

TOWARD a PSYCHOSPIRITUALITY

Over the years I have taught that being a psychologist requires at least three skills: possess a theoretical framework with which to explain human behavior; possess ability to make psychological assessment; create a safe and warm therapeutic environment. Now as I near my passing I have opportunity to review my own theoretical framework for understanding human behavior which I call Psychospiritual, a variety of Depth Psychology. Clearly my education directed me in this direction. While no longer a practicing Catholic, I was deeply influenced by its practices in my early years. My doctoral studies were under the mentorship of Dr. Bruno Bettelheim in Freudian psychology. Afterwards I plunged into self-taught Existentialism and Zen Buddhism. Finally, my studies at the Jung Institute in Zurich were done under the mentorship of Dr. M-L von Franz.

Psychospiritual consists of two words that are generally associated with religion: spiritual (from Latin-spiritus and soul (from Greek-psyche). The following expands on these two words in order to clarify the meaning of Psychospiritual.

SPIRITUAL/SPIRIT

In Christianity, Spirit plays an important role. In the opening of the biblical Genesis the SPIRIT of God is hovering over the waters when all that was, was the void. This Spirit, as animator of the Life Force of the Creator God, awakens the Void with the Life Force. In Genesis, Spirit was the Life Force that produced consciousness out of the darkened Void. We also find Holy Spirit as the third entity of the Trinity. In the Trinity the Spirit is an animating life force that is poured on the faithful. In the Trinity, the Spirit pours out the Cosmic Life Force through which humanity receives the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit (such as wisdom and fortitude). Thirdly, the Spirit on Pentecost brought tongues of fire to the apostles so that human exchange could broaden. Although the three examples used above are steeped in Christian mythic imagery, they nonetheless narrate a universal meaning of Spirit. The Spirit, in short, is taken to be the animator of the Life Force that connects individuals with the Force or Urge that set forth Creation.

How then to encounter the Spirit so that it becomes an aspect of one's theoretical framework? I would recommend a Centering Practice. Over the years I have used Zen Meditation, dreams and currently, a Mandala Practice, but there are many other centering practices. At bottom, a Centering Practice aims to provide space for the Spirit of Creation to "hover" over the individual's psyche. A Centering Practice, in brief, is an external outreach that attempts to connect with an outside-of-body entity.

In context of the framework, the ego, when taking on the work of Individuation, opens itself to interaction with the Spirit which, in turn, leads to a connection, even if it is ever so slim, with the source of Creation. In my own process I have sensed the presence of the Spirit in several dreams. I also have felt its presence in the few times that I have engaged in active imagination.

But perhaps the best example of the Spirit's involvement in human life can be found in what Jung called synchronicity; the something that occurs outside "cause and effect." When I was attending the Jung Institute in Zurich events caused me to request permission to continue my training in the United States for a year. Permission was granted and I settled in El Paso, Texas close to a military hospital. I had occasion to meet a military psychologist and chaplain both of whom began analysis with me. Besides the conduct of case studies, I was able to write my thesis during the year. Once the year was over, I faced a major difficulty in returning to Zurich namely, finding English speaking analysts (for case studies) in order to progress with my training. And here is where synchronicity crept in. The army chaplain received orders to be stationed in southern Germany (Munich). The Army psychologist also received orders to be stationed in Germany, but in the North. He subsequently received orders for a station in Central Germany. Shortly before leaving he received orders for Southern Germany (Stuttgart). Given their close proximity to Zurich I continued my analysis with both; they also provided other analysts as well as office space. The Jung Institute-Zurich also gave me more credits for case study hours conducted during the year than it initially granted, which allowed me to complete my studies in three years (to include the year in the USA). Given such intervention it was a 'green light' that I would be a Jungian trained analyst. Prior to the synchronistic events I was doubting my decision to decline the promotion to the rank of colonel of Infantry in order to pursue advanced training in Zurich. The turn of events ended my doubts.

In my theoretical framework such synchronicity, as described above, is attributed to the work of the Spirit guiding our lives. It is true that many egos are beset with features of anxiety and depression, and thus little open to new personal psychological formulation. At the same time, it should be held in mind that the Spirit is forever hovering waiting for an opening in the psychic structure in order to bring forth a renewed Life Force. If the theoretical framework is to be psychospiritual, a relationship needs to exist between Ego and Spirit.

PSYCHE (SOUL)

If Spirituality bears on an external relationship between Spirit and Ego, Psyche (Soul) bears on an internal relationship between Soul and Ego. The word Soul has become problematic with each author giving his own operational commentary on its content and role. I'll be no different and shall provide my take on Soul. To begin, I hold that the Soul is linked to the preconscious Void. When the Void fragmented at Creation, the fragmented elements carried off bits of the Void. Throughout evolution, these bits continued to be passed on in an unknown manner. For example, members of the Homo sapiens specie inherit, in an unknown manner, a bit of the pre-creation Void that was passed on to the members of the specie. This inheritance from Creation I perceive to be the Soul and underscores the Soul's probable immortality and its relationship with the Creator.

A question arises regarding Soul; what is its purpose in the human? Why the inheritance of a foreign entity? The answers may be found in what is unique in the human species. First, a much higher state of consciousness compared to other species; second, an ability to love and be loving-kind beyond that found in other species. The paleontologist-Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin concluded, based on his studies, that evolution was heading towards the "amorization" of the

Cosmos. Humanity's uniqueness suggest that it may have a role in fashioning the amorization process.

In general, humans have left Soul matters to religious or philosophic overview. The contact between human and Soul is mostly elementary and the state of the relationship communicated through moods. For that matter it can be opined that the Soul reveals its presence mostly through moods whether it be discontentment or joyfulness. I am of the opinion that the level of human consciousness was somewhat expanded in the mid-Nineteen Century when the focus on the Soul began to take on a modern "psychological" face. Soul no longer would be experienced in terms of moods and left in the hands of religion and philosophy. Life began to be perceived in terms of meaning, and purpose. Soul and Ego, in context of Being, explored a new accommodation. The eminence of social democracy, advances in science and industrialization jolted the understanding of Soul (Psyche). Over the next century Soul gave way to Psyche and modern psychology came to root.

Perhaps this shift, that began in the mid-Nineteen Century, can be linked to Frederic Nietzsche's mythic hero, Zarathustra, (1883) when he asked a hermit whether he had not heard that "God is dead." (Implicit is that the God of Sin and Redemption is dead.) Shortly afterwards the writings of Freud and Jung brought attention to the unconscious. Such writings caused a turn around to the Soul-Psyche impasse and thrust the standoff to the therapeutic clinic with apparent success as neurosis and psychosis could be readily found. The therapeutic process was called psychology and the prominence of Soul waned. After World War II another shift took place. Neurosis and psychosis lost its dominant grip in the clinic. Meaning, purpose, love, death became topics that had crept into the clinic and "existence" and "Being" became the subjects of concern. Victor Frankl with his "Search For Meaning" and "The Doctor and the Soul" ushered in a Psychology where there was room for Soul. His contribution of Logos Therapy and its emphasis on meaning abetted the development of what has become the Existential School of Psychology. Otto Rank with his "Psychology and the Soul" was a forerunner of existentialism. In the United States the works of Rollo May, "Love and Will" and Abraham Maslow (Toward a Psychology of Being) were major contributors to the Existential School. In brief the promise of Existentialism suggests that the practice of Psychospirituality may be an extension of the Existential School.

The Analytic School of Carl Jung, while supposedly open to the Soul and Spirit, has them enmeshed in a vortex of an archetypal world. At the same time, Jung's Depth Psychology that emits features of Psychospirituality, has earned its keep as a central psychological system. Less successful is Transpersonal Psychology that evolved in 1970s out of Existential Psychology and Humanistic Psychology. Its focus has been the formalistic examination of experiences that border on the Ego's frontier such as near-death experiences, mysticism, and drug or shamanic induced mind "travels."

In the human, Soul is found in personal Being particularly in a Being that seeks to maximize itself in the matter of becoming conscious and loving-kind so that it can assist in the amorization of the Cosmos. If there is no Being there is no Soul or for that matter, no Organizing Center. If the shift in the mid-Nineteen Century took Soul out from political philosophy and institutional religion and tied Soul to psychological therapy, the second shift, triggered by the nightmare of World War II, shook the Soul out of the therapeutic dream of a nonproblematic human life. This

led Camus to opine that the only worthwhile question of existence was Suicide or not. If the individual is not careful, s/he may place on the Ego a redeemer role thinking that all that is needed is for itself to trudge the Path of Individuation or activate the Drive for Meaning.

Although a wonderous psychic instrumentality the Ego, at bottom, is quite fragile. If therapy still has a role to play, it is to strengthen and mature the Ego so that it can support Being play out its hand. Jung viewed the Ego's weakness flowing from its bifurcated situation. Whereas primates experience only Self, humans experience both Ego and Self with Ego the manager of consciousness and processor of the personal unconscious. Self, as a more dynamic agent, is holder of the instinctual template, roster of archetypes and collective unconscious. Although brittle, the Ego is the mainstay of Psychospirituality mostly because it has will at its disposal. Jung outlined the path of Individualization where the Ego works through shadow and complex contents in the unconscious. The goal is to establish contact with Self. If the Ego pursues Individuation, it is likely that the Self will encourage the former through projective means such as dreams. In the Freudian conceptualization the Ego manages Id and Superego urges within the demands of a particular reality. In the Existential school the Ego is tasked to find meaning of Being. Psychospirituality does a bit of all three Schools plus extending contact to the Soul.

If the externalized Spirit intervenes sparsely in human life, the internalized Soul is closely bonded with Ego (in a manner similar to Self being bonded with Ego). In this context the Soul's main interaction with Ego is that of guide; of setting the mark to be achieved. The Soul encourages the Ego to let go of an Ego-based life for a Soul-based life. Each civilization has its example of a Soul-based life for example, Jesus in the Western World and Gautama-Buddha in the Buddhist World. Both examples reflect Soul-based lives. Given the relative low level of the species' collective consciousness few individuals are able to trade-in an Ego-based existence for a Soul-based life. But this should not cause individuals not to try. There is much to gain in trying.

CLOSING

I have not yet arrived as the point of rendering immortality to the internalized Soul but I view it as a metaphysical 'hardcopy' found in Being. If there is a post-death role for Soul, I can visualize it as combining my level of consciousness with the amount previously deposited by the preceding dead in an evolutionary tilling field with the result of increasing the specie's overall level of consciousness. The situation is different with the externalized Spirit that I perceive as a metaphysical hard copy energetic Life Force. The Spirit is there for the evolutionary duration with responsibility to animate and overview evolution. As an external or collective entity, Spirit hovers above my destiny introjecting itself when called for. The Ego awaits the Spirit's comings.

Soul would entertain a close relationship with the Ego were the latter sufficiently conscious. The goal before the Spirit and Soul is to herd the Ego toward Individuation and a Soul-Based existence in order to enlarge the collective conscience. But by advancing the Ego's level of consciousness Soul or Psyche has split itself into two variants: 1) a field of study and therapeutic practice of "Psychology", and 2) "Psyche" (Soul), an internalized metaphysical agent to guide the personal Life Force.

What is often overlooked is the Spirit and Soul's availability to aid Ego in wading through the storms and plots of Life. At the same time, a Death Force lurks around the Ego's Life Force, both biologically and psychologically. This dual threat is due to the bifurcated human nature that give humans a conscious or psychological existence and a veiled Spiritual one. Given this evolutionary situation, the Death Force triumphs biologically (as it does with all other creatures), while at the psychological level the Death Force seeks to weaken with the Ego's Life Force. The Death Force's responses are many but a common one is generating depression. Both Spirit and Soul assistance as well as Death Force interference is the human lot. (Or so is my reckoning.)