

It is my intention in this essay to point out some significant parallels between Existential Philosophy and Jungian Psychology. Furthermore, I will demonstrate the ways in which such a comparison reveals the existentially 'religious' aspect of individual psychical development and thereby points to the appropriateness of an Existentialist Psychotherapy that is inclusive of spirituality. Carl Jung himself was obviously influenced by Existentialist thinkers such as Nietzsche, whom he quotes regularly in his writings, but while Jung's theories only imply the ways in which Existentialist thought can be interpreted psychologically and religiously, I feel that this implication is germane to understanding the Jungian conception of the process of Individuation and its applicability in modern Western experience and therapeutic practice. With reference primarily to writings by Edward Edinger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul Tillich, I will therefore be exploring this correlation more explicitly.

In order to fully appreciate the contemporary value of the Jungian psychological model, we must first acknowledge some of the relatively recent currents of change in the ethos of North American culture. It has been generally observed that the secularization of modern Western society has led to an overall decline in orthodox religiosity, and this has been largely interpreted as a decrease in our reliance on spiritual explanations of the world due to the increasingly widespread understanding and acceptance of rational scientific answers to questions previously addressed by religion. Globalization has further contributed to secularization by introducing alternative belief-systems into our popular culture, thus allowing for the relativization of worldviews and the de-sacrilization of traditional values. It is the experience and opinion of some that religious belief-systems are currently threatened by the scientific worldview which offers a verification principle where religion offers only 'blind faith'.

For many North Americans, the traditional Judeo-Christian symbolism is now felt to be reified and limiting in its patriarchal, overly personified and literalized representation of the divine. Such narrow and dogmatic manifestations of religion have clashed terribly with the increasingly pervasive and persuasive conceptions of reality offered by science. It would seem that the Nietzschean assertion that "God is dead" still reverberates in our cultural psyche and has

gradually led, along with the technological and feminist revolutions, to widespread questioning of traditional religious attitudes by an increasingly skeptical populace. Although this may be the dominant consciousness of our secular Western culture, we must recognize that it has been bought at the price of severe anomie and ontological anxiety.

There is a current trend, however, that sees individuals and groups within North American society once again seeking spiritual guidance and creating new forms of belief and worship where traditional religious frameworks are found to be inappropriate to a modern ontology. Religiosity is not in fact declining in today's Western society, but is merely evolving into forms of spirituality which encompass and address the existential concerns arising in the context of present cultural and psychological reality that includes the pervasive but alienating emphasis on science and technology. Orthodox conceptions of science and religion and their relationship to one another are being revolutionized and a new vision of the metaphysical unity of naturalistic and theistic worldviews is being engendered.

In an essay entitled Science-and-Religion and the Search for Meaning¹, Philip Hefner describes the 'New Age' approach to the religion/science interface as:

...a postmodern perspective...committed to constructing new overarching frameworks that function very much like myths and metaphysics in former times. They are postmodern in the sense that old frameworks are awash and are oppressive to the extent that they are identified with particular groups and thus are not available to everybody who is now a citizen of the global village (Ibid:311-312).

Along with many others, Hefner has recognized that the experiences of naturalism and theism fulfill "two basic human needs... [those] for credible understandings of the world and our lives in it...and for indicators of the ultimate meaning or significance of these understandings" (Ibid:316). This recognition is essential to the formulation of a doctrine of humanity, of life and of Being, which is broad enough to provide a philosophical grounding for contemporary Psychotherapy.

¹ Hefner, Philip. In Zygon Journal of Religion and Science, Vol.31, No.2. Joint Publication Board of Zygon: Chicago, IL., 1996.

I have so far been focusing on the issue of religiosity in our times because I feel strongly that the postmodern 'psychologized' form of spirituality emerging from the dialectic between religion and science is significant in its potential capacity to heal the ontological anxieties which become augmented in the breakdown of established metaphysical explanatory constructs. I have attempted to suggest that secularization does not in fact imply the demise of spirituality, but only of traditional conceptions of religion. To my mind, Nietzsche's call for the "death" of the Christian God was not prompted by his atheism but by his realization of the need for a subversion of ossified religious forms. It is in order to encourage humanity to transcend the overly literal interpretations of God that we are informed of His death by Nietzsche's Madman, who cries out "Whither is God... *we have killed Him - you and I*" (Oaklander, p99)².

Because God cannot be scientifically proven to exist, we must admit that it may be the case that He does not. Nietzsche wants humanity to take responsibility for the fact that it is we *ourselves*, not some external God, who are the locus of control for the choices we make in our lives and the values which dictate those choices. By claiming as fact that "God is dead", Nietzsche invites us to examine within ourselves how we might deal with the resulting sense of absolute autonomy in free will and self-determination. The death of God implies that we have the option to behave in whatever manner we choose and thus to become whomever we choose. Nietzsche sees such existential freedom as potentially both exhilarating and terrifying, requiring us to overcome our terror in the exhilaration of self-affirmation. Assuming that God has never actually 'lived', anywhere other than in the human psyche, Nietzsche cannot mean that God is *literally* dead. The only way in which we can have 'killed' God is if we have killed our belief that God empirically exists. This is what Nietzsche says we have done, at least those of us who are willing and able to be honest with ourselves.

Nietzsche insists that those who believe in the external existence of God have mistaken their subjective truth for objective reality. Along with other Existentialists such as Kierkegaard,

² Oaklander, Nathan L. Existentialist Philosophy An Introduction 2nd Ed. Prentice-Hall Inc.: Upper Saddle River, NJ., 1996.

Heidegger, and Sartre, Nietzsche is a subjectivist who believes that all we can really know about the world with any certainty is what each of us perceives and how those perceptions are interpreted and acted upon by us as subjective individuals. From Kierkegaard's viewpoint, this implies that if I choose to believe that God exists I will live my life accordingly and thus God exists for me, regardless of whether or not He in fact exists out there in the world. Nietzsche, on the other hand, sees no need for a concept of God for those who can accept that there is no divine morality external to us which would universally dictate what is Good or Evil. Thus, living one's life according to a subjective belief in God amounts to the same thing as living according to one's own godliness. As we will see, Jung was obviously very much influenced by this way of thinking about God.

For Jung, religion is an external projection of the unconscious psychological reality of unity and wholeness. Jung's model of the psyche proposes the existence of certain "universal archetypes" within a "collective unconscious", which he sees as 'divine' in the broadest sense of the term. Edward Edinger, in his book Ego and Archetype³, describes this aspect of Jung's theory as follows:

...the individual psyche is not just a product of personal experience. It also has a pre-personal and transpersonal dimension which is manifested in universal patterns and images such as are found in all the world's religions and mythologies (Ibid:3).

The individual Ego (the personal conscious) and Id (the personal unconscious) are therefore not identical with the totality of the human subject. Jung holds that there is a central, ordering archetype, that of the "Self", which encompasses and structures all aspects of the psyche as a whole and is a manifestation of the collective unconscious of humanity. As Edinger describes:

...the Ego is the seat of *subjective* identity while the Self is the seat of *objective* identity. The Self is thus the supreme psychic authority and subordinates the Ego to it. The Self is most simply described as the inner empirical deity and is identical with the *imago Dei* (Ibid).

³ Edinger, Edward F. Shambhala Publications Inc.: Boston, Mass., 1972.

Essentially then, 'God' can be understood to be the projection of the archetypal 'Self'. For Jung, the various universal archetypes of the psyche represent aspects of the Self, and the process which he calls "Individuation" (Ibid:7) is enacted through a dialogue between the Ego and the archetypes of the unconscious, which thereby allows for the conscious integration of previously repressed aspects of the Self. Jung sees this developmental process, which ideally leads to Individuation in the second half of life, as being teleological in nature.

According to Jung's model, the psyche of the human infant is not divided into conscious and unconscious realms because the Ego has yet to differentiate from the psychological whole. The inchoate Ego is therefore completely identified with the archetypal Self, so that the infant's awareness is one of passive "inflation" in a total unity with the divine. In this state, the infant experiences a completely un-selfconscious sense of satisfaction and omnipotence which is impossible for an adult to comprehend because it is pre-ideational. Nevertheless, it is the unconscious memory of this blissful state, indelibly etched into the psyche of every human being, that gives rise to its representation in religious and mythological symbolism and creates the impetus for our psychological development towards actualized Individuation. The experiential loss of this original unity through the differentiation of the conscious Ego, while painfully alienating, is an essential psychological step. To remain too long in the inflated infantile state creates an over-identification of the Ego with the Self and thereby interrupts the healthy development of consciousness for which, according to Jung, the disidentification of Ego and Self is required.

In Edinger's opinion, children unconsciously project their archetypal Self onto the primary caregiver (Ibid:39), so that parental permissiveness inflates the Ego's connection to the Self, while discipline alienates the Ego from the Self (Ibid:12). An imbalance between permissiveness and discipline will therefore likely cause the developing Ego to become overly identified with, or overly alienated from, the unconscious Self. Edinger has devised a diagrammatic representation of the cyclical process of Ego development in the first half of life, which he describes as follows:

Psychic growth involves a series of inflated or heroic acts. These provoke rejection and are followed by alienation, repentance, restitution and renewed inflation (Ibid:41-42).

By adulthood, parental permissiveness and discipline, if these have been well-balanced, are replaced with a basic acceptance of the Ego by the inner Self, affording the Ego a sense of ontological security and a fundamental capacity to learn and grow from rejections by the outer environment. The point of contact between the Ego and the Self is called, in Edinger's terminology, the "Ego-Self axis" and it is seen as the "vital connecting link...that ensures the integrity of the Ego" (Ibid:6). Edinger describes the intact Ego-Self axis as offering a "foundation, structure and security to the Ego" which then "provides energy, interest, meaning and purpose" to existence (Ibid:43). However, if the Ego-Self axis has been damaged during the primary identification with the caregiver, the individual will experience a lack of self-acceptance, especially when they are rejected by the environment. Edinger asserts that "the result is emptiness, despair, meaninglessness and in extreme cases psychosis or suicide" (Ibid). I would have us note that these are the precise symptoms described by Existentialists as arising from ontological anxiety.

As long as the Ego-Self axis remains undamaged, not overwhelmed by over-permissiveness or severed by over-discipline, then the process of psychological development allows for the requirement that there be a gradual separation of Ego and Self in order for an eventual *rapprochement* to be possible in the final Individuation phase. It is as a result of this dissociation of the Ego from the Self, implying and implied by the growth of consciousness, that the Ego-Self axis which is at first unconscious is later able to expand into our conscious awareness. Edinger describes this process of Individuation as potentiated in the cyclical oscillation between healthy states of inflation and alienation. He explains:

As this cycle repeats itself...it brings about a progressive differentiation of the Ego and the Self. In the early phases...the cycle is experienced as an alternation between two states of being, namely, inflation and alienation. Later a third state appears, when the Ego-Self axis reaches consciousness, which is characterized by a conscious dialectic relationship between Ego and Self. This state is Individuation (Ibid:7).

In order for this third state to be attained, Edinger insists it is essential that the healthy oscillation between inflation and alienation not be corrupted, either by a lack of rejection following an inflated act or by a lack of reacceptance following such a rejection. If one of these fails to occur, the individual will experience in the former case an inability to recognize their own limitations and in the latter case an inability to recognize their own worth. Both of these difficulties can usually be overcome given an appropriate Psychotherapy which addresses such existential concerns by offering both the rejection and the acceptance needed for the establishment of a dynamic Ego-Self connection.

Throughout his book, Edinger proceeds to demonstrate that the psychical relationship between the Ego and the Self, as it is presented in the Jungian model outlined above, forms the raw material basis for the cultural creations of mythology and religion. If this is true, then we have now established how the psychological significance of spirituality can not only be explained but justified within a framework which is not in conflict with a modern scientific worldview. Furthermore, we are now in a position to recognize ontological insecurity and other existential anxieties as relating to damage of the Ego-Self axis manifesting either as inflated narcissism or alienated meaninglessness. It is in these implications of Jungian theory that I find the potential for a fascinating and useful conjunction between psychology, philosophy, and spirituality.

Inasmuch as Jung's 'psychologized religion' locates the divine in the collective unconscious as represented in the individual by the archetype of the Self, his theories are in agreement with Existential philosophy. In this view, the values which people freely choose to uphold, while they may not yield any objective truth about the world, can reveal truths about the ontological attitude of the individual psyche. We have observed that if God is pronounced dead, or is seen to be a psychological projection, people are faced with the realization that their deeply held values have no external authority. Henceforth, if I am kind to others it is no longer because God 'says' I must be, but because I have now allowed myself to acknowledge the possibility of my not being kind and have exercised free will in choosing to value kindness. Nietzsche feels that the prospect of such free will is terrifying to all except those "free spirits" for whom it is exhilarating. Those who

are brave, honest, and strong enough to accept that God does not exist can admit that it is we ourselves who have fabricated the values and morals by which we have lived.

Through such an affirmation and assertion of our own natural self-worth, which both Nietzsche and Jung presume, we are capable of surmounting the paradox of free will that manifests in the problem of how to make choices in a world without objective values. In so doing we display what Nietzsche terms a "Master morality" (Oaklander, p115). Without God's prescriptions for their behavior, many people find themselves overwhelmed by anxiety and alienation. As we saw in Edinger, this same alienation results from a lack of conscious recognition of the fundamental connection between Ego and Self. For the un-individuated person in whom the Ego-Self axis is still completely unconscious, so that the inner locus of divine wisdom has not yet been recognized by the Ego, total liberation from externally imposed values is felt as a loss of freedom instead of a gain. No longer being told how to behave, they experience a stifling emptiness and lack of meaning which prevents them from justifying any action they might consider taking. This terror which some feel at having external limits removed, akin to that of a child without parental guidance, results from their lack of faith in themselves as capable of choosing well their own set of values. Such choices are especially difficult for the inflated and the alienated personalities, because choosing well requires both self-limitation and self-esteem.

Individuals such as those just described, Nietzsche sees as operating under a "Slave morality" (Ibid:115), while Jean-Paul Sartre would say that they are in "Bad Faith". We have here suggested that they are suffering from a damaged Ego-Self axis, likely resulting from imbalanced parental guidance in childhood, which has led either to an inflated or alienated Ego-Self identity. Edinger quotes H.G. Baynes' description of the "provisional life" that such states engender:

(The provisional life) denotes an attitude that is innocent of responsibility towards the circumstantial facts of reality as though these facts are being provided for, either by the parents, or the state, or at least by Providence...(It is) a state of childish irresponsibility and dependence (Edinger:13).

The inflated condition is also comparable to M-L. Von Franz's description of "overidentification with the *puer aeternus* image" (Ibid:14). According to Edinger:

The psychotherapist frequently sees cases of this sort. Such a person considers himself as a most promising individual. He is full of talents and potentialities. One of his complaints is often that he could do anything but can't decide on one thing in particular. In order to make a real accomplishment he must sacrifice a number of other potentialities. He must give up his identification with original unconscious wholeness and voluntarily accept being a real fragment instead of an unreal whole (Ibid).

In Being and Nothingness⁴, Sartre discusses the problem of autonomy in relation to human existence as "...a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is" (Ibid:100). According to Sartre, our consciousness is in Bad Faith to the extent that we deny "...the double property of the human being, who is at once a *facticity* and a *transcendence*" (Ibid:98). In another parallel between Jungian and Existential theories, I would assert that it is in an 'inflated' state that we do not recognize our limitations and thus are in denial of our 'facticity', and in an 'alienated' state that our fear of being limited by our facticity in turn causes us to deny our 'transcendence'.

For Nietzsche, the acceptance of responsibility for self-determination is an affirmation of the virtue of personal power and independent will which ought to follow from acknowledging that the Christian God does not exist. Nietzsche calls this self-affirmation the "Will to Power" (Oaklander, p81). However, for those whose belief in divine morality has been imposed on them by cultural hegemony rather than by a personal faith arising from self-awareness, the news of God's death and the freedom which this implies, when suddenly unleashed, is unmitigated by experience and thus is potentially destructive. Such a reaction clearly coincides with Edinger's point that too precocious an identification of the Ego with the divine archetype of the Self, unmitigated by a conscious dialogue between a mature Ego and the unconscious archetypes, makes a "hubristic poison" of what for others is a liberating "panacea" (Edinger:13). Nietzsche warns us that the "great liberation" of the Will to Power is:

...at the same time a sickness that can destroy the man who has it, this first outbreak of strength and will to self-determination, to evaluating on one's own account, this will to *free will*: and how much sickness is expressed in the wild

⁴ Sartre, Jean-Paul., Transl. by Hazel E. Barnes. Washington Square Press Publication of Pocket Books: New York, NY., 1956.

experiments and singularities through which the liberated prisoner now seeks to demonstrate his mastery over things! (Oaklander, p104).

Nietzsche's concept of the "Will to Health" (Ibid:105) allows for this sickness to be overcome and for a healthful 'free spirit' to be achieved. There is always the danger, however, that unless we are continuously questioning and listening to ourselves we may become stuck in false states of health which we have mistaken for true self-affirmation. This observation is implicit throughout Jung's theorizing as well. It is only when we fully acknowledge and accept the extent of our possibilities that we can evaluate with integrity who we have been, are, and are becoming. One cannot reach one's full potential when one has not accepted complete and ultimate responsibility for one's choices. In Jungian terms, one cannot become 'Individuated' unless one has entered, fully conscious, into an honest dialogue with the divine wisdom of the unconscious.

In my opinion, Jung's conception of the phenomenological function of spirituality in individual psychological development clearly coincides with Nietzsche's views and thus represents what I suggest is an Existentialist approach to psychical and spiritual dis-ease. Professor and Theologian Paul Tillich is likewise concerned with the relationship between Psychotherapy, Existentialism, and Theism. In his book The Dynamics of Faith⁵, Tillich discusses the individual as subject in a dynamic relationship with their object of faith, their "ultimate concern". He suggests that a person is known through their practices and pursuits, the quality of which are determined by the extent to which the person knows themselves. Thus, the center of the personality both determines and is determined by the true ultimacy of the individual's faith. When the object of faith is an ultimate concern with that which is not truly ultimate, then the center of the personality becomes skewed and this eventually results in dissatisfaction and disillusionment. Tillich notes:

If the faith of somebody expresses itself in symbols which are adequate to his unconscious strivings, these strivings cease to be chaotic. They do not need repression, because they...are united with the conscious activities of the person. If a uniting center is absent, the infinite variety of the encountered world, as well as of the inner movements of the human mind, is able to produce a complete disintegration of the personality (Ibid:107).

⁵ Tillich, Paul. Harper & Row Publishers Inc.: New York, NY., 1957.

This way of viewing the human being's relationship with the phenomena of their own psyche coincides with what we have seen of observations by both Nietzsche and Jung.

Tillich feels strongly that the freedom to doubt and question the content of one's ultimate concern is intrinsic to being human and essential to maintaining a dynamic faith. If our ultimate concern takes a form which represses the natural need to satisfy our sense of reason, then we will likely be led to behave with dogmatic self-righteousness and/or complacency. It seems to me that this is precisely what is experienced when the Ego-Self axis has in some way been damaged so that the Ego, in a resultant state of alienation or inflation, is unable to adequately interface with the ultimacy of the Self. The potentially pathological existential anxieties which arise in this situation are described at length in Tillich's book The Courage to Be⁶. For the purposes of this essay I will not go into Tillich's psychological descriptions, however I find the following points very appropriate to my comparison of Jungian theory and Existentialism. Tillich says that the "doctrine which gives the courage to be to modern man"...is that "...of the individual in his quality as mirror of the universe" (Ibid:121). He goes on to assert that:

Enthusiasm for the universe, in knowing as well as in creating, also answers the question of doubt and meaninglessness. Doubt is the necessary tool of knowledge. And meaninglessness is no threat so long as enthusiasm for the universe and for man as its center is alive (Ibid).

The existential doubt inherent in a dynamic faith requires courage and risk because, as Tillich has observed, we must accept that the object of true ultimate concern cannot be known in a literal way. The language of mythic symbols, however, provides a concrete representation of content and a basis for the act of faith in one's Self. Jung acknowledges this fact as well, in his assertion that the archetype of the Self is universally represented by the symbols of quaternity, specifically the image of the Mandala (Edinger:4). We need to acknowledge, therefore, that it is spiritual language which represents for us our relationship with the unknowable, and that the

⁶ 1952: Tillich, Paul. Yale University Press: London, England. Reprinted by Vail-Ballou Press Inc.: Binghamton, NY., 1980.

human striving to be in such a relationship is a reflection of our desire to understand ourselves more deeply, in spite of our awareness that we can never know all.

We have seen that a lack of courage in the face of the unknowable leads us to objectify and concretize our symbol-systems in a tendency which both Tillich and Jung passionately warn against. If we insist on retaining a literal, reified interpretation of our symbolic language, thus rejecting our scientific knowledge and denying our capacity for free will, we succeed only in limiting ourselves to the finite contents of a language the very purpose of which is to lead us beyond our finitude. Tillich suggests that we need to recognize spiritual language as providing nothing more than reference points in the actualization of our centers of personality and of our faith. This recognition allows for a "creative holiness" (Tillich:15) which pushes us to doubt, question, and grow beyond the limits of the Ego in reaching toward the truly ultimate, toward the "God above God", which I am suggesting Jung and Nietzsche might agree is actually the 'universal Self'.

Like Tillich and Jung, Nietzsche too sees the selection of our own personal values as a creative process of self-determination, one in which we become our own image of God and thus the masters of our fate. For Jung, it is a process in which we come to recognize the unconscious as divine and thus we are no longer controlled by the Ego's repression of its link with the powerful wisdom of the archetypes. I would argue that, existentially, all of these views amount to the same thing. Nietzsche believes that the principles of the "Will to Power" and the "Will to Health" are inherent in nature and thus in those of us who are courageously faithful to our own humanity. These two principles operate in unison to overcome existential fear and weakness in an attitude of 'healthful power' which allows for the self-honesty, self-limitation and self-esteem required to create and live one's own morality.

As Edinger has pointed out, Tillich recognizes the existential and metaphysical value of Jung's discoveries which, he says, "reach deeply into the dimension of a doctrine of being, that is, of ontology" (Edinger:198). Tillich says of Jung's theories that:

In taking the biological and, by necessary implication, the physical realm into the genesis of archetypes, he has actually reached the ontological dimension...and this was unavoidable, given the revelatory power he attributes to the symbols in which the archetypes express themselves. For to be revelatory one must express what needs revelation, namely, the mystery of being (Ibid).

The Existentialist philosophers are likewise concerned with the 'ontological dimension', inasmuch as they reject the abstract rationalism of speculative philosophy in favor of the particular individual's subjective experience of Being-in-the-world. It is this validation of intra-psychic reality that I feel puts Existential Philosophy in line with Jung's humanistic, ethical, and phenomenological approach in Psychotherapy. The drive toward self-affirmation has been described by Nietzsche as the Will to Power and by Jung as Individuation. As Tillich reminds us, regardless of whether or not we recognize it, there is a deeply spiritual quality to this courageous process of coming face-to-face with the ultimacy of our own Being. Tillich states:

Perfect self-affirmation is not an isolated act which originates in the individual being but is participation in the universal or divine act of self-affirmation, which is the originating power in every individual act (Tillich:23).

According to Tillich, the only faith which is not idolatrous is an "absolute faith" which accepts the despair of ontological anxiety and, through the courage to be (which is a result of this kind of faith), takes that despair into itself, encompassing and conquering it in a fearless affirmation of non-Being (transcendence) as an element intrinsically implied in Being (facticity). There is an experience of joy derived from unlimited self-affirmation and it is this joy which Tillich believes is the only remedy for anxiety (Ibid:176). In Nietzsche's view, it is the 'death' of the personified God which frees humanity to affirm the Truth of our own powerful nature with a maturity that allows us to embrace life in all its unorthodox complexity. This is precisely the attitude which is required, and engendered by what Edinger describes as a healthy Ego-Self axis, towards a realization of the ultimate goal of Jungian Individuation. While there are many more parallels to be found between Existentialist and Jungian thought, I have opted to point out just a few in the elucidation of what I feel to be the psychologically significant spiritual implications of the postmodern deconstruction of orthodox religiosity.