

Transcript
Edward Edinger Interview on Social Relevance of Jungian Psychology

<https://youtu.be/OfpKWD3P650>

0:00... Now I'd like to say a bit about what it means – as one progresses in the process of self knowledge – what it means to learn about each of those items that go to make up the structure of the psyche that I spoke of earlier.

Let's start with the ego – that's the starting point for everything. One of the goals of the life process, just the natural life process, as well as the analytic process, is maximum ego development. One can have no real analysis, one can have no real confrontation with the unconscious, until one has a sturdy, responsible and ethical ego prepared to have that encounter. Before that there's no question of depth analysis, all that is available is a supportive psychotherapy that promotes ego development. You see it's vitally important, just considering the social aspect of the matter, that the members of society have good, strong, reliable egos. That means they have to have an authentic sense of their own identity, they have to have acquired a responsible character structure that enables them to function responsibly in relation to other people. That's all a product of ego development, so just to start with good ego development is not only good for the individual, it's good for the society that the individual's a part of.

2:25... Awareness of the Persona

Then the question of the persona. What value is awareness of the persona to the individual and society? Here again as with all self knowledge, both the individual and society benefit. You see it commonly happens, that to a greater or lesser extent, an individual is identified with his persona. It's so convenient. It's hard enough to acquire competence in a professional career and once that has been achieved, the satisfactions of that achievement are often so significant that there's a strong tendency for the individual then to identify with the professional persona that one learns in the course of his professional training. So, the minister learns his persona as he goes through theological seminary and then starts his first job as assistant pastor. The medical student learns the medical persona, the lawyer learns his and so on and once that's learned it makes things work so smoothly to operate out of it that there's a strong tendency to identify with it.

But the trouble is, for society as a whole, that when one meets one's doctor, or one's pastor, or one's lawyer, or whatever, one isn't meeting a full human being, you meet the mask. I'll speak for my own profession, I won't belittle any other profession that I don't know but I can tell you that it's a real problem in the medical profession. Doctors are very busy and it takes too much time to be real. It's much easier to function out of your medical persona. The great advantage of it – the temporary advantage is – it's like skating on a pond of frozen ice, it doesn't take any effort, you don't have to respond out of deeper human realities and you can get a lot more work done in a day, you see. You can see more patients. If you take time to listen to them and respond to them humanly you get caught up and you're way behind in your schedule.

It's all understandable but if self knowledge is to proceed and if individuals are going to achieve full, well rounded human potentiality, it's important for them to discover the reality of the persona and the fact that it's not identical with the ego and that if they choose to identify with it now and then they are diminishing themselves both psychologically and humanly and once those things become known then the initial identification is broken and even though one may have to operate out of that persona at times, then you know what you're doing and it makes a world of difference whether you are doing it consciously or unconsciously because choice is involved.

6:52... Awareness of the Shadow

Then turning to the next item – the shadow. What's the social advantage of being aware of the shadow? I can tell you it's immense because as long as one is unconscious of the shadow almost infallibly it gets projected. It gets projected onto somebody that provides some hook, some quality, maybe only in small degree that corresponds to the nature of one's own shadow and when that happens the projector has the delightful experience of locating evil – it's out there, in you. Now I know what to attack in order to make the world a better place and so in lesser shadow projections I guess no great harm is done, it's an abrasion in the general mechanics of ordinary human relationships but once it starts operating on a large collective scale, shadow projection can be disastrous and I hardly need to spell out the examples of it because they're everywhere to be seen, where you've got one faction opposing another faction and attributing dark, evil, if not diabolical, implications on the enemy faction.

We see this everywhere in the world and I'm not going to go into the details but this is all a consequence of shadow projection and it's really a disgrace for an educated and supposedly relatively mature human being to be caught engaging in a crude shadow projection in this day and age. But disgrace or not, it happens all the time and it's a grave damage to our social fabric. So to the extent that an individual, through the analytic process, becomes aware of his shadow he is then inoculated from shadow projection because he recognises that the particular quality, or idea, or mode of living, that is so annoying to him in the other person is an expression of his own shadow, which accounts for the annoyance. We can have likes and dislikes but when a certain level of affect enters the picture, that's an infallible indication of a shadow projection and people unconscious of their shadows are a grave danger to the welfare of society as a whole.

11:11... Awareness of the Anima and Animus

Now, turning to the animus and anima – we're reaching a deeper layer now and here the social aspects cannot be spelled out in such simple terms. They're present but they're more complex and occult and a little harder to express but certainly we can say that an individual who has even a rudimentary awareness of the reality of the anima or the animus is going to have a more authentic, a more conscious, a more fruitful and realistic relation to the opposite sex and after all, that relationship between the sexes is quite fundamental to the whole social process. The family is based on it and the raising of children and the welfare and psychological early development of children – that is very dependent on the level of conscious relationship that exists between the parents. That type of understanding relationship that can endure the inevitable conflict between the opposites of the sexes is very much promoted and helped by an awareness of the animus and anima because with that

awareness then one avoids the crudest of projections and can relate to the partner in terms of their reality rather than in terms of the illusory expectations one has when one has projected the anima or animus onto the partner.

13:45... Awareness of the Self

Now coming finally to the question of the Self – the awareness of the Self. The Self is the centre and totality of the psyche. One of its synonyms is the inner God-image. It's the transpersonal authority of the psyche. The ego is the smaller authority and the Self is the larger authority. When one has made a contact with the Self, the ego then becomes relativised and recognises that its life must be governed by an authority higher than itself. Now what does such a recognition have to do with society? A great deal indeed. In a certain sense we can say that society is the exteriorised mirror of the psyche. Every society has a leader of some sort. At one stage it was the king or the President. Occasionally it's an oligarchy of aristocrats but always in order for a society to be cohesive and exist organically, it has to have a central authority and that central external social authority is a mirror of the inner authority of the Self. That's why when one has dreams of a king, or a President, or of Washington DC, in most cases those dreams refer to the Self.

So what's at issue here is the individual's relation to authority. If one has no connection to the Self and particularly when the ego is weak – when there's low level of psychological differentiation – especially in times of social turmoil and distress, there is a strong tendency for the Self – the central organising authority/principle of the psyche – to be projected. Because in times of turmoil the compensatory aspect of the psyche activates and turmoil then tends to constellate order. Disorder constellates order and order in such circumstances often has to be imposed with some level of discipline and authoritarianism. And so what can happen in such cases then is that one gets massive collective projections of the Self onto the leader – the Fuhrer, for instance. That's what happened in Nazi Germany. It's a – I'm looking for an adequate word to describe... it's in a lesson of instruction of a magnitude that could hardly be exaggerated as to the danger of the collective projection of the Self. That's what happened in Nazi Germany, we see it happening in all sorts of charismatic religious cults, it's happening in small scale all over, scattered all around and as we lose our containment in our conventional religious myth, this danger's going to become more and more operative and it's probably the greatest threat to humanity – much greater than the nuclear bomb.

19:55... Transformation of the God Image

Jung puts it all very succinctly in Answer to Job when he says:

God needs man and encounter with man has an effect on Him.

Now that's a symbolic statement. In psychological terms; the Self needs the ego and the ego's awareness in relation to it, in order to be transformed. That puts it in our neutral psychological language. The Self, or the God Image, in its unconscious form, as I've said before, is a paradoxical union of opposites. This is the ground of our psychological being and the Christian God of love is only one half of it. That's why Satan has never disappeared. He leads a separate existence but he's still around and Jung has demonstrated that Christ and Satan are the two opposite sons of the same paradoxical deity and when these images come

into the range of empirical experience, they require some reconciliation. You see, they generate an inner conflict that's intolerable until it achieves a reconciliation and this is what happens when the individual encounters the primordial God Image in its paradoxical oppositeness. It experiences the activation of the conflict within the nature of the Godhead and since also contained within the whole dynamic is the potential for a union and reconciliation of those opposites, that can often be achieved in the individuation process by the process of Active Imagination and the net result then is that the psyche is no longer split.

The Christian psyche is split and that means everybody, whether you're a professing Christian or not, it's irrelevant, it's part of the collective psychology we all share. We're all split because the God Image is split and the split occurred even before Christianity – it was split by Plato and the Stoics, so that it's got a philosophical source too. That split, that paralleled doubleness of deity, is what undergoes reconciliation and transformation when an individual human consciousness engages this depth issue in its own individual life. Then that little piece of the collective psyche that is carried by the individual has been transformed and if there are enough individuals who have had this experience and who have participated in this transformation of the God Image, then they act as a kind of leaven to society as a whole and very gradually a new collective God Image is born out of that society as a whole.

24:50... Is Christianity doomed?

You know the question often comes up in modern thinking, 'Is Christianity doomed? Has it run out?' Jung makes a very interesting point in that regard. He points out that the Christian myth itself contains as part of its thematic structure, the death of God. I want to see if I can spell this out because I think it's of some importance. According to the Christian myth – and I elaborate all this in my book *The Christian Archetype* – according to the Christian myth, God – the God, remember that in psychological terms whenever I use the phrase 'God,' I'm referring to the psychological God Image. Psychology does not presume to know anything about the metaphysical deity. We're talking about the psychological God Image which is within the range of empirical experience. But according to the Christian myth, God descends to earth by incarnating himself as a man through the agency of the Holy Spirit, who impregnates the Virgin Mary and God, as man, then lives a human life on the earth, incarnated. He goes through the passion, he dies and he's resurrected and then ascends to heaven. So that in his incarnated form the myth describes the deity as passing through a death.

What then happens, after his death, according to the Christian myth, is that the Holy Spirit descends again on Pentecost and this time, according to the church dogma, the church is born. Pentecost is considered to be the birthday of the church. So that the incarnation cycle repeats itself. The Holy Ghost – the deity – descends and is incarnated a second time in the church which describes itself as the body of Christ. Then, according to certain theologians – this is stated explicitly – the church as the body of Christ is obliged to live out the same fateful sequence as did Christ. That means the church must also go through a passion and a death. Now the church projects that anticipation onto the last days, as far off as possible but considering this psychologically, we might consider that that's happening right now, that the church as the body of Christ, the collective incarnation of Christ, so to speak – Christ was the first individual incarnation, the church was the second collective incarnation, who must also go through the passion and death and resurrection – and now according to my understanding,

the resurrection will then initiate a third cycle in which the Holy Spirit will be now incarnating itself in empirical individual human beings.

That's Jung's point and as you can see, as I spell it out that way, that's a consistent and quite appropriate continuation and reinterpretation of the Christian myth. Jung was very concerned that the treasure of the Christian myth not be lost to modern man and what he's done is he's provided a transformative and re-interpretive understanding of it, in his notion of continuing incarnation, which preserves all of the rich Christian symbolism you see but now understood on a psychological individual level. And this is my understanding of what the new epoch means and why Jung is an epochal man.

31:21... An Antidote

We are in for some very grave disturbances in the collective social fabric of Western society and Jung was keenly aware of that and he even made the remarkable statement, in a letter, that he wrote Answer to Job because he did not want his moral laxity to allow things to drift towards the impending catastrophe. What he revealed there and is expressed very clearly is that his book Answer to Job is the antidote to the apocalypse. If one can understand Answer to Job one would be in a position to survive psychologically the onslaught of the apocalypse of the transition from one epoch to another because he describes the psychological meaning of this collective event and what it means. Without summarising the book, which would be impossible in this setting, what it means is that a process is going on in which the God-image is undergoing transformation and the process of that transformation requires human awareness of the divine nature in order for that nature to change. That puts it in a nutshell. In fact I'll repeat it. The essence of Answer to Job, which is the antidote allowing one to survive psychologically the apocalypse, is the realisation that the apocalypse is a process in the transformation of God in which, by means of entering human consciousness, the divine nature can undergo a transformation and change its nature.

It's all spelt out in the Book of Job. I also discuss this matter in my little book on Blake's engravings for the Book of Job called The Encounter with the Self. You see part of the divine nature – remember I'm speaking psychologically, not metaphysically. Psychologists know nothing about metaphysics, depth psychologists are good Kantians who recognise that metaphysical statements are beyond human possibility and so that they make no metaphysical assumptions at all, we're talking about the psychological God-image – that that God-image is a union of opposites. It's not only Christ, it's also Satan. It's not only Yahweh of the Book of Job, it's also behemoth and leviathan and that paradoxical God-image with that dual nature is in the process of being transformed through being experienced by human consciousness. Being seen by human consciousness is the agent of its transformation – one individual at a time.

It's not done collectively, not done in committee, it's done one lonely individual at a time, who has the experience of the divine ambiguity and in the process of that experience penetrates that paradoxical Self with human consciousness which transforms it. This is the process I see now in its initial phases and which will continue with more and more intensity in the collective. You see, if we have more experiences of the same nature as the Nazi holocaust – those are psychological events. Those are expressions of the collective human psyche. They weren't natural disasters; they didn't fall out of heaven – they were psychological events. They are phenomena describing the nature of the collective psyche and

that's the kind of stuff that we're in store for as we go through this catastrophic transformation from one age to the next in which the divine image is undergoing transformation.

38:23... Dr. C.G. Jung (excerpt from the film Matter of Heart):

The world hangs on a thin thread, and that is the psyche of man. Nowadays we are not threatened by elementary catastrophes. There is no such thing as an H-bomb; that is all man's doing. WE are the great danger. The psyche is the great danger. What if something goes wrong with the psyche?

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