MAN AND THE LAND: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF C. J. JUNG

by Lawrence N. Gelb

By exploring C. J. Jung's contribution to the understanding of the interrelationship between consciousness and unconsciousness, I intend in this paper to throw light on a framework of the human psyche that can help us understand why man has let his environment so deteriorate and how man can develop the change in attitudes necessary for a new, more realistic approach to the earth on which he lives. Through an integration of the far-reaching implications of Jung's psychological theory, a great deal of wisdom is added to our ecological understanding.

With the discoveries unleashed on the world by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century, man became aware that his conscious attitude—the feelings and thoughts of which he is typically aware—is not the sole determinant of his mental behavior. In addition to the conscious, rational system with which man is identified, a deeper, more irrational system of mental activity lurks below the translucent surface of consciousness. Freud termed this system, which he encountered in his patients' dreams, slips of the tongue, memory lapses, and neurotic sysmptoms, the "unconscious." Within the domain of the unconscious lie all the repressed memories of early experience. These memories are forced into the unconscious because they create psychological pain on their entrance to the threshold of consciousness. For Freud, the incidents which are repressed are those arising from man's sexual instinct. In order to avoid conflict with the restrictions which human society and culture place on the expression of these instincts, the conscious ego of the individual learns to repress these sexual phantasies early in life.

Freud writes that

humanity has in the course of time had to endure from the hands of science two great outrages upon its naive self-love. The first was when it realized that

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our earth was not the center of the universe, but only a tiny speck in a world-system of a magnitude hardly conceivable. . . . The second was when biological research robbed man of his peculiar privilege of having been specially created, and relegated him to descent from the animal world, implying an ineradicable animal nature in him. . . . But man's craving for grandiosity is now suffering the third and most bitter blow from the present-day psychological research which is endeavoring to prove to the "ego" of each one of us that he is not master in his own house, but that he must remain content with the veriest scraps of information about what is going on unconsciously in his own mind.¹

With the discovery of the unconscious by Freud, man no longer could base his actions on the assumption of his own unblemished rationality. Man must become aware of the dark, instinctual half of his human nature if he is to approach that ideal, but nebulous, goal of self-understanding.

Jung was one of Freud's original disciples. His early research was devoted to proving that the unconscious does, in fact, exist, that it is a scientifically valid construct which cannot be ignored in a description of man's personality. But Jung also discovered that the dreams of his patients contained unconscious material which could not simply express the repressed contents of the individual's own life experience. In these dreams mythological imagery arose from an even more inaccessible area of the mind. In this deeper, more universal substratum of the unconscious, Jung discovered symbolic imagery which could not derive from the dreamer's personal experience on this earth. Jung called this level of the unconscious the "collective unconscious":

The unconscious contains . . . two layers, the personal and the collective. The personal layer ends at the earliest memories of infancy, but the collective layer comprises the pre-infantile period, that is, the residues of ancestral life. Whereas the memory-images of the personal unconscious are, as it were, filled out, because they are images personally experienced by the individual, the archetypes of the collective unconscious are not filled out because they are not forms personally experienced. On the other hand, when psychic energy regresses, going beyond the period of early infancy, and breaks into the legacy of ancestral life, then mythological images are awakened: these are the archetypes.²

Here Jung sets up the dichotomy between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, a split which led him down a different path from that of Freud. This path led Jung away from a concern with the strictly sexual contents of the unconscious, drawing him into the wider realm of religion, mysticism, alchemy, mythology, and fairy tales. It is in these areas that one encounters the symbols that arise as man attempts to integrate the contents of the collective unconscious

into his consciousness. Nevertheless, Jung still admits the existence of the orthodox Freudian unconscious: "The unconscious contains everything psychic that has not reached the threshold of consciousness, or whose energy-charge is not sufficient to maintain it in consciousness, or that will reach consciousness only in the future."

In his discussion of the collective unconscious, Jung employs the word "archetype" to describe those inherited thought patterns which lie imbedded in the depths of the collective unconscious: "These ancient images are restored to life by the primitive, analogical mode of thinking peculiar to dreams. It is not a question of inherited ideas, but of inherited thought patterns." And since these archetypes arise from the collective unconscious, they reveal "contents more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us." 5

If the archetypes represent the expression of that part of man which is most ancient, then, naturally, this part should lie in the deepest, least accessible regions of the human mind: "The archetype represents or personifies certain instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness."6 If this is the case, then the archetypes must stem from the prehistoric dawn of man, a man whose life was so governed by his instincts that he bore little resemblance to the rational individual of the modern era. At this point man was almost indistinguishable from the other denizens of the anthropoid world. He was still an indivisible part of nature, merged in the living earth from which he took nourishment. Since the archetypes form the hidden foundations of the human mind, they represent "the roots which the psyche has sunk not only in the earth in the narrower sense but the world in general. The archetypes are thus that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature, or in which its link with the earth and the world appears at its most tangible."7

THE "EARTH" ARCHETYPE

This being the case, it would seem that the way in which prehistoric man experienced his relatedness to his environment, to his earth, would form an archetypal image of the earth arising out of this interrelationship. I plan to examine this "earth" archetype, as viewed by Jung, with the aim of illuminating its current unconscious effect on the way in which man relates to his natural environment. Through this insight into man's unconscious personality, much light can be shed on the causes of our current environmental crisis.

Jung writes:

As civilized human beings we in Western Europe have a history reaching back perhaps 2,500 years. Before that there is a prehistoric period of considerably greater duration, during which man reached the cultural level of, say, the Sioux Indians. Then come the hundreds of thousands of years of neolithic culture, and before that an unimaginably vast stretch of time during which man evolved from the animal. A mere fifty generations ago many of us in Europe were no better than primitives. The layer of culture, this pleasing patina, must therefore be quite extraordinarily thin in comparison with the powerfully developed layers of the primitive psyche. But it is these layers that form the collective unconscious, together with the vestiges of animality that lose themselves in the nebulous abyss of time.⁸

How did primordial man experience the earth on which he lived? According to Jung, primitive man existed in a state of participation mystique with his environment. Since the most ancient men reacted instinctually to the natural environment, they lived in an unconscious state of mutual identity with this environment. Ego consciousness, rationalistic willing, had yet to become the dominant form of consciousness in *Homo sapiens*. In his unconsciousness, primitive man related to the earth as if it were a part of himself. He acted toward trees and rivers and water holes as if they possessed attributes of his own mind. He appeared to be psychologically continuous with the sacred bush of the tabu cavern, as if part of himself were actually contained in them. Consequently, the objects of the environment became filled with mana—they were experienced as possessing a mysterious fascination or power over the primitive person. But, in reality, the primitive is actually endowing the environment with characteristics of his own undeveloped psyche. Jung continues: "These identifications, brought about by projections, create a world in which man is completely contained psychically as well as physically. To a certain extent he coalesces with it. In no way is he master of this world, but only a fragment of it. Primitive man is still far from the glorification of human powers. He does not dream of regarding himself as the lord of creation. . . . Man is dovetailed into his nature. It never occurs to him that he might be able to rule her; all his efforts are devoted to protecting himself against her dangerous caprices."9

In this state of primitive identification with his environment (an environment in which no real subject-object differentiation had yet taken place), early man experienced an incredible sense of unity with his world. All modern men are familiar with the popular denotation of our planet as "Mother Earth." In the biblical creation myth God literally molds man out of the soil of the earth: the earth is the chthonic mother who bears man from her womb. In the unconscious archetypal representation we all have of our world, "earth is called the mother of elements, for she bears the son in her womb." In the

undifferentiated psyche of primitive man, the equation earth = mother was of utmost psychological validity. And, because the basic archetypes live on in our own modern collective unconscious, this symbolic equation still carries a large charge of psychic energy. On one level our relationship to the earth still reenacts the experience of the helpless infant (primitive man) tied to the devouring, fearsome mother (the earth), a mother who also gives great love.

This original identification of primitive man with the earth is relived in the ontological development of every childhood: "The earth he [the child] plays with, the fire he warms himself at, the rain and the wind that chill him, were always realities, but because of his twilight consciousness they were seen and understood only as qualities of the parents. Then, as out of a mist, there emerge the material and dynamic aspects of the earth, revealing themselves as powers in their own right, and no longer wearing the masks of the parents. They are thus not a substitute, but a reality that corresponds to a higher level of consciousness."

So, out of an original unconscious identification of the earth with his parents (and, more important, with his mother) the child gradually learns to differentiate natural objects from his own projections. This happens in direct relation to the extent to which he comes to experience his "I" as being separate and distinct from the other people and things he comes into contact with: "Nevertheless something is lost in this development, and that is the irreplaceable feeling of immediate oneness with the parents [and the earth]. . . . All this drops away with the broadening and intensification of consciousness. The resultant extension of the parental images over the face of the world, or rather, the world's breaking through the mists of childhood, severs the unconscious connection with the parents." 13

Originally, the child is totally dependent on the ministrations of the mothering one for his survival. If she does not feed him, keep him from the cold and the heat, and protect him against the disturbing elements in the environment, the baby will die. The newborn's relation to the mother is one of total weakness and dependence in relation to the comparative omnipotence or godlikeness of the maternal figure.

And so is the relation of primitive man to his environment. He, too, is totally dependent on the whims of the earth for his survival. If there is no rain, his crops die; if a monsoon hits, his village is destroyed. This basic attitude of original dependence on the earth is intrinsically locked up in its archetypal manifestations.

Jung notes from insights gained in his clinical practice that "unconscious compensatory inferiority tallies with conscious megalomania." ¹⁴

This fact implies that man's present arrogance toward his relationship with the earth arises out of the unconscious feeling of absolute dependence which characterized the greater part of his experience on the planet. Man sets himself up consciously as god on earth to compensate for his unconscious feeling of inferiority derived from experiences at the twilight of his existence: "It is civilized man who strives to dominate nature and therefore devotes his greatest energies to the discovery of natural causes which would give him the key to her secret laboratory. That is why he strongly resents the idea of arbitrary powers and denies them. Their existence would amount to proof that his attempt to dominate nature is futile after all." 15

To return to primitive man, how did his original participation mystique with his environment give way to a relationship based on conscious control of the natural forces? In order to accomplish this feat, primitive man "must de-psychize nature in order to dominate her; and in order to see his world objectively he must take back all his archaic projections."16 Like the child, this "de-psychizing" of his environment occurs with the advent of ego consciousness. This new ego consciousness is based on the ability to discriminate and categorize opposites, the most important one being that of self and others. The Bible says that the original sin occurred when man first picked the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—in other words, when man developed ego consciousness and the ability to separate himself from nature through conscious discrimination. From this point on man was no longer psychologically identical with his world-the opposites emerge. With the ability to discriminate came man's weaning from the intimate (and incestuous, since earth = mother), interpenetrating mix-up with the earth. Out of the primordial unity of unconsciousness, consciousness splits off. And with the acquisition of consciousness, man becomes man for the first time. No longer is he identical with nature: now he can be conscious of himself.

DICHOTOMIES

According to Jung, man's ego consciousness developed through this very ability to discriminate opposites: "Our individual conscious psychology develops out of an original state of unconsciousness and therefore of non-differentiation. Consequently, consciousness of differentiation is a relatively late achievement of mankind, and presumably but a relatively small sector of the indefinitely large field of original identity. Differentiation is the essence of consciousness. Everything unconscious is undifferentiated, and everything that happens unconsciously proceeds on the basis of non-differentiation—that is to

say, there is no determining whether it belongs or does not belong to the self."¹⁷

So with consciousness man starts to set up opposites: good-bad, mind-body, spirit-matter, positive-negative, man-earth, conscious-unconscious. The categorizing ego consciousness then proceeds to attach a good or bad value onto each half of the pairs of opposites. Then he denies the power of the bad or negative half, while consciously identifying with its positive opposite. Nevertheless, in the unconscious mind both opposites are reunited, since the function of consciousness creates them in the first place.

Gradually, man came to identify himself more and more with the spiritual side of the opposites, spirit (mind)-matter (body). In so doing, he emphasized his conscious mind at the expense of matter or the earth: "Spirit is the dynamic principle, forming for that very reason the classical antithesis of matter—the antithesis, that is, of its stasis and inertia." Furthermore, "in archetypal conceptions and instinctual perceptions, spirit and matter confront one another on the psychic plane." Through man's identification with the spirit to the point of denying his ties to matter, he dismisses the Tantric wisdom that matter is nothing other than the concreteness of God's thoughts (a wisdom coming from contact with the unconscious where all opposites are united).

Just as man created the spirit-matter, mind-body dichotomies, he also created an opposition between himself and the earth, the environment with which he was formerly at one: "The soil of every country holds some such mystery. We have an unconscious reflection of this in the psyche: just as there is a relationship of mind to body, so there is a relationship of body to earth."20 In the same way that modern man has emphasized the importance of his mind over his body, so, too, has he exaggerated his own self-importance as he opposes himself to the earth: "The more power man had over nature, the more his knowledge and skill went to his head, and the deeper became his contempt for the merely natural and accidental, for all irrational data—including the collective psyche, which is everything consciousness is not."21 Through the centuries man has continued to nourish this belief in his own conscious power to domesticate the earth, to pose himself in opposition to the earth. This trend has been accelerating exponentially right up to our current situation in which man's rational control of the earth equates itself with ecological disaster. And just as he continues to deny the power nature has over him, so he denies the power of his own nature, his unconscious, in relation to the conscious controller with which he identifies. Like the little child, man's historical development can be seen as a progressing attempt to deny the power of the "Great Mother," the earth, over his own ego. But by destroying the earth, man destroys the mother who nourishes his existence. To destroy the earth is to destroy himself. And with the end of species man, all the opposites are ended.

Jung's main contribution to our understanding of our modern dilemma is his realization of the dangers inherent in emphasizing one pole in a pair of opposites to the exclusion of the other pole: "In all ordinary cases the unconscious is unfavorable or dangerous only because we are not at one with it and therefore in opposition to it. A negative attitude to the unconscious, or its splitting off, is detrimental in so far as the dynamics of the unconscious are identical with instinctual energy. Disalliance with the unconscious is synonymous with loss of instinct and rootlessness." So to carry on Jung's argument, the unconscious/earth-conscious/man dichotomies must be returned to a value-free accord. To do this, every man must regain contact with his unconscious archetypes: Through this act a recognition of the opposites as two parts of one whole can be achieved.

As man continues to emphasize his controlling, categorizing ego consciousness, the danger grows that he will cut himself off from primal dispositions. And, perhaps, the strongest of all these is the sense for survival. All one has to do is open one's eyes to see the sorry state in which man's technical, rational knowledge has placed him. Rivers swirl with lethal pollutants, the air is choked with poisonous gases, the ocean is threatened with imminent death. Until now, man's technological relation to the earth has brought with it the prospect of total destruction, a prospect which would render the advantages previously won rather insignificant. And still the unbalanced faith in "logos," in man's rational, technological capacity to deal with the problems he has created, continues. Garrett Hardin defines a technical solution "as one that requires a change only in the techniques of the natural sciences, demanding little or nothing in the way of change in human values or ideas of morality."23 Yet Hardin reaches the same conclusion that our study of Jung's ideas brings. Man can no longer afford to rely totally on his reason—a deeper change in values must take place, a change in values reaching down to the very essence of man's being. Or, as Jung notes, "A conclusive appeal to reason would be all very fine if man were by nature an animal rationale; but he is not; he is quite often as much unreasonable as he is reasonable. Therefore reason is often not sufficient to modify the instinctual drive and make it conform to a rational order."24

"The psyche," continues Jung, "not only disturbs the natural order but, if it loses its balance, actually destroys its own creation. Therefore the careful consideration of psychic factors is of importance in restoring not merely the individual's balance, but society's as well, otherwise the destructive tendencies easily gain the upper hand. . . . The present situation is so sinister that one cannot suppress the suspicion that the Creator is planning another deluge that will finally exterminate the existing race of men."²⁵ But in the case of our environmental crisis, it is man who is the creator. So the logical place to look for the promise of change lies within man's mind, not in the greatly heralded capabilities of his technology. Yet "our psyche, which is primarily responsible for all the historical changes wrought by the hand of men on the face of this planet, remains an insoluble puzzle and an incomprehensible wonder, an object of abiding perplexity—a feature it shares with all Nature's secrets."²⁶

Luckily, Jung is being more modest than he rightly ought to be. $Grace \ \grave{a}$ his research into the workings of the unconscious part of man's experience, the student of psychology is presented with a new model of human growth and, perhaps, a way out of the awful mess we have dragged ourselves into.

OVERCOMING THE MAN-EARTH OPPOSITION

The first step man must take if he is to avoid environmental destruction is to regain contact with the archetypal contents of his collective unconscious—in our particular analogy, with the archetype of the earth. If something has gone wrong with the world, it is because something has gone wrong with us: "The integration of unconscious contents is an individual act of realization, of understanding, and moral evaluation. It is a most difficult task, demanding a high degree of ethical responsibility. . . . Confrontation with an archetype is an ethical problem of the first magnitude."27 By becoming aware of his primal relation to the earth as symbolic mother of all humanity, man possesses the capability to realize that his own life depends on her well-being. This image of primal relation to the mothering earth lies dormant in the depths of man's own mind. By becoming conscious of the archetype, the tyranny of the opposition of man-earth can be overcome. Man can become conscious that his unconscious desire to inflict all sorts of wounds on the mother who bore him is a futile denial of their interdependence and is a compensatory but erroneous affirmation of man's individual ego consciousness. Then man can free his relation with the environment from the tyranny of his own unconsciousness. And by recognizing the inner power of the earth archetype, man also gains insight into the necessity of integrating as much of his unconscious into consciousness as possible. Through this integration the spirit-nature, conscious-unconscious polarities reach

awareness, too. For, "when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner contradictions, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves." Accordingly, when man's inner conflicts are projected onto the world, the unfortunate circumstances which confront us today arise externally.

Jung's wisdom lies in the fact that he does not encourage a one-sided emphasis on any one half in the multiplicity of opposites. "The products of the unconscious are pure nature," he writes. "But nature is not, in herself, a guide for she is not there for man's sake. Ships are not guided by the phenomenon of magnetism. We have to make the compass a guide and, in addition, allow for a specific correction, for the needle does not even point exactly to the north. So it is with the guiding function of the unconscious." Here Jung disposes of the romantic fantasy that by a simple return to nature, coupled with the abandonment of all our technological knowledge, man can achieve utopia. This would represent the opting for one side of the coin (nature and unconsciousness), while denying the opposite side (logos or consciousness). Such a reversal in values would merely continue man's policy of excluding one opposite at the expense of the other. What Jung aims for is an integration of the two.

The process by which the individual attains this integration of opposites is that of "individuation":

If we may picture the conscious mind, with the ego as its center, as being opposed to the unconscious, and if we now add to our mental picture the process of assimilating the unconscious, we can think of this assimilation as a kind of approximation of conscious and unconscious, where the center of personality no longer coincides with the ego, but with a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious. This would be the point of a new equilibrium, a new centering to total personality, a virtual center, which, on account of its focal position between conscious and unconscious, ensures for the personality a new and more solid foundation.³⁰

Jung calls this "new center of personality," which represents an integration of the unconscious by the conscious, the "self": In the individuation process "the unconscious processes stand in a compensatory relation to the conscious mind. . . . Consciousness and unconsciousness are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but complement one another to form a totality, which is the *self*. . . . It embraces not only the conscious but also the unconscious psyche." Through the individual's discovery of the "self," he becomes aware of the psychic union of man and nature, spirit and matter, mind and

body, good and bad, conscious and unconscious. The peculiar vantage point of the "self" allows a total view of one's own psychological makeup; this view allows one to understand that the opposition of the opposites is only a function of man's human mind. Only through this recentering of personality in the "self" can man avoid the pitfalls of increasing identification with his ego consciousness which, in denying the animal in him, denies man's dependence on the earth.

The traditional Western expression of the individuation process is through the understanding and integration of the symbol of Christ into one's life: "Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self." Christ is the word made flesh, spirit reunited with matter, God merged with man, and man joined with earth: "The scope of the integration is suggested by the descensus ad infernos, the descent of Christ's soul to hell, its work of redemption embracing even the dead. The psychological equivalent of this is the integration of the collective unconscious which forms an essential part of the individuation process." 33

But, unfortunately, modern man's estrangement from that part of himself where God is experienced parallels his emotional estrangement from the earth. In both cases he denies the importance of the most basic archetypes of his unconscious, placing full weight upon his rationalistic ego consciousness. Man believes himself omnipotent in relation to his environment, much in the way he feels omnipotent to his God (note the contradiction in terms). But this arrogant posture belies the relation he feels toward both aspects of his existence in the archetypal representations of his unconscious. Unless man regains contact with these archetypes—his earth and his God—the Apocalypse may soon arrive.

To conclude this exploration of the relation between Jung's model of man and man's relation to the environment, I will add one more thought on the efficacy of man's rational foresight in planning the future. Jung writes that "rational argument can be conducted with some prospect of success only so long as the emotionality of a given situation does not exceed a critical degree. If the affective temperature rises above this level, the possibility of reason's having any effect ceases and its place is taken by slogans and chimerical wish-fantasies."³⁴ So unless we become aware of the unconscious projections which color our discussion of the environment, we will be unable to effect any necessary change. For all our optimistic (or pessimistic, for that matter) plans for the future are inherently shaded by the fact that it is the nature of our own psyches which is doing the predicting. And if half of our nature is unknown, how can we claim responsibility for any truly rational decisions at all?

NOTES

- 1. Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis (New York: Pocket Books, 1952), p. 296.
- 2. C. J. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (New York: Meridian Books, 1953), p. 87.
 - 3. C. J. Jung, Civilization in Transition (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), p. 8.
 - 4. Two Essays, p. 147.
- 5. C. J. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 4.
 - 6. C. J. Jung, Psyche and Symbol (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1958), p. 123.
 - 7. Civilization, p. 30.
 - 8. Ibid., p. 12.
 - 9. Ibid., p. 66.
 - 10. C. J. Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 130.
 - 11. Civilization, pp. 36-37.
- 12. The word "projection" means the attribution or throwing out of parts of one's own psychological makeup into external objects. Projection is the basic dynamism at work in *participation mystique*.
 - 13. Civilization, pp. 37-38.
 - 14. Psyche and Symbol, p. 146.
 - 15. Civilization, p. 66.
 - 16. Ibid., p. 66.
 - 17. Two Essays, p. 217.
 - 18. Psyche and Symbol, p. 65.
- 19. C. J. Jung, On the Nature of the Psyche (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 126.
 - 20. Civilization, p. 13.
 - 21. Ibid., p. 291.
 - 22. Two Essays, p. 126.
 - 23. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," Science 162 (1968): 1243.
- 24. C. J. Jung, On Contemporary Events (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1946), p. 38.
 - 25. Nature of the Psyche, p. 132.
 - 26. Civilization, p. 269.
 - 27. Ibid., p. 221.
 - 28. Psyche and Symbol, p. 60.
 - 29. Civilization, p. 22.
 - 30. Two Essays, p. 234.
 - 31. Ibid., p. 188.
 - 32. Psyche and Symbol, p. 36.
 - 33. Ibid., p. 37.
 - 34. Civilization, p. 248.