The Portable Jung*, pp. 519-520). Here Jung takes St. Clement out of context to support his heterodox beliefs.

amalgamation of opposites to compensate for consciously adopted, one-sided, and therefore false assumptions regarding the nature of a reality seen to be antinomic. For in “Answer to Job,” Jung reduces the divine to psychic reality. There he holds Yahweh to be a “*coincidentia oppositorum*,”⁴² “an antinomy – a totality of inner opposites,”⁴³ and he speaks of Yahweh as having “inner instability”⁴⁴ as well as a “shadow side.”⁴⁵ Jung even cedes to Job moral superiority over Yahweh!⁴⁶

Jung’s assertions betray his syncretistic leanings, his familiarity with Asian “psychological” categories of yin and yang,⁴⁷ Gnostic dualism, and medieval alchemy. Jung had precious little knowledge of Eastern Christianity, and he was critical of Western forms of the faith for what he took to be their blindness to an irrational, unconscious fourth element counterbalancing the Trinity.⁴⁸ And this understanding of psychic balance is reflected

⁴² *The Portable Jung*, p. 589. The coining of the term *coincidentia oppositorum* is attributed to the 15th century German polymath Nicholas of Cusa.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 531. G.C. Tympas explains Jung’s perception of divine antinomy as resulting from his epistemology: “The human and divine (metaphysical) levels are fused within the psychological domain insofar as there is no perception, in Jung’s epistemology, for a different logic - namely, a transdisciplinary logic - that could solve the interface of the psychic and the divine levels under a set of different principles other than reductive” [*Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor: On Psychic Development* (East Essex and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 47].

⁴⁴ *The Portable Jung*, p. 600.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 546.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 572.

⁴⁷ This seems particularly true of his speculations regarding the animus and the anima. Nevertheless, Jung is not uncritical of Far Eastern thought forms, and he even acknowledges the loss in the West of the true meaning of the symbol: “We are surely the rightful heirs of Christian symbolism, but somehow we have squandered this heritage. We have let the house our fathers built fall into decay, and now we try to break into Oriental palaces that our fathers never knew” (CW 9i, Para. 28).

⁴⁸ “The ultimate purpose of such links between the conscious and the unconscious is to incorporate into one’s psychic wholeness the fourth element (evil/shadow, feminine, body). As an incarnation of the Gnostic Sophia, ‘who corresponds to the archetypal mother’ (1955/1956; para. 498, 401-3), the fourth element functions, in Jung’s theory, as an integration of the psychologically ‘incomplete’ Trinity”

in Jung's way of bringing the archetypes of "the shadow," "wholeness," and "the God image" into his discussion of visionary art.

Most signal among Jung's archetypes are the shadow and wholeness, the former representing "the dark aspects of the personality,"⁴⁹ the latter occupying "a central position which approximates it to the God image"⁵⁰ - which image corresponds to Jung's antinomious "god," defined as an ontologically unstable process maintaining within itself both light and darkness. As these opposites intermingle within the collective unconscious, Jung's visionary art is a composite, manifesting aspects of the archetypes in a paradoxical manner that reveals our humanity in such a way as to make for a precarious "blending," which may be understood as resulting from a centering of "the self"⁵¹ on the archetype of wholeness.

Jung's visionary artist, descending into the collective unconscious, has a social function and thus is impelled to speak out by a "transcendent" force running parallel to his times. For Jung's visionary artist addresses the emergent issues of the day in a "suprapersonal" manner "that transcends our understanding to the same degree that the author's consciousness was in abeyance during the process of creation."⁵² This is because, according to

[G.C. Tympas, *Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor: On Psychic Development*, p. 47].

⁴⁹ From *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, as appearing in *The Portable Jung*, p. 145.

⁵⁰ "There is in the unconscious an archetype of wholeness that manifests itself spontaneously in dreams, etc., and a tendency, independent of the conscious will, to relate other archetypes to this center...Consequently, it does not seem improbable that the archetype of wholeness occupies, as such, a central position, which approximates it to the God-image" ("Answer to Job," as appearing in *The Portable Jung*, p. 648).

⁵¹ In Jung, the self is "the sum total of the psyche with all its potential included. This is the part of the psyche that looks forward, that contains the drive toward fullness and wholeness" (author uncited, "The Jungian Model of the Psyche," *Journal Psyche*, <http://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>).

⁵² "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," p. 75.

Jung, the visionary artist serves as witness to the inscrutable *Zeitgeist* and thus intimates, “knowingly or unknowingly, by the conscious attitude,” either what is demanded by the collective mind of the times or what is good and most needful to the times:

Every period has its bias, its particular prejudice, and its psychic malaise. An epoch is like an individual; it has its own limitations of conscious outlook, and therefore requires a compensatory adjustment. This is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to its fulfillment - regardless (of) whether this blind collective need results in good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction.⁵³

Jung offers his considered impressions based upon questionable epistemological assumptions and his analysis of figures in dreams. And yet, while aspiring to be scientific and objective, he charts “psychic” manifestations that can only be categorized, not categorically defined. Further, Jung is not at all keen to make moral discriminations, citing, for instance, Joyce’s *Ulysses* as “a work of the greatest significance in spite or perhaps because of its nihilistic tendencies.”⁵⁴ One would like clarification as to how such a work - and others cited by him as visionary: Wagner’s *Ring* and *Tristan*, Nietzsche’s “Dionysian experience” or “the scurrilous imagery of E. T. A. Hoffman’s tale *The Golden Bowl*”⁵⁵ - might facilitate that “compensatory adjustment” he deems to be crucial to visionary art - unless nihilistic, destructive forces have a part to play in the attainment of humanity’s collective well-being which, in the context of his thought world, flies in the face of

⁵³ “Psychology and Literature,” p. 98.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91, footnote 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

reason and common sense. But Jung sees no possibility of resolving this contradiction, inasmuch as reality, for him, is *irrational*, and the psyche, corresponding to Jung's "divinity," is "a totality of inner opposites." Further, Jung is not at all clear about the nature of the *Zeitgeist*, "the unspoken desire of (the artist's) times," whether such destruction wrought by it may lead to new life beyond a given epoch - as in cyclical Hinduism or in linear Biblical accounts. Is the *Zeitgeist* a manifestation of "divinity," destroying as a necessary prelude to re-creation? Is its destructiveness a manifestation of man's sinfulness, his willfulness? Is it a function of culture? Is it "*daemonic*?" Is it all or is it none of these?

Jung does cite *Moby Dick*; *Faust, Part II*; *The Shepherd of Hermas* (the latter as a work "very nearly included in the New Testament canon") as well as the poetry and paintings of William Blake as great visionary works.⁵⁶ He might have included Mahler's 9th Symphony, of which Arnold Schoenberg says,

[It is] most strange. In it the author hardly speaks as an individual any longer. It is almost as though this work must have a concealed author who used Mahler merely as his spokesman, as his mouthpiece.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 88, 90, 91, 98.

⁵⁷ As appearing in Theodore W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 30. Leonard Bernstein says this of Mahler's 9th, emphasizing its kenotic effect: "It is terrifying and paralyzing, as the strands of sound disintegrate...in ceasing, we lose it all. But in letting go, we gain everything" [*The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Kultur Video, 2002)].

Assessing Jung

Jung is not incorrect to speak of the bringing together of opposites as characterizing art, for this is a function of the symbol.⁵⁸ The Greek word *συμβάλλων* (*symbolon*) is derived from *σύν* (*syn*), “with, together,” and *βάλλω* (*ballo*), “I throw, put;” while the term for devil, *διάβολος* (*diabolos*), is derived from *διά* (*dia*), “through, by means of” and *Βολη* (*boli*), “casting away, putting off.”⁵⁹ While the symbol “puts together,” the diabolic - that which is nihilistic and destructive - is the means by which we are divided, set apart, put off, cast away. The symbol, as understood in its Greek etymological sense, would therefore be antithetical to the diabolic. But Jung allows that the symbol may be incorporative of nihilistic elements - as in Joyce’s *Ulysses* or Nietzsche’s “Dionysiac experience” - and so his “true symbol” rings half true.

⁵⁸ Among Jung’s favorite paradigms of the psyche is the Buddhist mandala, in which opposites placed at furthest points on the circumference of a circle are resolved at the center: “Thus the mandala has the dignity of a ‘reconciling symbol’ [Psychology and Religion (New York: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 96]. And yet in his essays on art, “Answer to Job,” and in *Aion*, Jung reflects a strange and heterodox understanding of “reconciliation” as a blending of dark and light elements. Still, Jung’s *mandala* calls to mind St. Ephrem’s method of setting contrasting symbols “at opposite points around the circumference of a circle; the central point is left undefined, but something of its nature and whereabouts can be inferred by joining up opposite points, the different paradoxes, on the circle’s circumference” [Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, pp. 24, 25]. One thinks, too, of the preeminent poets and literary theorists S. T. Coleridge and T. S. Eliot, both of whom professed Christianity. For the former, art’s very power is manifested in paradox, “in the balance or reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities” [*Biographia Literaria*, as appearing in M.H. Abrams, gen. ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 2 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968), p. 278]; while T. S. Eliot says this in his essay, “The Metaphysical Poets”: “When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes” [*Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, intro and ed. Frank Kermode (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 64].

⁵⁹ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1294, pp. 283, 343, 301.

Jung's insight regarding visionary art's striving to balance images, ideas, or motifs in ways that disclose meaning is as true of sonata-allegro, rondo, and binary or ternary forms as it is of literature, poetry, and the visual and plastic arts. The attainment of formal balance is a chief aim of all considerable art. This is acceptable, but with the caveat that Jung's understanding of balance, as well as that of the nature of revelation, finds no validation within the Christian *Weltanschauung*.

Many visionary works demonstrating a Christian ideal of balance could be cited. *King Lear* comes to mind, where Gloucester's cruel blinding and his "*flawed heart / 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, / Burst smilingly*" (5.3.195-198) parallel Lear's madness and his own fatal heart attack when looking upon the lips of his dearest heart Cordelia, dead by hanging in an aborted attempt to save her father's kingdom - whose lips, for one, precious moment of joy, seem to flicker with life in the old man's flawed inner eye.⁶⁰ And there is the surreal *Gulliver's Travels, Book IV*, which sets forth two paradigms: on one extreme the Yahoo and on the other the Houyhnhnm - bestiality and pure reason - between which our mad, gullible protagonist is not able to find "the middle way," understood in context as that balance resulting from Christian discernment - although sensitive readers are obliged to seek such balance by Swift's rhetoric of satire.

And here is another point on which we would agree: the artist's rhetoric is key. He must draw us into his work, as he has been drawn into composition. If the visionary artist sees into the abyss of the psyche, it is his responsibility to touch us and to facilitate "psychic balance, whether of the individual or the epoch."

⁶⁰ The Latin / Celtic meaning of the name Cordelia is "heart or daughter of the sea." The Jungian interpretation is clear: she represents the fourth element of a quaternity, the feminine and water. But as Cordelia dies by hanging to save the king, she is taken as a Christ image by many literary critics, in which reading *King Lear* is seen to be the most profound of Christian morality plays.

As Jung says, “the secret of great art” consists in “its effect upon us,” and so the process of art is not complete until it effects an appropriate response - although Jung’s take on this “effect / response” is informed by his idiosyncratic understanding of psychic balance.

Objectionable is Jung’s characterization of creativity as irrational. As he says, “the creative urge which finds its clearest expression in art is irrational and will in the end make a mock of all our rationalistic undertakings.”⁶¹ But the urge to create is hardly irrational. *It is transrational*. For having its basis in the creative *logoi*, it speaks of the divine image.

Jung is apparently ignorant of Orthodox Christianity’s theology of distinguishing God’s essence from his energies, and he does not understand God as kenotic presence - sacrificial, creative love active in the cosmos, the divine energies, the *logoi*. In his rejection of Christian revelation, he assumes psychic reality alone to be relevant to thoughtful discourse.

Jung sees darkness and shadow as bearing “primitive qualities” that, if properly assimilated, “would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence.”⁶² But “God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5); correspondingly, humanity, as God’s image, is created to bear no darkness or shadow - which is to say that we are made to be beautiful, to bear light.

What is beauty, how is it perceived by the psyche, and what is its effect? Jung skirts these questions. Aesthetics, that branch of philosophy dealing with the principles of beauty in art and artistic taste, is of little concern to Jung. But love of beauty, *φιλοκαλία* (*philokalía*), is a principal concern of Orthodox theology⁶³ - for if

⁶¹ “Psychology and Literature,” p. 87.

⁶² *Psychology and Religion* (New York: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 95.

⁶³ “The Orthodox Church gives great importance to beauty: in the Liturgy, in the icon, in the ‘philocalic’ path. If this love of beauty is not closed in on itself and self-sufficient, but is directed outward as well; if, for example, we learn to love at

God is the Truth of eternal love, he is all beautiful. And it is in our self-emptying, our denial of *φιλαυτία* (*philautia*), corresponding to Christ's own denial of self-love, that we participate in that eternal love, the beauty of the uncreated *logoi* in all things. As the 14th century Church Father St. Nicholas Cabasilas says, God's love is *μανιακός έρως* (*manikos eros*) - a frail, shy, weak love that proves strongest of all. Paul Evdokimov comments:

The omnipotence of the *manikos eros*... does not simply destroy evil and death but assumes them: 'by death he has trampled on death'. His light shines forth as that of the Truth, crucified and risen.⁶⁴

According to the saints, such love is perceived as uncreated light by the nous, the eye of the psyche - the soul. But God's love abides, even in our unseeing - regardless of our response or lack thereof. And most beautiful of all is this shy, weak, strong love signified by crossed beams, vertical and horizontal, bringing together God and humanity, symbolizing God's active participation in human suffering and death, so that we may be glorified and thus become all - beautiful in him.

Finally, in contradistinction to Jung, Christianity maintains that it is fallen man - not God - who is "an antinomy - a totality of inner opposites" - a *coincidentia oppositorum*. As Hamlet says,

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a

the same time both the icon and - in another way - the great creations of modern Western art, then the 'philocalic' genius of Orthodoxy will enable us to understand and respect the beauty of creation, whether it be in ecological issues or the welcome due to every human face" (Olivier Clement, "Orthodoxy and Politics", *Sourozh: A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought*, Number 56 [May, 1994] p. 1, published by the Russian Patriarchal Diocese of Sourozh).

⁶⁴ As appearing in Fr. Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), p. 176.

god! The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? (2.2. 295-302).

Man is “a poor, bare, forked animal” (*Lear*, 3.4.111) - poor and bare because, being mortal, he possesses nothing in and of himself; forked, in that he points in two directions, being that singular animal imbued with a sense of the divine. Bound to the earth, man longs for that “future life” of which St. Gregory Nazianzus speaks:

The Word, having taken a clod of the newly-made earth, with immortal hands formed my image and imparted to it His life, because He sent into it His Spirit, which is the effluence of the unknown Divinity. Thus out of dust and breath was man made in the image of the immortal one...Accordingly, in my quality of earth, I am attached to life here below, but being also a divine particle, I bear in my breast the desire for a future life [PG 37.452].⁶⁵

But Jung is loath to speak of such desire, because he will not credit any reality beyond what he perceives in the psyche. He and those “scientists of the mind” following in his wake deconstruct the term for soul, *ψυχή* (*psuché*), thus founding a diminished “humanism” in which man becomes his own god. It is a humanism with its own terminology, a newspeak for a post-Christian world.

The crux of the matter is this: humanity is made in God’s image, but Jung takes the “confessions of the psyche,” the totality of psychic imagery - symbols and archetypes as manifested in dreams and in art - for the transcendent.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Poemata Dogmatica*, VIII, as appearing in Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ighita Kesarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989), p. 121.

⁶⁶ Jung’s reductionism, with priority given to the psychic over the theological, is expressed in “Answer to Job”: “The psyche is an autonomous factor, and religious statements are psychic confessions which in the last resort are based on unconscious, i.e., on transcendental, processes. These processes are not accessible to

Jung's god is in the image of man.

What is Visionary Art?

Visionary art deals with paradox, ambiguities, uncertainties, and doubts. For this is life, and art is humanity's dialogue with life - even, if unknowingly, our dialogue with the giver of life. The artist is a voice crying in the wilderness, a Jacob contending with the God he cannot see.

Realizing this, we are obliged to respond. And yet, according to the poet W. B. Yeats who, with Jung, was influenced by *fin-de-siecle* Gnosticism,⁶⁷ Byzantium's

moonlit dome disdains

All that man is,

All mere complexities,

The fury and the mire of human veins (5-8).⁶⁸

Does the Church disdain "all that man is?" And should Christians disdain man's art for its expression of natural human passion? One should hope not.⁶⁹ For by figurative means a work of

physical perception but demonstrate their existence through the confessions of the psyche" (*The Portable Jung*, pp. 522-23).

⁶⁷ See especially Morton Irving Seiden, *William Butler Yeats: The Poet as a Myth-maker, 1865-1939* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1975).

⁶⁸ William Butler Yeats, "Byzantium," as appearing in *W.B. Yeats: The Poems* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), p. 248.

⁶⁹ For what is natural is redeemable, as St. John Damascene states: "Christ took all the natural and non-reprehensible passions of man. He took on the whole man and all that pertains to man, except sin...He assumed all so that he might sanctify all" [*The Source of Knowledge*, 2367, (pp. 3,3,20), as appearing in William Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: 1979), p. 338]. And yet there are disputes within the Church concerning the value of art. Fr. Alexander Men locates the source of the problem in two understandings: one affirming, the other rejecting creativity [see his transcribed lecture, "Two Understandings of Christianity," as appearing in *Christianity for the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 151-163]. Representing the latter, a monk editor of St. Isaac's homilies deplores what he deems as Western and

art communicates the “secret” of the artist’s person, his or her creative energy corresponding to Christ’s symbolic presence and creative energy within creation.⁷⁰ Like God’s “art,” man’s art, too, is an “incarnation” - an offering that can be seen as imaging God’s in ways that are peculiar to any given work, regardless of its genre or medium.

As Jung correctly maintains, the making of art is a matter of vision, of perspective - but so is the aesthetic response. For seeing is antecedent to responding, and all visionary art - *if* viewed from the perspective of the Cross - can point to the Resurrection - inasmuch as even darkness bears witness to the light. Our ubiquitous God is conspicuous in his “absence,” so it comes down to

therefore presumably “scholastic” tendencies of certain Eastern monastics who appreciate beauty in art and its healing power: “We are told, ‘We must learn again what beauty is. We must learn what it is to be carried on the thunder of a fugue, to be engulfed in the madness of Lear, to be consumed with the sanity of Quixote. We need to be refreshed by the health and charity of Dickens, illumined by the clarity and perception of Hugo, ballasted by the sober gravity and sidelong wit of Johnson, touched by the fire of Donne, soothed by Chaucer’s flowering springtime.’ And this from monastic lips” [forward to *The Ascetical homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian* (Brookline, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2020), 31,32]. But isn’t it incumbent upon all Christians, even monks, to practice discernment and to affirm what is good, beautiful, and true “filling all things,” even when qualified? As in all of life, what is needful is balance, attending both to the traditional, ascetic disciplines of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and good works, while cultivating an appreciation for the life-affirming, creative works of God’s image. One might go so far as to suggest that such insensitivity to artistic beauty as expressed by this monk leans toward iconoclasm.

⁷⁰ Christos Yannaras speaks of art’s way of revealing the creator’s “existential otherness by means of essences heterogenous to the essence of his own person,” citing the work of Van Gogh: “Van Gogh is a man according to his essence, while one of his pictures is canvas and colors according to its essence. But these colors on top of canvas become a word which reveals the ‘secret’ of the person, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Van Gogh’s existence. The creative energy of Van Gogh, his artistic creation, makes possible our own sharing and participation in the knowledge of his person...The painted picture (like the poem, the statue, the music, the human voice) represents the energy of a man’s reason (*logos*), that is, the possibility for us to share in the knowledge of the personal otherness of the man - for all of us to share who see the same picture in the same otherness of the one person” (Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1991), p. 45.

questions of how we see and how we respond. And if Jung does not acknowledge the reality, the historicity, *the singularity* of Christ's accomplishment, he nevertheless rightly emphasizes the power of art to change us - whether, as he says, those changes may result in "good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction." For the quality of our response is relative to that of our discernment - *the truth of our own vision*. And this would concern not only how we see but what we see - and even more crucially *how we live in our seeing and what we choose to affirm* - whether it be good or evil, symbolic or diabolic.

If the visionary artist's invocation of the symbol is to bring about balance, this would be in such a way as to work toward our salvation, our becoming whole - that is, fully human. And this process might be initiated, paradoxically, by a work that is pagan, dogmatically unsound - and perhaps even dark and "atheistic." It may be the "Dionysiac" art of Nietzsche or the "scurrilities" of E. T. A. Hoffman - or the agnostic existentialism of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* or the decadent, "traumatized" art of Francis Bacon and Alberto Giacometti. In fact, it is not at all inconceivable that such works, resounding as searching and therefore, at least in this one, critical sense authentically human, might facilitate our progress more certainly than works that are overtly "Christian" but contrived, superficial, proselytizing. For real art is "an earthen vessel" containing "treasure" - the artist's secret and unique personal energy, inclusive of his "mere complexities." Light shines out from this art, as God's uncreated light, the *logoi* shine out from *his* creation, *his* "art." And all humans, made in God's image and having the potential to become like God, bear some manner of light, howsoever dim, shaded, or darkened by sin (cf. Mt. 6:23, Lk. 11:35).

It is our better nature to love the other, to share, to be creative, to "put together" things - to *symbolize*. As life is relational, the value of art is correlative, interpersonal, consisting not only

in what is written or notated, sculpted, danced, or dabbled in oil. "No man is an island entire of itself,"⁷¹ and man's art aims to persuade, to draw others within, *to synthesize and to bond* - for this is what symbolic language does. It would then be the responsibility of the mature reader to go there, to *empathize*⁷² with another who, even though long dead, "lives on" in his or her art - to love, to explicate, to interpret, to parse out half-truths and to call out that which is dark, diabolical, and therefore inhuman, anti-thetical to the symbol. The aesthetic response would then be understood as a process of "completing" any given work, corresponding to our own creative response in the Holy Spirit to Christ's creativity. For all works have profound theological soundings. Art is not and has never been "for art's sake," and its significance transcends psychological categories.

"And thus we half-men struggle"⁷³

So says Andrea del Sarto ("*Called 'The Faultless Painter'*"⁷⁴) in the eponymous dramatic monologue by Robert Browning. This poem consists of the ramblings of an artist of the Italian Renaissance who is conflicted, a struggling "half-man" long past his prime, but one intimately aware of the fine lines distinguishing art from life. As a master artist, Browning draws us into his poem. We identify with del Sarto, for we are all 'half-men,' distracted by worldly concerns, self-absorbed, wasteful of time,

⁷¹ John Donne, Meditation XVII, as appearing in *Renaissance England, Poetry and Prose From The Reformation to the Restoration*, eds. Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith (New York: W.W. Norton, 1956), p. 835.

⁷² Empathy is necessary as opposed to sympathy; for one must not be drawn into darkness. This rule, essential to psychotherapy and Christian ministry, should be practiced in all human interactions, including our relationships with art.

⁷³ "Andrea del Sarto," *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, l. 140, p. 1332.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, subtitle of the poem, p. 1329.

struggling, and far from faultless. Nearing his own end, del Sarto dreams of life after death (“In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance -” l. 260)⁷⁵ - it is that “future life” of which St. Gregory Nazianzus speaks. And we who are so like this man are drawn into those white spaces between the fine lines where we encounter the One who *is* faultless, who *is* whole, who defeats death and gives abundant life - *if* we have been given eyes to see. But what of Jung? Even he seems to intuit this selfsame One when speaking of the true visionary artist who

transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind and evokes for us all those beneficent forces that ever and anon have enabled humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night.⁷⁶

Not unlike the high priest Caiaphas who prophesied “the expiation for us, that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not” (Jn.11:50), so Jung prophesies, obviously passing over into the demesne of true theology, as the only art that could possibly enable humanity “to outlive the longest night” - *the night of our collective death - must be divine.*

Jesus Christ, “Symbol of Himself”

In his meditation on the Transfiguration, St. Maximos speaks of Christ, “in His measureless love,” as having become “a type and symbol of Himself:”

For in His measureless love for mankind, there was need for Him to be created in human form (without undergoing any change), and to become a type (τύπος) and symbol (συμβολικως) of Himself, presenting Himself symbolically by

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 1335.

⁷⁶ “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Literature,” p. 82.

means of His own self, and through the manifestation of Himself, to lead all creation to Himself (though He is hidden and totally beyond all manifestation), and to provide human beings, in a human-loving fashion, with the visible divine actions of His flesh as signs of His invisible infinity, which is totally transcendent, and secretly hidden, which no being, in absolutely any way whatsoever, can capture in thought or language [1165D].⁷⁷

In becoming man, the Logos is ontologically bonded with His symbol, leading “all of creation to Himself” who is beyond cognition - as St. Maximos says, “hidden and totally beyond all manifestation,” *absolutely* beyond categories of space and time, beyond the competence of discursive reason. For in Christ the secret, hidden fullness of the God image, the tenor of the image, becomes one with the vehicle or outward sign of that hidden fullness.⁷⁸

Thus the eternal longing is fulfilled *εν δυνάμει* (*in potentia*). God is enfleshed “*without undergoing any change.*” For Christ is that *symbol* to whom all are drawn by means of the *logoi*, the uncreated energies - the principles of beings. Acting within creation but “totally transcendent” of it, Christ is that “Unknown God” St. Paul speaks of - hidden, unfathomable... and yet known as well as we can know ourselves, “for he is not far from every one of us... seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:23,25).

Christ fleshes out the divine image in man, whose purpose it is to unite “created nature with uncreated nature through love...

⁷⁷ *Amb. 10.77* as appearing in Maximos the Confessor, *On the Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 269.

⁷⁸ “*Tenor and vehicle*: the components of a metaphor, with the tenor referring to the concept, object, or person meant, and the vehicle being the image that carries the weight of the comparison. The words were first used in this sense by the critic I. A. Richards” (*Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/tenor-literature>).

(showing) them to be one and the same by the state of grace” [1308C].⁷⁹

To say that the Logos became a type and symbol of Himself is tantamount to saying that God became perfect man so that man might become whole, fully human, *like Christ God*. For as the symbol unites, Christ, who is perfect God and perfect man, accomplishes what human beings were created to do and what human beings in Christ are enabled by grace to be: *God’s symbol*.

Relating Jung to St. Maximos

What are the Jungian implications of St. Maximos’s understanding of Christ and his symbol? And to what extent may it be possible to incorporate Jungian language into an Orthodox theology of art?

If, as Jung says, a great artist gives “shape” to “an archetypal image” in a “finished work,”⁸⁰ we may say that the Logos in becoming man gives shape to the *divine* archetype, as He perfects “the God-image,” being Himself that archetype from whom all true symbols are derived;⁸¹ if Jung’s artist is “‘collective man,’ a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind,”⁸² we may say that Christ is the archetype of collective man,

⁷⁹ Amb. 41.5 as appearing in St. Maximos the Confessor, *On the Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. Nicholas Conostas (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 109.

⁸⁰ “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Literature,” p. 82.

⁸¹ Fr. Maximos Conostas writes, “In the sense that, by assuming human nature, the Word becomes, like all human beings, an ‘image’ of God, but by virtue of his divine nature he is the archetype of that image, and so becomes an image and symbol of himself” [St. Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios*, trans. Fr. Maximos Conostas (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), p. 40, footnote 125 (italics mine)].

⁸² “Psychology and Literature,” p. 101.

both our truest self *and* the hidden source of humanity's unconscious "psychic" life - as well as the vehicle, tenor, and moulder of all life forms - *the progenitor* of all true symbols; if the artist is to "restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or the epoch" - and in doing so "*makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life*"⁸³ - Christ is the *apotheosis* of such an artist. Christ may be that implied first person intuited by the visionary who perceives himself to be second in the act of composition. Or He may be intuited as that "living agency beyond our everyday human world - something even more purposeful than electrons." Or He may be understood as that artist whose humanity is not "alien" to His divine nature but one with it, un-mixed, unchanged. For Christ the Logos fashions all of creation in diverse ways, and he calls upon us to respond by becoming *like* Him, and to do so freely, willingly, without force of compulsion - for, as St. Maximos would surely say, the rhetoric of "measureless love" is gentle. As divine artist, Christ manifests His deified humanity in symbols of bread and wine, *antitypes* of His Body and Blood and of His Resurrection⁸⁴ which we consume - and which we are obliged to assimilate, if we are to become fully human. For our collective selves, symbolized by the bread and wine we offer to the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit, becomes one with Christ's Body and Blood - *both the symbol and the very Body and Blood of God.*

⁸³ "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," (italics mine), p. 82.

⁸⁴ In the Divine Liturgy, prior to the Consecration, St. Basil the Great calls the gifts of bread and wine "the antitypes of the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ" (*αντίτυπα του αγίου Σωματος και Αίματος του Χριστου σου*). And then, at the Dismissal, turning to the Prothesis, the priest gives thanks on behalf of the faithful for having been deemed worthy to witness "the antitype of your Resurrection" (*Ανασταστιάσεως σου τον τυπων*). The Basilian understanding is clear: we participate *symbolically* in Christ who has become a type (*τύπος*) and symbol (*συμβολικως*) of Himself, as St. Maximos affirms.

We Orthodox could then maintain that the consummate work of visionary art would be the Eucharist⁸⁵ - our grateful participation in Christ God who, descending into the collective darkness, tramples down our death by *His* death and thus, as Jung prophesies, “enables humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night;” who is the agent of our *catharsis* - our *purgation*, our *purification*, our *healing*; who brings our shadow into the light and makes us whole, so that we may work with Him to make our worlds whole; who, being both God and man, fulfills our “inner nature;” who, in an eternal act of kenotic love, reconciles humanity and all of creation to Himself; who, being one with the Spirit of Truth filling all things, is Kingdom, Power, and Glory; who is that veiled “Presence” St. Paul speaks of in Hebrews - *that symbol*.

The Divine Liturgy is that work God makes with us - a synergistic work of “process art” leading to deification at the *Eschaton*. With recourse to Jungian language, we may say that our participation in the Eucharist is a “re-immersion in a state of *participation mystique*,” so that “the secret of artistic creation and of the effect which (such) great art has upon us” serves no longer only the individual but “the life of the collective.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ “The ontological content of the eucharist - eucharistic communion as a mode of existence - assumes that the communal reality of life has a cosmological dimension: it presupposes matter and the use of matter, which is to say art, as the creative transformation of matter into a fact of relationship and communion” (author’s bold stress) [Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), p. 231].

⁸⁶ “Psychology and Literature,” p. 105 (author’s italics).

Conclusion

The prevailing tendency in the West since the Great Schism has been to aspire to scientific precision and to compartmentalize - to distinguish psychology from theology, aesthetics from ontology. We have become pseudo-Aristotelians, holding to different classifications of knowledge, hardly realizing that Truth is One as our God is One. We do this because we are not “composed,” not properly ordered within ourselves. We are “earthen vessels” with fault lines - pottery cracked straight down the middle and barely holding our halves together. And so we see as we are and we do what we can. We are fallen, we are broken, and so we break up things. We compartmentalize. We become reductionistic. We make distinctions and draw hard lines, rending the sacred from the profane, ourselves from each other, and even ourselves from God - a God from whom human beings cannot be separated, as we are his image.

Thus, it could be argued that *this* - the *paradox* of human existence: the fact of our alienation from God, our self-exile, and the reality of our being bound to Him by our deep longing for transcendence - is a theme implicit in much secular visionary art and the reason for its often profound sadness and poignancy, its searching restlessness, its truth, plangent beauty, and aesthetic appeal.

Jung represents an attempt to understand art holistically from the perspective of a scientist of the psyche. But *God* is “the measure of all things” - *not* the psyche, *not* man.⁸⁷ Absolute

⁸⁷ “Of all things the measure is man,” according to the sophist philosopher Protagoras of Abdura (ca. 490-420 BC). This famous saying “has been interpreted as a first stance in favor of relativism, and his claim on the gods introduces the problem of agnosticism” (“Protagoras,” 1st published 9/8/2020, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/protagoras/>)).

Truth is neither scientific, nor psychic, nor mythological; and absolute meaning is not disclosed in analysis, as if divinity could be thus circumscribed. Such meaning is *transrational*, beyond the antinomies of existence.⁸⁸ It is mystical, to be experienced aesthetically in the apprehension of beauty, the uncreated light - *and* it is ontological: for as “the light of the world” (John 8:2), God has deigned to shine forth from within all things as *logoi*, the principles of beings - that light within light spoken of by the Psalmist (36:9), His word “a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Christ is that “Hidden One shining out,” as St. Ephrem says. He is that divine symbol within the mind and heart of creation and shadowed forth or glowing prophetically from within humanity’s truest and most beautiful poetry, literature, music, and art. But the fullness, the *πλήρωμα* (pleroma) of Truth and Beauty shines out from those holy antitypes - *symbols*, bread and wine, His Body and Blood - *if* we are blessed to see with that translucent eye made luminous in the transfiguring light of The Universal Christ:

Who will not give thanks to the Hidden One,
most hidden of all,
who came to open revelation, most open of all,
for He put on a body, and other bodies felt Him
- though minds never grasped Him.

(Faith 19:7)⁸⁹

Thanks be to God!

⁸⁸ Absolute meaning is in God whose “understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28), who is “eternal, beyond comprehending or describing, invisible, unchanging, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great God and Savior, the object of our hope” [Prayer said by the priest before the Trisagion at the Anaphora of *The Divine Liturgy According to Our Father Among the Saints Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea*, trans. Frs. Leonidas Contos and Spencer Kezios, (Northridge, CA: Narthex Press), p. 21].

⁸⁹ St. Ephrem the Syrian, as appearing in Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, p. 28.