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## TRANSFORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF GOD LEADING TO SELF-INITIATION INTO OLD AGE

Lionel Corbett

*The initiatory dream presented here is of a woman about the age of 60 who never had analysis. This woman's dream can be seen as*

*an authentic modern revelation of the objective psyche which makes a contribution to the "New Myth." The dream demonstrates clearly the reciprocal relation between the ego and the Self. They help each other and carry each other's burdens. In a letter Jung writes, "I consciously and intentionally made my life miserable because I wanted God to be alive and free from the suffering man has put on him by loving his own reason more than God's secret intentions" (Psychological Perspectives Spring 1975, p. 12).* NB

*Primarily, the dream concerns the transformation of deity through incarnation, i.e., individuation. The incarnation is also a coniunctio which refers not only to a reconciliation of the male-female polarity but likewise to the union of all opposites. To me the most important feature of the dream is that it informs the dreamer that she is a partner of God and a participant in the drama of divine transformation. This gives her suffering and sacrifice archetypal sanction and roots her in a living myth.* NB

—Edward Edinger, M.D.

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*... the same initiatory patterns are found in the dreams and in the imaginative life both of modern men and of the primitive.*

—Eliade, 1958, p. 131.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**RANSITION into old age has no clear social, psychological or biological demarcation, and like all developmental crises may produce emotional distress. If the individual accepts the challenge, this time provides an opportunity for growth, provided one feels the possibility of mastery and the ego is able to make the necessary sacrifices. Some missed opportunities for development in earlier life can also be reappraised at this time. However, if the additional demands of old age cannot be met, psychosocial decompensation may occur and the personality misses its fulfillment.

Jung points out that old age would not occur unless it had some meaning for the species. Whereas the meaning of the first part of life has to do with ego, career and family development, new and different goals are required in the second half, namely the pursuit of meaning, wholeness and the further creation of consciousness (Jung 1969). Early developmental demands inevitably lead to partial, preferential unfolding of only some aspects of the personality. Ideally, later in life, family and occupational restrictions become less rigid, time is more available, and progressive emotional maturation leads to the relaxation of immature defenses and methods of adaptation. This provides the potential for widening of identity, brought about ultimately by reconnecting with more of the latent potential of the Self which was present at birth, but which had to be sacrificed for the sake of adjustment to circumstances. This period, of crucial importance, is often a difficult time to both enter and adapt to.

Hitherto, the individual has grown accustomed to sequential advancement in social status, with increasing prestige and authority. Now one is asked to accept a role which society devalues, which may have long been dreaded, with new norms and values and the risk of a fall in social status and self-esteem. This crisis is sometimes precipitated by retirement. The so-called "young old," who remains vigorous and engaged, resist the negative social stereotype of deterioration since this is not their experience. In fact, they exemplify exactly the long pre-terminal relatively steady-state period during which decline is minimal and energy and time are available for paying attention to further development. Unfortunately, however, those who are unable to differentiate themselves from our cultural bias may depreciate the very idea of old age and ignore its specific meaning, which simply postpones the transitional crisis for them.

*The Need for Initiation into Old Age*

A major difficulty facing the individual about to move into this period is that there are no adequate social provisions to help with the transition. At a time of turmoil and ambiguity, no clear expectations are defined and many of the skills the person has painstakingly acquired are suddenly much less

relevant. The fact that help with major life transitions is often necessary is evident from pre-technological cultures, where movement into new developmental periods is marked by initiation ceremonies or rites of passage (van Gennep 1960). Although these seem primitive to modern eyes, they perform profoundly important psychological and social functions. For example, such rituals overcome resistance to change, preventing regressive dependency. The culture thereby validates the transition, which impresses the significance of the new status on the initiate and his clan. The rites offer the initiate protection during the uncertainty of the threshold (liminal) period, help predict what to expect, give a new set of symbols for the next part of life, and connect one with the history and tradition of the culture. Finally, the "reborn" individual is re-incorporated into the group with a new role, and with new rights and duties. Biological, social and personal necessities are then integrated. The rites thus protect the emotional health of the initiate and his society by ensuring safe psychological and social development. Successful initiation is essential for spiritual rejuvenation and the attempt to attain a "sanctified mode of being." When this process is successful, the new status has meaning to the person, which helps to mitigate life's harshness. It is no coincidence then, that without such cultural sanction and protection the move into old age may exact a heavy emotional toll; the individual may be unable to emerge from a state of chronic liminality. Jung believed that fear of meeting developmental tasks (failed initiation) is an important cause of emotional disturbance. When transformation is necessary but not forthcoming, when the only security lies in change which cannot occur because of fear, or because no helpful initiation into the new mystery is available, neurosis may supervene. Clinically, one often sees an exacerbation of early neurotic or characterological problems during such threshold periods. The therapist then has to understand the need to be a ritual elder and help initiate the patient into the new status as well as simply working on earlier developmental material. When such outside help is lacking, the developmental imperative may come from within (Henderson 1967).

*Auto Initiation: "The Archetype Motivates from Within"*

To illustrate the existence of Self-initiation into old age, the dream of a 60 year old woman is presented (with her consent), in which she is confronted with startling notions about the nature of God, the meaning and purpose of old age, and the relationship between these two. Personal details are unnecessary except to say that she had a puella "psychology": though she was reluctant to grow, another part of her was struggling to mature, aware of her impending old age. In this situation of tension between two opposing inner claims, the Self provided the necessary, transcendent, symbolic impetus, in the form of this dream—so that the dreamer's individual consciousness could be "reconciled with universal will." The dream illustrates one way in which contact with the

luminous may be healing—the individual feels part of the whole, in a manner which simultaneously resolves her personal inner polarities by including them in a much greater synthesis.

### The Dream

An authoritative male voice informs me that it is going to teach me about the process of aging. A black and white illustration appears before my eyes. It represents the rejuvenated Godhead. Underneath it, alive, is the head of a very old man. A connecting line is drawn from the old man's head to the diagram of the divinity, which consists of an outer elongated square enclosing an inner circle. At the bottom of the circle is a crescent, convex upward. Out of the crescent arise two heads on two almost identical long necks. I know that they share the same body which is not shown. The voice explains that this is an abstract of the rejuvenated Godhead. The right head represents the male aspect and the left the female. I want to know more about it—particularly, more about the feminine aspect of God. The voice ignores that except to remind me that this has been partly explained in a previous dream and would I please now focus on the old man. But I find the Godhead(s) a lot more interesting and I think to myself "God is one, two heads, but one." At the same time, what I have learned in a previous dream flashes through my mind—the awareness that what I am shown here is not God as ultimate reality—which we are not equipped to understand—but either an oversimplified version of that reality or an aspect of divinity that we are able to relate to.

The two heads are in absolute harmony with each other. They look like spirits, ethereal. I perceive their facial expression as autocratic,



blithe, somewhat curious, unemotional. They do not look authoritative, but the voice is. The tops of their heads are shaped like an indented crown with three prongs that I can see on each head. The old man looks quite ordinary and sort of earthy, with reddish skin. The voice explains that in our society we still do not understand the process of aging. The purpose of maturation is to enable the Godhead(s) to rejuvenate. If we could only understand that! When we are born, God is old; when we grow old, God becomes young and when we die, God experiences rebirth. This goes on and on, not in the sense that God is feeding on us but that the whole thing is a natural process which is not yet too well understood. It is absolutely essential that, particularly in old age, we do not lose our connectedness with the Godhead, for otherwise we not only deprive God of our share in His rejuvenation, but may actually disturb the cosmic ecology, which in turn affects us.

The voice makes me understand that whereas ideally we gain wisdom as we grow older, only a few people in fact do so. In the dream, I understand wisdom to be a conglomeration of life experience, a priori and acquired knowledge, and the awareness and acceptance of one's inner child. Only too often the inner child has been lost in the jungle or drowned in the flood or simply forgotten and left behind. To accumulate knowledge per se is not all that important. What is important is that we are connected with divinity and let it live within us—even though it is also outside of us. Belief in the supreme being constellates the inner child and thus furthers the process of divine rejuvenation. If we ignore the divine element—as is man's tendency today—it sinks into itself and ceases to be conscious of itself.

As we grow older, we often "lose the child," and as we do so we are apt to simultaneously sever our ties to the divine. Or, we lose our belief in divinity and starve the child. It sort of goes hand in hand.

I think of some old people I know who have become childish and irritating. The voice picks up on that and says that even though such people have obviously not gained wisdom, their very childishness yet reflects the rejuvenating God. This too is not too well understood but instead of having a condescending attitude towards the child in old people, we would do better to let it be and to have a positive attitude towards it no matter how it manifests. Even if we perceive it as distorted or wounded, we should be aware that it expresses and is linked to the rejuvenation process of the Godhead(s) and that the process should not be interrupted.

The dream voice also indicated that the birth and death process are actually the same, except that as little children we seem to be contained in the divine element while in old age we are apparently

expected to be a container for divinity. I reflect in the dream that old people ought to be less subject to the tension of the opposites—particularly of the masculine and feminine principle—and therefore more apt to reflect (unperturbed) the divine image that has been presented to me.

This dream is both a miniature description of the individuation process in late life and a visual mandala of aging. On the level of the collective, it imbues aging with considerable spiritual, psychological and social significance. The dream is composed of multiple, intertwined themes.

#### *Themes Characteristic of Initiation Ceremonies* (Eliade, 1958)

The dreamer is brought into relation with an image of divine unity, which is one of the purposes, meanings and effects of initiation. Knowledge of the sacred is revealed; a hierophany occurs. Like Job, the dreamer actually sees. Thus related to divinity, the individual can transcend the personal, and at the same time experience her individuality. The dream illustrates Eliade's point that initiation gives death a positive value. Death prepares for spiritual birth into a mode of being not subject to destruction by time. Being reborn indicates the attainment of another mode of being—becoming new and consecrated. Psychological transformation is often depicted in dreams and rituals by death—rebirth imagery, which is also a powerful image of healing. At the same time, the dream emphasizes the transitory nature of chronological time and images an ongoing relationship to sacred time and eternity. The individual's life becomes a necessary part of sacred history. Should the aging dreamer suffer from death anxiety, her existence is now placed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Psychologically, the dream's overall effect should be to move the dreamer into a new consciousness, one more adaptive for later life.

#### *Bisexuality and Androgyny*

Androgyny is visually the central theme of the dream, and is clearly of major importance in its overall message. Accordingly, some aspects of androgyny specifically relevant to the dream image are reviewed and enlarged upon here. (Following Jung in various papers [e.g. 1970a] fuller discussions of the subject have been provided by Singer [1976] and from a Taoist viewpoint by Colgrave [1979].

Initiation ceremonies often include ritual transformation into the opposite sex. Among shamans such transvestism is common, sometimes with a relationship to a celestial spouse. The combination in one person of earth (femininity) and sky (masculinity) enables the individual to act as an intermediary between these realms (Eliade 1972). Hermaphroditic representa-

tions of mythic gods are common in many cultures and may be an archaic form of the idea of divine bi-unity (Eliade 1958). In fact, Dionysus was not only bisexual but is often represented as a divine child, which is interesting in view of the emphasis on the connection of the child to God in this woman's dream. Astrologically, bisexuality is depicted as Gemini. Those born under this sign are said to suffer from the tension of internal polarities such as rational-intuitive, male-female, transpersonal-earth bound, light and dark. Intellectually, they are "mercurial." In alchemy Mercurius (sometimes as an androgynous figure) symbolizes the making of bridges—he connects male and female and other apparent opposites, assisting in transformation. In Plato's *Symposium* man is initially created in the form of a sphere with two bodies and two sexes, and is separated, interestingly, because of hubris—suggesting that appropriate humility needs to be developed for full humanity to be experienced. In the *Kabbala*, not only does divinity have masculine and feminine aspects, but the original Adam is androgynous. This suggests that the masculine and feminine potentials of divine man were in equilibrium in the soul, but when Eve was removed their divine completeness was lost. In the Christian mystical tradition, Christ is also depicted as an androgyne.

The hermaphrodite and the androgyne are not synonymous. Jung (1976) notes that the hermaphrodite precedes individuation. This is an important psychological statement. As elaborated by Poncé (1983), the distinction is that the hermaphrodite is an image of masculinity and femininity joined in a sexual body, of the unconscious union of opposites, while the androgynous state is an image of their union in the archetypal realm of the subtle body, and of differentiated, conscious access to both modalities. (Note the dream image of the heads without a physical body rising out of the moon.) Poncé points out that the hermaphrodite (with its emphasis on sexuality) is given, whilst the androgyne is achieved. This process is reflected in several creation myths, as well as in the development of the individual. Its intermediate stage is of divided masculine and feminine consciousness. The baby is born with relatively undifferentiated sexuality; maturity separates the opposites in the physical body whilst old age demands their conscious psychological integration in a body which has become less clearly differentiated.

The concept is further found in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas: "For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." This is not a sexist remark; rather it points out the need to develop androgynous consciousness. Several other gnostic writers emphasize the masculine and feminine characteristics of divinity, that self-knowledge is knowledge of God, and that humanity itself manifests the divine life. The Gospel of Thomas further reports that Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is not a physical place

and does not occur at a future time but is found inside the individual. The "kingdom" is actually an image of transformed consciousness. According to this account, when the disciples said: "Shall we as children enter the Kingdom?" Jesus replied, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below and when you make the male and female one and the same . . . then you will enter the Kingdom" (Robinson 1977). In like manner, Lao-Tzu says: "He who knows the male and yet cleaves to what is female becomes like a ravine receiving all things under heaven. Being such a ravine, he has the eternal power which leaves not and he returns to the state of infancy." Being in the Tao resembles the state of infancy (Jung 1971).

The alchemists were also preoccupied with the problem of uniting the masculine and the feminine. The culmination of the great work (psychologically equivalent to individuation) consists in the production of the perfect androgyne, an image of wholeness and the "coniunctio oppositorum": a sacred marriage represented by the union of opposites such as heaven and earth, sun and moon, mercury and sulphur, masculine and feminine—often symbolized by joined male/female figures, the two-faced head of the king and queen or the red man and his white wife. To produce the philosopher's stone represents the conscious realization of the Self—the opposites united, the sum of all things and the key to knowledge. The work requires that these inner opposite qualities be purified (made conscious) and related to each other within the individual. Perhaps the dreamer has difficulty with some aspect of the masculine-feminine polarity, and needs to become aware of the androgynous nature of the Self, portrayed in the dream as a male-female coniunctio with two heads in "absolute harmony" with each other.

In various traditions androgyny symbolizes supreme identity, the level of nonmanifest being or the source of manifestation (Zolla 1981). Clearly, in this context "masculine" and "feminine" are not intended to be identified with male and female. They represent psychological and spiritual principles in their own right. Of all possible opposites which might have been represented in her dream, the fact that these are chosen suggests that they are of major, possibly supreme, importance, at least to this individual. The dream image supports the idea that both are found in the soul of individuals of either sex and have their divine analogues. Their essential nature, however, is not easy to grasp, and since they are aspects of divinity we may never be able to articulate them. Years of cultural conditioning may have obscured our vision and preferentially conditioned us to associate certain attributes with men or women. On close examination, however, the usual stereotyped descriptions do not coincide with experience.

Typically, generations of tradition ascribe to masculinity such decisive and goal-oriented properties as penetrating, initiating, classifying, organizing and discriminating, and to femininity the attributes of receiving, accepting,

relating, harmonizing and nurturing. Another cliché is that masculine consciousness is sharply focused, in contrast to the diffuse awareness of the feminine, and so on. We should be less ready to accept such concretizations, since it is perfectly possible that each of these processes may be bipolar, possessing both masculine and feminine forms, each with specific qualities, which need to act in unison for their optimum expression. For example, only (patriarchal) convention and tradition tell us that when a woman is being assertive and logical this is her "masculinity"—perhaps such behavior is authentically feminine if it comes from her own essence and is not simply the result of introjects. (I am indebted to Marion Woodman for this insight.) Witness the enormous variation in the behavior of mythic gods and goddesses. To equalize the core metaphors, symbolically women may inseminate and men may gestate. It seems unnecessary to always differentiate between masculine and feminine behaviors. Furthermore, the unconscious of men is commonly said to be essentially feminine and to be so personified (Neumann 1954). However, surely men also possess profoundly authentic, unconscious masculinity.

Perhaps the most subtle definitions are provided by Miriam and José Arguelles (1977). They describe the feminine as the quality of all-accommodating space, which is "simply there, without conditions, either positive or negative. It is open, all pervasive and without origin." It is the unborn quality within experience; its essence is the cosmic womb in which all things may exist no matter how mutually contradictory. The feminine provides the "open and uncreated ground for the constant revelation and display of the phenomenal world." The masculine principle operates within this space, provoked to respond by the openness of the feminine. The masculine is form and content, encompassing the total range of personal experience and emotion. It is the essence of everything related to and contained by the unceasingly fertile, "unborn" feminine, which explores its spaciousness and articulates its endlessness. "The play of unborn feminine space and unconditional masculine response describes two cosmic principles. The unceasing interpenetration of these principles allows communication and meaningful activity to take place." From this interplay arises creativity. In the Arguelles highly evolved model, the union of masculine and feminine is imagined as the inseparability of discriminating awareness and skillful compassionate behavior. It allows us to grow old without an ultimate resting point, or attachment to fixed ideas, by accepting confusion as "the working base for discovering greater warmth and intelligence."

Another oversimplification equates spirit with masculinity and soul with femininity. However, any archetype (including those considered feminine) is an ordering and hence spiritual principle. In the psychoid realm from which they emerge, the archetypes may be beyond such divisions, only taking on masculine or feminine characteristics in the human psyche, in this time and



space. Spirit is experienced within the individual soul, which is the organ or (feminine) space of receptivity; but soul also transduces spirit, that is, soul detects and transforms the energy of spirit into meaning and value. It does so, for example, by casting the experience of spirit into image, metaphor and language, or by its response to the numinous. Soul therefore also has active, "masculine" qualities. Jung in fact suggests (1966) that the anima, linking body and spirit, is hermaphroditic. In the realm of (the body), structural differences define sexuality, although body itself—being matter—is thought of as feminine. It is certainly the container for experience. But the fact that our bodies are either male or female may be simply because our evolution is as incomplete physically as it is psychologically. Perhaps what ultimately confers psychological masculinity and femininity is the quality (state of development) of the embodied soul, which is able to act as a resonating end-organ for spirit because of its similar nature (but to the extent that the soul is not yet androgynous, one side of spirit's yin-yang polarity predominates in the soul's experience). The net affect of these interactions is that in any given aging individual certain spirit-soul-body harmonics predominate, and are typically broadly masculine or feminine; there is clearly a spectrum of possibilities between these extremes. Masculine and feminine can only be described in relation to each other, and do not exist individually. Perhaps any process in the psyche has both masculine and feminine aspects which need to be integrated to give birth to the full expression of that process. These principles behave like parents, and only in the realm of the transpersonal are they undivided. Anima and animus not only have the same root, but are part of the same tree. They complement and compensate for each other within each individual.

In spite of such problems of definition and mechanism, we remain in intuitive agreement with the notion of a dialectic polarity, yin and yang, both psychologically and in nature. All of life, not simply humanity, has masculine and feminine energy. Their union in this dream seems to occur within an individual psyche rather than between individuals. This birthing leads to the production of an inner "child"—a new potential. Indeed, the tension between such polarities seems necessary for the creation of consciousness. As we age, if we continue to create consciousness, we birth more of this child inside us. As Edinger (1984) explains, etymologically consciousness means "knowing with"—"withness" implies coniunctio, perhaps of any opposites—logos and eros, masculine and feminine, matter and spirit, *senex* and *puer*. Part of the power of the dream described here is created by its uniting of several opposites, a process which creates consciousness, which in turn allows further discernment, or (paradoxically) separation of the constituent parts of a situation. The dream image illustrates that there is no antagonism but rather mutuality between the sacrality of masculinity and femininity in developed androgynous consciousness. This may be yet another way in which the

numinous heals. What is missing in the personal is provided by revealing its divine counterpart to the individual's consciousness, which is thereby expanded. This makes it more complete and improves its balance. Discovering aspects of God leads to self-discovery.

A practical, incarnational aspect of the development of androgynous consciousness is described by Colgrave as the capacity to really love. This is a poorly understood process consisting of both personal and transpersonal aspects which have to be integrated and mediated by the individual, although it is not within individual control. Love happens to us, and comes and goes for no obvious reason. On the personal level, for love to be mature we have to find in ourselves what is otherwise only experienced in or via the other person. He then becomes needed in a different way. We see him for what he really is, instead of constantly seeing an unknown or otherwise unavailable part of one's self (narcissistic love), or an aspect of our parents that still possesses us (neurotic love). Although projections themselves are not love, they seem to act as vehicles which carry love, allowing us to experience it consciously. When they are withdrawn the potential for love still exists independently. As Jacobini (1973) puts it, when we do not project we then love realistically with conscious devotion to the other, without possessiveness. This requires considerable conscious work, but when the projections are integrated our own strength is discovered, and we can deal with the contrasexual in its more powerful and evolved form. To use Chardin's analogy, union is different from adolescent absorption (or, psychodynamically, a state of fusion). Real love differentiates the aging individual. At the same time, it opens one to increased consciousness. Singer correctly suggests that whereas romantic love is enclosed within the personal relationship, transpersonal love is essentially androgynous in nature. Only through love can these opposites of masculinity and femininity be transcended. In the androgyne masculine and feminine energies are (in Singer's terms) combined but not confused. As we grow older we realize our individuality through androgyny.

Perhaps such intermingling of the personal and the transpersonal aspect of love is another way of understanding: ". . . let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God . . . for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). The necessity for human consciousness to bring divine love to fruition is also indicated by: ". . . if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). For the ego to achieve the difficult task of becoming a channel for divine love, it must try not to interfere with or handicap the process with its own needs.

Obviously, there is no direct mention of love in the dream. Therefore, if this particular amplification of the meaning of androgynous union is correct, and not due to personal distortion, finding love in the image is a further example of the result of adding human reflection to what is divinely given. Then not only is the classical notion correct that love leads to enlightenment, but knowledge.

knowledge of God (enlightenment) leads to love. Such knowledge is here obtained by direct experience (as revelation) rather than by adherence to a particular dogmatic system. Those aspects of divinity are revealed which are most relevant to, or needed by, the dreamer's personal psychology.

The subjective experience of androgynous consciousness has been described by Grof (1976) as one which may occur to individuals undergoing LSD experiences. Since these are known to amplify our intrinsic psychology, the experience clearly exists as a potential in the human unconscious. Apparently, therefore, the archetype of androgyny was activated in the aging dreamer when it became necessary to further her development. Perhaps her concept of God was excessively tied to a traditional masculine—*senex* idea, and she had undervalued both her own femininity and the divine feminine, for which lack of awareness the dream is compensatory.

### The Geometrical Forms

Since antiquity, geometrical forms have been invested with psychological and symbolic meaning (Pennick 1980). They are images of the structure of creation and their qualities can be understood as representative of aspects of the universe. Each form has been endowed with unique properties in esoteric symbolism, predicated on the Hermetic notion of "as above, so below," the correspondence of the macrocosm with the microcosm. Nature is created in an infinite hierarchical series of analogous structures, a continuum differing in size but not in principle and quality, so that the whole can be found in any part. Thus is man in the image of God—an implicit overall meaning of the dream image.

The square is an expression of quaternarity, firmness, stability, honesty, integrity and an image of organization and construction. It refers to matter and rationality and is an old image of the order and stability of the world. Four elements, four seasons, four stages of life, and the four corners of the earth suggest God made manifest in creation. It may also represent the fixity of death as opposed to the dynamic circle of life and movement. Because the square has limits, it represents form, permanence and stability. In the dream, the square has limits, it represents form, permanence and stability. In the dream, the square is elongated vertically—perhaps to indicate the connection upward, to spirit, in the dreamer's psychology.

The circle is often an image of the sun, of heaven and perfection and hence of the deity or of the Self in its impersonal or potential aspect. According to Jung, the circle corresponds to an ultimate state of oneness, in contrast to the square which is an image of the plural state of man without inner unity. The circle is also an image of time in the sense of cyclicality, recurrence, birth and death, infinity or eternity, time enclosing space, timelessness with no beginning or end, and of spacelessness (since it has no above or below). It is

zero, the origin, emptiness and totality. As the sun, the circle is masculine and spirit, but as the soul and the encircling water, it is feminine and maternal. The dream picture also has a crescent-moon image from which the necks arise, suggesting body and the feminine. Yet another conjunction (*solis et lunae*) can thus be discerned.

Squaring the circle was an alchemical preoccupation about the relationship between the circle, or cosmic symbol of heaven, and the earth as square. It depicts the union of opposites into a higher synthesis—the material realm contained within totality. As the Rosarium puts it, "make a circle of the man and the woman, draw out of this a square, and out of the square a triangle. Make a circle and you will have the philosopher's stone" (Jung 1968b). Squaring the circle produces the philosopher's stone, and in the process the two sexes become one, which is necessary for the achievement of Selfhood. Although other images of conjunction suggest a kind of shared Self, the totality image of the dream diagram (with its separate crowns which are integral parts of the heads) implies the maintenance of the height of individuality within unity—part of the paradox of the androgynous Self. In the hermetic tradition, a squared circle represented salt, among whose symbolic meanings are soul, understanding, wisdom and relationship (Jung 1970b).

The Triangle: the diagram's dotted line indicates an implicit triangle which is a symbol of the Godhead in many traditions, for example, of the Trinity in Christianity. For Pythagoras it represented wisdom. Traditionally, since it was firmly based below yet points upward, it was an image of femininity. It indicates a relationship between the contents at its corners. The empty space on the right presumably implies the presence of the dreamer. "The right is the male and the left is the female"—each connected to its appropriate human head. Spirit and body (or body and subtle body) are depicted with no split between them.

Alchemically, the triangle apex represented fire, an ancient symbol of spiritual energy, the energy of life, the presence of God and the means by which matter transforms, regenerates and purifies. Fire is needed to transform male and female into the androgyne. The alchemists also thought of fire as a unifying and stabilizing factor. In the shamanic and yogic traditions, religious energy (sacred power) burns. Both the shaman and the alchemist are masters of fire. Mystics of all traditions are "apt to feel the supernatural warmth to the degree that, each upon his appointed plane of being, they surpass the profane human condition and become embodiments of the sacred" (Eliade 1967).

Therefore, the dream image unifies body, soul and spirit and is probably an indication of the relationship between humanity and divinity, depicting what is usually called the ego-Self axis, although ego-Self analogue would here be a better description. Apparently the wisdom of the feminine, or inspiration by the holy spirit, relates the two. Interestingly, the apex of the

triangle is precisely at the point where the two spirit heads are joined, perhaps at the center of the entire mandala. The human appears to be an emanation from this divine center, experienced as masculine or feminine as it incarnates within the human soul. Humanity cannot yet contain the divine opposites in their undivided state.

### The Child

The child is often described by Jung as an image of the Self (Jung 1968b), expressing the idea of psychic wholeness. It conveys a sense of the future and of becoming, of potential and new hope. The dream defines wisdom in part as "the awareness and acceptance of one's inner child." An immediate meaning is the need to retain open and fresh vision, to be able to see things for the first time, to be open to new experience, to retain the capacity for naivete and learning, and to know truth when we see it. Without a relationship to the inner child we cannot experience excitement, wonder and awe, which we sometimes need to experience the numinous. The child in us is not bound by time and if healthy is not too obsessively disciplined. It acts out of spontaneous love and not power motives. The healthy child has ready access to fantasy, the imagination, and archetypal reality. It helps us to bridge that world and everyday reality. Without relation to the child we tend to be disconnected from the unconscious. It does, however, need help with boundaries. Like all children, this inner child may become destructive if ignored or maltreated and may die if it is not loved. According to the dream, childish (instead of child-like) old people have been overwhelmed by the inner child. It is living them out, its intensity too great for their insufficiently developed ego consciousness. Even this poorly understood process is of value as an illustration of the concept that the archetype insists on its own process with or without our conscious cooperation. In the latter case, what results often looks like pathology. Perhaps the severe regression of *senile dementia* is the ultimate example of the consequences of ignoring the inner child. This illness is always experienced as a terrible catastrophe. However, there is a hint in the dream that, if understood in a certain light, dementia too expresses an archetypal reality, albeit in an unconscious form.

Children are common images in the dreams and imaginal life of the elderly. Often such figures behave like long forgotten aspects of the personality, left-behind inner figures who were never given the opportunity to develop. To rediscover this child is to reconnect with childhood wounds. As at any age, dealing with them usually proves painful but is necessary for growth to continue. These early wounds remind us of our parents, and our early attempts to take care of their difficulties and struggle with their unconsciousness. As children, this was often too difficult, and sometimes we sacrificed important aspects of ourselves in the process of meeting their needs.

Late in life, we not only may be able to parent our own wounded inner child, but also understand our parents much better, and deal with their suffering at less cost to our adult personalities—that is, become a parent to the inner sick parent. When this is achieved it has a redemptive, healing quality.

Connecting with the inner child is considered so important that "as we lose the child we are apt to sever our ties to the divine." This is also because child-aspects of the psyche represent part of the potential of the Self which were present at birth and which have never been realized. If the ego crystallizes around a fixed level of defensive development, it loses its permeability to new revelations and to the pressure of the Self. By contrast, "belief" implies an attitude of openness, and results in behavior and feelings which would not otherwise occur. Jung emphasizes the fact that God needs man to become conscious of him. This dream also suggests that our attitude is all important for the furtherance of this process. If the ego loses its belief in the transpersonal, and its capacity for play, it is not likely to experience the continuing unfolding of the personality which otherwise occurs in later life. Thus the dreamer is urged to move on but at the same time to retain her connection with the child. This will prevent her from falling prey to fixed rules, rigid thinking and all the other *senex* characteristics she fears. Just as there is an inner child (or archetype of the divine child), so there is also an inner elder (or archetype of aging and wisdom). Just as the child can be understood as hemaphroditic, so the old person becomes androgynous. This may be another meaning of the phrase "God gets younger": the Self in late life becomes as bisexual as the Self of childhood, but now with the addition of consciousness.

### The Creation of Consciousness in Late Life

"God gets younger" further refers to the fact that the Self in late life becomes more similar to the primal Self which originally existed, containing all potentials, at birth—without the boundaries or categories which later ego-consciousness found necessary. They both represent the union of opposites, but in late life the Self is more fully incarnated (actualized in the world) and transformed by consciousness. Individuation means both incarnation and differentiation; both are enhanced by progressive Self-revelation giving birth to new consciousness, which is itself necessary for individuation, in a circular process. Whenever an ego position dies, a little more of the Self is born ("when we die, God experiences rebirth"). Whereas the Self in the baby is old (Jung's "2 million year old man") it is unconscious. The developing ego allows the Self to be born constantly by realizing its potential. This may be a psychological understanding of Eckhart's idea that God is born in us (Jung, 1966). The Self births ego in childhood, and ego returns the compliment in old age: "I am God's son and He is mine" (Silesius, quoted by Jung 1970). The



rejuvenation of God seems to be equated with the birth of new consciousness, which according to Jung (1966), is equivalent to the renewal of life. According to the dream, this process is so important that its failure "disturbs the cosmic ecology," emphasizing the importance of mankind in the overall scheme of things. It is noteworthy that the diagram represents the rejuvenated God-head—the result only of the successful application of the process. Therefore, if we take old age seriously, it confers an enormous responsibility. For, according to the dream, without man's efforts God's energy is diminished, and divinity "sinks into itself and ceases to be conscious of itself." In Jungian terms, we need to help the creator become conscious of His creation. The ego can then become a model of the Self—and man thereby becomes deified. Relevant to this process is Dr. James Hall's suggestion to me that as the Self presses for the ego to individuate, the Self becomes simpler—i.e., more "schematic"—because less and less of it remains to become actualized. Perhaps this is why it is able in later life to represent itself in such a relatively simple way. The dream illustrates Jung's notion of the "relativity of God"—that is, "a reciprocal and essential relation between man and God, whereby man can be understood as a function of God, and God as a psychological function of man" (Jung 1966). NB

For those interested in the theory of reincarnation, "when we die, God is reborn" also refers to the idea that the Self (Atman) reincarnates in order to regenerate itself. It chooses its particular lifetime for further development to occur. The ego's responsibility is to realize who it is, and this furthers the process. NB

#### THE DREAMER'S SECOND BIRTH: HER PERSONAL JOB-EXPERIENCE

Apparently in response to his suffering, Job experiences God in a whirlwind, and hears His voice, and is initiated into a deeper understanding of the mystery of good and evil. Raine (1982) points out that, for Job, God is now no longer hearsay but actual vision—an experience, not just a belief. Job had hitherto been unconscious of the nature of the God existing within him. Now, through vision, deity becomes conscious, at the same time uniting his inner and outer worlds. Quoting William Blake, Raine points out that good and evil are transcended in Job's realization that God is beyond his personal categories, and that nature is alive with God. This, then, is Job's second, or spiritual, birth, which abolishes the spiritual pride (or unconscious grandiosity) that, according to Blake, was the original cause of his suffering. His vision of God makes questions irrelevant. His inner conflict, coinciding with painful outer events, is healed by contact with the numinous. NB

Analogously, the dreamer experiences a paradigmatic, quantum shift in her consciousness. She sees a transformed image of God, which resolves

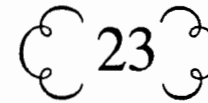
various antinomies which are of personal importance. To see on this higher level is to be at that level of consciousness: "Seeing provides a nondual basis of communication in which the awakened masculine responds to the self-existing feminine" (Arguelles 1977). Curiously, the purely visual elements—the "spirit" heads—are not especially powerful, perhaps because they are so diagrammatic. But the dream voice carries a level of authority beyond all doubt (Jung 1986b). The dreamer sees and hears that God includes and transcends masculinity and femininity, that youth and age are inseparable, that birth and death are two threshold aspects of a unitary process which endlessly renews itself, and above all that human consciousness is an integral ingredient of the entire opus.

In 1959, Jung wrote: "we are going to contact spheres of a not yet transformed God when our consciousness begins to extend into the sphere of the unconscious. . . . Individuation and individual existence are indispensable for the transformation of God. . . ." I suggest that the elaboration of the dream image in this paper is just such an example of how conscious work on any image of God that we discover in the unconscious transforms that image. Such work enables us to partake in the continuing incarnation (Jung 1959). In fact, human consciousness either brings about or is essential to incarnation. It is even arguable that consciousness is synonymous with incarnation—the more we have of it, the more we realize our divinity.

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## OLD AGE AND DEATH

*Jane Hollister Wheelwright*

*In her essay, "Old Age and Death," Jane Hollister Wheelwright, a Jungian analyst for over forty years, reaps the fruit of an active life. Even in her old age she advises herself: "Never let an old horse lie down." Self-aware, candid, anecdotal, salted with wisdom and gentle humor, her remarks manifest the wisdom of feminine elderhood. Although she protests, "Don't expect me to be able to speak for you, for I am not an expert in this field," you will be not only sympathetically lured but also intellectually enlightened by her personal observations regarding the 'twilight years.'*

*Wheelwright stresses the need to let go of one's ego as one enters old age, because preparing for death is like preparing for a journey to a foreign country where one doesn't know what to expect, but where one knows somehow that it is necessary to cut down on the sheer quantity of one's "baggage" in order to make that trip a success. One must decrease one's stress-laden concerns in favor of a greater concentration on what she calls the "long view." Her article gives apt advice not only to those of us who are approaching old age but also to those of us who must still face the possibility of dying young; we do well to listen carefully.*

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**M**Y aim in this paper is both to convey to you some personal experiences of my old age, as well as thoughts about death. Certainly experiences vary enormously, and there must be about as many versions of old age as there are old people. Yet perhaps out of our pooled experiences we might pin down a few generalizations. Also, we should consider that our fantasies about what is