ISLAM AND THE WEST: A CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Part-II

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IV

Jung and the 18th Surah

Apart from the observations about the beauty of the Taj Mahal and the "jealously guarded secret of the Islamic Eros", (Volume 10), the other substantive reference to Islam concerns the figure of Khidr and Jung's analysis of the 18th Surah of the Qur'«n. In fact, more than half the references to Islam in The Collected Works are repetitions of this motif, its most detailed exposition being in Volume 5, and especially Volume 9, in the section titled 'On Rebirth' and the essay 'A Typical Set of Symbols Illustrating the Process of Transformation'. The entire essay is devoted to the 18th Surah. Similarly, in Volume 18, there is an extensive reference to Khidr in a letter from Jung to Pere Bruno, a priest who had queried Jung on "how to establish the existence of an archetype." Jung's response was to give Bruno an illustration through what "I think about the probably historical personage Elijah".

The letter is a gem of erudition drawing from all the monotheistic traditions to describe the nature of Elias/Elijah whom Jung saw as analogous to John the Baptist, Christ and Khidr. Citing the Leiden Encyclopaedia of Islam, Jung states that Ilyas/Elias (Elijah) and al-Khadir (Khidr) are immortal friends/twins. He refers to the legend of them spending Ramadan at Jerusalem every year and afterwards they take part in the pilgrimage to Mecca without being recognized. He also very clearly cites the claims of many schools of Islamic mysticism regarding their unbroken chain going back not only to Mohammad but to Egypt, the source of all such ancient knowledge, including especially, alchemy. "Ilyas is identified with Enoch and Idris (Hermes Trismegistos). Later Ilyas and al-Khadir are identified with St. George" (p.676)

The 18th Surah was selected by Jung as a prototypical description of a psychological process of transformation that is of such an intense nature that it can be considered a sort of rebirth. Entitled 'The Cave', the surah can be divided into three sections. It opens with the Judaeo-Christian legend of the seven sleepers in a cave and their prolonged state of sleep over many hundred years. This story is followed by an account of Moses and his companion (Joshua) and their encounter with an unnamed person. Moses wants to "learn" from this man who reluctantly takes him as a pupil. A series of events occur which are handled by this teacher in a most unusual fashion, baffling Moses. The third section of the surah deals with the character of Dhulquarnein (Alexander) and his fight with the mythical monsters, Gog and Magog.

Jung's reading of the surah claims that it is a "purely an Islamic legend", and an "almost perfect" description of the process of transformation of consciousness:

> The legend has the following meaning: Anyone who gets into that cave, that is to say into the cave which everyone has in himself, or into the darkness that lies behind consciousness, will find himself involved in an unconsciousness process of transformation ... a connection with his unconscious contents... may result in a momentous change of personality in the positive or negative sense ... (p.136).

MOSES AND KHIDR

Central to Jung's analysis is the section on Moses and the mysterious teacher. As stated in the Qur'«n:

> And Moses said to his servant: "I will not cease from my wanderings until I have reached the place where the two seas meet, even though I journey for eighty years". But when they had reached the place where the two seas meet, they forgot their fish, and it took its way through a stream to the sea.
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> And when they had journeyed past this place, Moses said to his servant: "Bring us our breakfast, for we are weary from this journey".

But the other replied: "See what has befallen me! when we were resting there by the rock, I forgot the fish. Only Satan can have put it out of my mind, and in wondrous fashion it took its way to the sea".

Then Moses said: "That is the place we seek". And they went back the way they had come. And they found one of Our servants, whom we had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom. Moses said to him" "Shall I follow you, that you may teach me for my guidance some of the wisdom you have learnt?"

But he answered: "You will not bear with me, for how should you bear patiently with things you cannot comprehend?

Moses said: "If Allah wills, you shall find me patient: I shall not in anything disobey you".

He said: "If you are bent on following me, you must ask no question about anything till I myself speak to you concerning it".

The two set forth, but as soon as they embarked, Moses' companion bored a hole in the bottom of the ship.

"A strange thing you have done! exclaimed Moses, "Is it to drown her passengers that you have bored a hole in her?"

"Did I not tell you", he replied, "that your would not bear with me?"

"Pardon my forgetfulness", said Moses, "Do not be angry with me on this account".

They journeyed on until they fell in with a certain youth. Moses' companion slew him, and Moses said: "You have killed an innocent man who has done no harm. Surely you have committed a wicked crime".

"Did I not tell you", he replied, "that you would not bear with me?"

Moses said: "If ever I question you again, abandon me; for then I should deserve it".

They travelled on until they came to a certain city. They asked the people for some food, but the people declined to receive them as

their guests. There they found a well on the point of falling down. The other raised it up, and Moses said; "Had you wished, you could have demanded payment for your labours".

"Now the time has arrived when we must part", said the other, "But first I will explain to you those acts of mine which you could not bear with in patience.

'Know that the ship belong to some poor fishermen. I damaged it because in their rear was a king who was taking every ship by force.

"As for the youth, his parents both are true believers, and we feared lest he should plague them with his wickedness and unbelief. It was our wish that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more righteous and more filial.

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city whose father was an honest man. Beneath it their treasure is buried. Your Lord decreed in His mercy that they should dig out their treasure when they grew to manhood. What I did not done by caprice. That is the meaning of the things you could not bear with in patience ...[156]

The person referred to as "One of our servants, whom We had endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom" is the figure of Khidr, "the Verdant One" who plays a pivotal role in Islamic mysticism. According to Jung, Moses is the man who seeks, a sort of Everyman on the 'quest'. On this pilgrimage he is accompanied by his "shadow", the "servant" or "lower" man. Joshua, the son of Nun, is the name for "fish" suggesting the notion of watery depth and darkness, the shadow-world. The critical place is reached "where the two seas meet" which is interpreted as the isthmus of Suez, where the western and eastern seas come close together. For Jung, "it is that place in the middle", that all-important point between two opposite but equally vital extremes, e.g. conscious and unconscious. Initially, Moses and his companion do not recognize the significance of this middle place, but then the recognition comes from the humble source of nourishment, the fish (Nun) which leaps out to return to its homeland. It represents "the animal ancestor and creator of life separating himself from the conscious man, an event which amounts

[156] Fischer, M.J; "Is Islam the Odd-Civilization Out?" *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Spring 1992.

to "loss of the instinctive psyche" (p.139). In psychological terms this is a symptom of dissociation or fragmentation, when there is an overwhelming one-sidedness of any given conscious attitude. The unconscious then compensates for this by "splitting off", leading to feelings which diminish one's sense of "wholeness", or what the primitive called a "loss of soul".

Moses and his servant soon notice what happened. The fatigue ("worn out") that he feels is a common symptom in a process that is typical when, according to Jung, one "fails to recognize a moment of crucial (psychological) importance". That is, Moses realizes that he had unconsciously found the source of life and then lost it again.

At this stage Jung draws extensively on alchemical commentaries regarding the symbol of the fish and other related terms such as the "philosophers stone". The unacknowledged link between Islam and alchemy is quite evident when one considers the sources for Jung's explanations. Foremost among them is Nicolas Flamel, whom Nasr has discussed as an important example of the extent of the influence of Islam on Christian/western alchemy. Based on these alchemical symbols, Jung concludes that Khidr is a symbol of the "self" which he defines elsewhere as "our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality":

> Khidr may well be a symbol of the self. His qualities symbolize him as such; he is said to have been born in a cave i.e. in darkness. He is the "Long-lived One" who continually renews himself, like Elijah. He is analogous to the second Adam ..... he is a counsellor, a Paraclete, "Brother Khidr". Anyway, Moses looks up to him for instruction. Then follow these incomprehensible deeds which show how ego-consciousness reacts to the superior guidance of the self through the twists and turns of fate. To the initiate who is capable of transformation it is a comforting tale; to the obedient believer, an exhortation not to murmur against Allah's incomprehensible omnipotence. Khidr symbolizes not only the higher wisdom but also a way of acting Anyone hearing such a mystery tale will recognize himself in the questing Moses and forgetful Joshua ..... (p.141)

The analysis moves on to certain comments which are quite significant.

"A DISGUISED MOHAMMEDAN"

In the preceding review of Jung's contributions to psychology and alchemy, it was discussed how the psychology of Islam was consistently overlooked. Even though, as Nasr -or a vast number of 'average' Muslims- would affirm, the alchemical tradition in Islam continues to flourish till today. In contrast, no comparable claim of similar proportion and scale can be made for Judaism and Christianity. Indeed, it was the absence of just such an alchemical tradition and its subsequent study by Jung, which made it one of his main achievements. These facts were not entirely lost on Jung who, in his discussion of the 18th Surah, discusses a personal experience of this aspect of Islam, including the exceedingly significant archetype of Khidr.

> The character of the self as a personality comes out very plainly in the Khidr legend. This feature is most strikingly expressed in the non-Koranic stories about Khidr, of which Vollers gives some telling examples. During my trip through Kenya, the headman of our safari was a Somali who had been brought up in the sufi faith. To him Khidr was in every way a living person, and he assured me that I might at any time meet Khidr, because I was, as he put it, a Mty-ya-kitabu, a Man of the Book', meaning the Koran. He had gathered from our talks that I knew the Koran better than he did himself (which was, by the way, not saying a great deal). For this reason he regarded me as "islamu". He told me I might meet Khidr in the street in the shape of a man, or he might appear to me during the night as a pure white light, or - he smilingly picked a blade of grass - The Verdant One might even look like that. He said he himself had once been comforted and helped by Khidr.... This shows that, even in our own day, Khidr still lives on in the religion of the people, as friend, advisor, comforter, and teacher of revealed wisdom.....(p.143).

The preceding passage tells something not only about Jung's personal exposure to Islam, but also indirectly, about one key difference between Islam and Christianity in the twentieth century. As Jung himself admits, the Somali tribesman's view of Jung was not exactly of the stereotypical "infidel"

or "unbeliever", rather it was an insistence on seeing Jung as a Muslim ("islamu"), a person who was familiar with the Koran. Similarly, as Jung states, the frequent experience of Khidr-"psychologically" and/or spiritually, -is not an uncommon occurrence in the Muslim psycho-spiritual world. His encounter with the Somali confirms this at the most basic, the 'popular' level, insofar as the individual was not a religious scholar but a tribal and a safari headman. Recounting the same episode in his autobiographical writings, Jung stated that the Somali insisted that he was a "disguised Muhammedan".[157]

This episode and Jung's observations about Khidr and the 18th Surah, clearly indicates a major difference between the psychology of Islam as compared to Judaism and Christianity. It is the difference between historical fact and present reality, between a theoretical explanation and lived experience. The point is not to suggest that the wide–spread alchemical aspect of Islam as lived experience makes it automatically superior. Rather, it is to, firstly juxtapose these perceptions and encounters of Jung regarding the 18th Surah and Islam on the one hand, with the overall substantive place of the subject in The Collected Works. Related to this, secondly, the point is that the information vacuum vis a vis Islam is all the more prominent given its distinctiveness as a lived and hence living tradition, one which Jung had not only theoretically grasped in the 18th Surah but also personally witnessed. It must be reiterated that this is not to imply wilful prejudice. Rather, that these oversights are typical of psychodynamics pertaining to the 'other'-as-shadow.

TWO PAIRS OF FRIENDS

Returning to the essay and analysis of the transformative nature of the 18th Surah, Jung does an insightful interpretation of certain key motifs and archetypes, as he perceived them in the narrative. However, as he himself acknowledges, his analysis is almost wholly derived from the German scholar Vollers whose commentaries, in turn, are directly derived from sources in Islamic mysticism. According to Jung, the aspect of Khidr-as-Friend is evident in the abrupt introduction of the figure of Dhulqarnein who in Islamic mysticism is equated with Alexander the Great ("The Two horned One"), and also Moses. The Surah continues:

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[157] "*Unlike Abraham, Moses, or Jesus*, the Prophet of Mecca lived his adult life in the glare of history". (p.34). Desmond Stewart; *Mecca*; Newsweek Books, N.Y. 1980.

They will ask you about Dulqarnein. Say: "I will give you an account of him.

"We made him mighty in the land and gave him means to achieve all things. He journeyed on a certain road until he reached the West and saw the sun setting in a pool of black mud. Hard by he found a certain people.

"'Dhulqarnein', We said, 'you must either punish them or show them kindness.

He replied: "The wicked" we shall surely punish. Then they shall return to their Lord and be sternly punished by Him. As for those that have faith and do good works, we shall bestow on them a rich reward and deal indulgently with them.

"He then journeyed along another road until he reached the East and saw the sun rising upon a people whom We had utterly exposed to its flaming rays. So he did; and We had full knowledge of all the forces at his command.

"Then he followed yet another route until he came between the Two Mountains and found a people who could barely understand a word. 'Dhulqarnein', they said 'Gog and Magog are ravaging this land. Build us a rampart against them and we will pay you tribute'.

"He replied: "The power which my Lord has given me is better than any tribute. Lend me a force of labourers, and I will raise a rampart between you and them. Come, bring me blocks of iron'.

"he dammed up the valley between the Two Mountains, and said: 'Ply your bellows'. And when the iron blocks were red with heat, he said: 'Bring me molten brass to pour on them'.

"Gog and Magog could not scale it, nor could they dig their way through it. He said: 'This is a blessing from my Lord. But when my Lord's promise is fulfilled, He will level it to dust. The promise of my Lord is true".

On that day We will let them come in tumultuous throngs. The Trumpet shall be sounded and We will gather them all together.

> On that day Hell shall be laid bare before the unbelievers, who have turned a blind eye to My admonition and a deaf ear to My warning.

Summing up the Quranic narrative in psychological terms, Jung sees the story continuing along its transformative trajectory, that is, descriptive of a process of psychological change incorporating the 'self'. Accordingly:

> Moses has to recount the deeds of the two friends to his people in the manner of an impersonal mystery legend. Psychologically this means that the transformation has to be described or felt as happening to the "other" although it is Moses himself who, in his experience with Khidr stands in Dulqarnein's place he has to name the latter instead of himself in telling the story.

According to Jung, the substitution "can hardly be accidental" and is in fact a part of a conscious recognition and remedy for the danger that occurs when ego-consciousness comes closer to the 'self' and its connection with primordial forces. With the discerning that these forces are within oneself, (the other) there is the danger that consciousness may get carried away, so to speak, and the individual may start believing that, for example, he is endowed with extraordinary powers, is Christ, a visionary etc. This belief is what is termed ego-inflation which is a consequence of seeing no difference between one's individual ego (conscious) and the 'self' whose matrix is essentially collective (unconscious). There is, therefore, the danger of consciousness being overwhelmed through a contact with the 'self'. As Jung points out, most "primitive" cultures have mechanisms of dealing with this possibility. One can add that within many Sufi practices similar systems/methods are used to take care of such contingencies. To quote Jung:

> All the more primitive or older cultures show a fine sense for the "perils of the soul" and for the dangerousness and general unreliability of the gods. That is, they have not yet lost their psychic instinct for the barely perceptible and yet vital processes going on in the background, which can hardly be said of our modern culture.

Jung contrasts the motif of friendship between Khidr and Dhulqarnein with its dark opposite(s) as they appear in Western culture:

> To be sure we have before our eyes as a warning just such a pair of friends distorted by inflation - Nietzsche and Zarathustra - but the

> warning has not been heeded. And what are we to make of Faust and Mephistopheles? The Faustian hybrid is already the first step toward madness. The fact that the unimpressive beginning of the transformation in Faust is a dog and not an edible fish, and that the transformed figure is the devil and not a wise friend, "endowed with Our grace and Our wisdom" might, I am inclined to think, offer a key to our understanding of the highly enigmatic German soul. (p.146).

The essay continues the analysis of the 18th Surah as a sort of blueprint of psychological change and an enlarging of the field of consciousness. Whether Muslims agree with this interpretation or not, two points are evident. Firstly, as acknowledged by Jung himself, his approach is clearly derived from Islamic mystical texts. Secondly, the essay is ample illustration of Jung's creative genius and a vision which when focused on the mystical heart of Islam perceived therein the inherent psychological principles and truths that lie at the heart of all religions. Yet, as one approaches Jung's concluding remarks, certain comments once again indicate a general conception of Islam in very stereotypical terms (All emphases are mine):

> In spite of its apparently disconnected and allusive character, (the 18th Surah) gives an almost perfect picture of a psychic transformation or rebirth which today, with our greater psychological insight, we would recognize as an individuation process. Because of the great age of the legend and the Islamic prophet's primitive cast of mind, the process takes place entirely outside the sphere of consciousness and is projected in the form of a mystery legend of a friend or a pair of friends and the deeds they perform. That is why it is all so allusive and lacking in logical sequence. Nevertheless, the legend expresses the obscure archetype of transformation so admirably that the passionate religious Eros of the Arab finds it completely satisfying. It is for this reason that the figure of Khidr plays such an important part in Islamic mysticism. (147). (Emphasis mine)

One can note here that despite the stereotypes, the observation that what the "passionate religious Eros of the Arab finds completely satisfying", Jung also found to be a "perfect picture of psychic transformation" with the proviso that today ("with our greater psychological insight") this

transformation is the goal of Jungian psychology/therapy/analysis - "...the individuation process". Such parallel statements would not be possible if Jung's personal religious Eros were not to have found the narrative a "perfect picture". In short, it must have been in resonance with something in Jung himself, and to that extent "satisfying".

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

To recapitulate: In the context of comparative frequency of reference in The Collected Works, Islam is consistently overshadowed by all the major religions and even the minor ones such as that of the American Indians. A contextual analysis of these references reveals very little substantive psychological insights on Islam.

The single exception in terms of psychological interpretations is Jung's analysis of the 18th Surah that, in his own words, is "an almost perfect picture of psychological transformation". The fact that Jung simply restated an essentially mystical reading of this surah in his own language of "analytical psychology" is significant insofar as it illustrates a fundamental harmony between his psychological concepts and those of Islamic mysticism. This is not surprising since the bulk of Jung's researches into religion and especially alchemy are inextricably related to the mystical aspect of all the religions he considered. The point is thus not so much a lack of understanding or the need for somehow a different method in approaching Islam, but a relative lack of interest in the subject. Different types of data, drawn from art, culture and religious rituals, are fundamental to the Jungian method. Apart from the text of the surah, no other aspect of Islam, in terms of its rituals, beliefs or personalities such as the prophet, are touched upon. As the analysis of the 18th Surah suggests, when interest is focused, powerful psychological insights follow, but since these are not anchored in or connected to other concepts and information as they occur in The Collected Works, any substantial or sophisticated understanding of Islam is not possible. In contrast, such scholarly sophistication is evident throughout The Collected Works regarding the other major religions.

The essay on the 18th Surah and the figure of Khidr while no doubt mostly a positive portrayal of Islam remains an isolated exception. One will discuss subsequently other equally Jungian but different elaborations of the 18th Surah. For the moment, its place in the Jungian opus can be considered

one pole of a spectrum of Jung's intellectual and psychological understanding of Islam. Moving along this spectrum the only other psychologically substantive and positive statement is the paragraph about Jung's response to the Taj Mahal as an epitome of the "jealously guarded Islamic Eros".

The notion of Eros is a major conceptual cornerstone in Jungian psychology. It pertains to the feeling and emotive aspect of behaviour as opposed to logos which pertain to the impersonal and logical side. One can note in passing that any effort to uncover the mystery of powerful emotions which no doubt inform the Islamic fundamentalist venture, would in a sense entail the outlining of what exactly constitutes the "Islamic Eros". Unfortunately, beyond its manifestation in the 18th Surah and in Jung's enthusiastic witnessing of the Taj Mahal, there are no more clues. In terms of any glimpse into the psychology of the Islamic Eros, the information is limited to its almost "perfect picture" as evinced in the 18th Surah, on the one hand, and on the other to a brief comment regarding the Taj Mahal. It would be no exaggeration to say that for someone not familiar with Islam or its culture - these two references would hardly be adequate in understanding what Jung himself saw as a "jealously guarded secret".

Moving on from the two positive and substantial comments towards the other end of the spectrum, midway are the main bulk of references that in effect say nothing, one way or another, regarding Islam. As the content analysis suggests, the overwhelming number of references in The Collected Works to Islam and all related categories, are essentially non-sequiteurs. They are primarily either block/passing ones ("Yahweh, Brahma, Allah") or then foot notes citing Arabic alchemical writers. The subsuming of a distinct and powerful Islamic alchemical tradition into an entirely western one along with the tendency to either ignore Islam or dissolve it within the general label of the 'Arabs' or monotheism, suggests a particular stance which is not so much one of prejudice as it is of a self-convinced paternalism. It regards Islam as a sort of primitive and largely incoherent appendage to Judaism and Christianity, and from this perspective - considerable widespread in the West - Islam remains an essentially hodgepodge version of the preceding monotheisms. This attitude is part of the same mindset that sees Islam as being spread by the sword, lacking analytic refinement and intellectual substance ("no mind to it"), and thus reliant on brutality to force its view on others ("rigidity and fanaticism"). For example, throughout The Collected

Works there is no mention as to how "Islamic fatalism" is actually manifested psychologically in text and ritual in the light of the observation that "Islamic fatalism is not suited to the European."

Finally, between the two positive references to Islam and the vast majority of non-informative, non-substantial statements on the subject, there is the other end of the spectrum consisting of statements that most Muslims would consider derogatory. Thus, for example, more than once Muhammad is compared to Nero, Hitler and Anti-Christ. He was a person whose sense of "chronology leaves much to be desired", having a "primitive cast of mind".

ODD MAN OUT

The Odd-Civilization-Out status of Islam[158] as religion and culture is partly related to the 'odd-man out' status of Muhammad vis a vis western ideas about religion and personality. Compared with founders of other religions, the life of Muhammad is an exceedingly well-documented one that was lived in what has been called "in the glare of history".[159] In fact, it is the established details of his life that suggest a distinct portrait setting him apart from the usual conception of a prophet. For example, compared to Jesus, Buddha and Moses, the life of Muhammad was replete with a wide range of experiences, events (and emotions) that unfolded either parallel to or in direct relation to his particular religious mission. These range from his involvement in managing business and financial affairs to direct participation in what can be considered as much social and political battles as they were conflicts and confrontation over theological issues. (Note that the theological issues concerned both 'paganism' and the Semitic religions). Simultaneously, and equally well known were his predispositions for perfume, and, of course, women (and family).

The prominent differences between the personalities around which a religion is structured can be considered paradigmatic to the religion itself,

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[158] As perceived by Peage in *Abnormal Psychology*.

[159] As the punch line states: *If you yearn to spring out of iron cage secularism - but don't want to land in the lap of the aytollahs, cultists, or fundamentalists - subscribe today*!

For a detailed analysis of the return to religion in U.S. academe see Chaudhry and Ahmed "The Cultural Politics of Paranoia: First World/Third World". 1992. *op.cit.*

leading to different social, psychological and spiritual emphases which constitute the profile of a religion and evoke a certain psychology in its adherents. One explanation then for Jung's lack of substance regarding Islam could be related to this consistently negative portrayal regarding the prophet of Islam and his "primitive cast of mind". This negativity, it must be stressed, is a consequence not so much of prejudice but ignorance due to the tendency to regard Islam as an incoherent re-hash of Judaism and Christianity, and Mohammad as an epileptic[160] marauder, hence the comparisons to Nero and Hitler. Whereas, in fact, it is possible to suggest that the clues to the "jealously guarded Islamic Eros" may be first found in Mohammad's life and subsequently his teaching. However, since neither of these is considered as being significantly different -especially from Judaism and Christianity -the Islamic Eros, which Jung himself perceived as "passionate" - remains a secret, shadowy mystery.

The lack of knowledge regarding fundamental facts of the life of Mohammad and the psychological relationship of Muslims with that life is self-reflexively related to the virtual void regarding psychological insights about Islam and is reinforced by other erroneous assumptions. Whereas Jung's specific vision was perhaps influenced by his colonial/imperial context, some of these assumptions are evident even today in the western imagination.

'Specialist' knowledge, notwithstanding, the western intellectual's attitude towards Islam can be gauged from a recent textual analysis on the subject of the return to religion in western academe. Part of this process can be discerned in a series of advertising texts promoting an academy journal on religion in various 'highbrow' publications such as The New York Review of Books. Over the last five years, the ongoing series of prominent ads have published the names of more than 50 personalities whom the editors consider as having contributed to "religious, literary and philosophical riches". Their names range from Moses, Jesus, Buddha and St. Francis to even Tolstoy, Graham Greene and Flannery O'Connor. Yet, the name of

[160] C. G. Jung, *Collected Works*; Vol 10, pp 136-139.

Muhammad, or any writer/philosopher, Muslim or otherwise, known for scholarship on Islam does not appear even once.[161]

Partly linked to the stereotypes of Muhammad is the other popular and erroneous assumption about Islam being synonymous with 'Arabs'. As has been discussed, this merging is especially evident in Jung's alchemical studies. As a religion, Islam is overshadowed by 'Arabs', leaving the reader either with established racial stereotypes, or at best no wiser about either Arabs or their religion. A cursory survey of the countries that have had Islam as a major religion over the last century would show that it covers a vast and varied network of cultures many of them far removed from the Middle East. Such a view would be akin to calling Jews and Christians 'Europeans', or more precisely, 'Middle Easterners'. In either case, the example would exclude societies such as South America and Africa/Asia that have large Christian populations. The point is that in keeping with the dominant paradigms and ethos of his age, Jung's understanding of Islam shows little evidence of depth, discernment and detail.

A final example of the Jungian blind spot is related to the mandala. One of Jung's most widely acclaimed 'discoveries' concerned the archetypal significance of the configuration of the square and the circle appearing almost universally in sacred art and architecture. Jung wrote extensively on the mandala and its psycho-symbolic significance in almost every religion. He showed how the image of the circling of the square (and vice versa) was closely related to the archetype of the 'self' as a symbol of wholeness. The Collected Works contain numerous images of mandalas from different religions including many drawn by his patients and Jung himself. According to him, in a condition of extreme psychological stress, some people spontaneously produce the mandala form as a symbolic expression of unity and wholeness as a counter balance to the inner experience of fragmentation. Here again one can see some of the bases on which Jung concluded that psychological health is inextricably linked with spiritual concerns.

Given the significant place of the mandala in Jungian theory, remarkably no mention is made of what is not only a massive mandala but also possibly the only human (and thus living) mandala on earth. This is the Ka'bah in

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[161] As quoted by Norman O. Brown: "The Apocalypse of Islam" in *Facing Apocalypse*; Andrews, Bosnak and Goodwin (eds). Dallas. Spring Publications 1987.

Mecca and the ritual of the pilgrimage performed by millions of Muslims during the Haj and in fact throughout the year. The central ritual of the circumambulation of the sacred cube, makes it a supremely mandala motif and that too in life and motion, not just static architecture or art. Yet, this most significant Islamic rite and rich symbolism remained unnoticed. Mecca does not appear at all in The Collected Works and the Ka'bah is mentioned once in passing, in the context of alchemy and the 'philosopher stone'. (Volume 14, p.398).

V

Jung, Postmodernity and Islam

It is ironic that whereas Jung's conceptual approach to psychology and religion makes him a cornerstone of the postmodern movement, his attitude to Islam reflects a distinctly modern mindset. Despite the considerable skilful analysis of the 18th Surah, Jung's modernist mentality is revealed by his comments on the Qur'«n. For example, in the essay on the 18th Surah and the abrupt transition from Moses to Dhulqarnain, he states:

> We see here another instance of the lack of coherence which is not uncommon in the Koran.....Apart from the unheard-of anachronism, Mohammad's chronology in general leaves much to be desired....[162]

Subsequently, he refers to the "apparently disconnected and allusive character" of the surah that he partly relates to "the Islamic prophet's primitive cast of mind".

The difference between modernism and postmodernism is essentially a difference of a "cast of mind". The nature of this difference was in fact solidly put forth by Jung himself. In so far as this specific debate was barely emerging at that time, the terminology is of course different. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that Jung almost single-handedly established the postmodern vision of human behaviour in psychology. In contrast to Freud's relatively neat compartmentalization of psychic life into id, ego and superego, dominated by western notions of science, ego-rationality and will power, Jung never gave a specific aetiology of neurosis other than its being a "one-

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[162] *Ibid.*

sidedness in the presence of many". This one-sidedness especially as it was manifested in the European psyche, he termed as "monotheism of consciousness". The choice of "monotheism" instead of the contemporary "monist" or "monolithic" was not entirely unrelated to the Judaico-Christian ethos. Indeed it was deliberate insofar as he was of the view that there were certain elements of dogma in the Jewish-Christian vision which were at the root of European psychology and which were responsible for its lopsided and, to that extent, mentally unbalanced individual and collective condition. His forays into alchemy and the Hindu, Taoist, Confucian and African religions can be considered firstly an attempt to juxtapose alternative visions of the role of religion in psychological life. Secondly, by cross-relating this material with certain strains within Christianity and Judaism, he attempted to establish the possibility of a less rigid and psychologically healthier approach to religion in the West. An approach, he always insisted, which was not in fact incompatible with the fundamental of Christianity. In short, he argued for a more pluralistic and diverse attitude towards not only what is psychologically normal and abnormal, but also religious. However, as is evident from The Collected Works, in his effort to throw out what he saw as the stagnant (bath) waters of Judaico-Christian monotheism, Jung perhaps unwittingly, threw out the baby of Islam.

THE 18TH SURAH RECONSIDERED

Jung's essentially modern mindset which regarded the Qur'«n as largely "incoherent" is in resonance with the ethos of his age. It can be summed up in the words of Carlyle, who according to the philosopher-psychologist Norman O. Brown, "perfectly articulated the response of every honest Englishman" to the Qur'«n:

> I must say, it is a toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite endless iteration, long-windedness, entanglement, most crude, incondite - unsupportable stupidity, in short! Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran ... with every allowance, one feels it is difficult to see how any mortal ever could consider this

> Koran as a Book written in heaven, too good for the Earth; as a well-written book, or indeed as a book at all.[163]

Brown's essay "The Apocalypse of Islam"[164] is also an analysis of the 18th Surah. It remains rooted in Jungian concepts especially of mythology, folklore, and archetypes, but arrives at different psychological conclusions. At the outset, Brown identifies those features of the Surah which "the bewildered Western mind discerns and fastens onto", namely the three mysterious episodes: (1) The sleepers in the cave. (2) Mose's journey and encounter with Khidr (3) Dhulqarnain's appearance and erecting the Wall against Gog and Magog.

Like Jung, Brown also identifies certain elements of the Surah as being connected to Judaeo-Christian-Hellenic motifs, especially the episodes of the Sleepers and Dhulqarnain. (Alexander). Similarly both Brown and Jung choose to focus on the episode of Moses and Khidr as the most bafflingly elliptical of the three episodes and the centrepiece of the Surah. This is the section in which, as Brown says: The new Moses, having become a seeker, submits to spiritual direction by a mysterious master who bewilders Moses through a series of Zen-like absurd actions....

Whereas Jung chose to interpret this encounter between Moses and Khidr as a symbolic quest towards individual transformation, Brown tends to regard it as also illustrative of the psychological relationship between Islam and the Judaeo-Christian traditions. Thus, whereas both authors rely on similar source materials, unlike Jung, Brown focuses on the Judaeo-Christian connections only to lead one to the point of divergence. Whereas Jung simply piled up the facts indicating the synonymous nature of Elijah and Khidr, Brown regards the relevant passages as a purposive attempt to "mobilize, without naming, the powerful contrast latent in Jewish tradition, between Moses and Elijah":

> Elijah the most popular figure in the legendary world of post-Biblical Judaism.... Elijah the omnipresent Comforter-Spirit present at every Jewish circumcision ceremony and every Jewish Passover; Elijah who knows the secret of heaven and is claimed as the direct

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163 Nasr, S. H. *Ideals and Realities of Islam*. Boston 1972. pp. 24-48.

164 Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing the Word,* N.Y. Methuen. 1982.

> source of revelation by Jewish mystics including Cabalists. The Koran sends Moses to Elijah's school - "It was taught in Elijah's school", Jewish mystics say. (p.148)

Brown goes on to suggest that the Qur'«nic episode about Moses and Khidr/Elijah is in fact the archetypal essence of an ancient folk–tale derived from Talmudic wisdom. At the same time, by a "creative confusion" of certain key figures such as of Moses and Alexander, the Qur'«n also "breaks with Judaic ethno–centrism and re-projects the prophetic tradition of a new trans–cultural, universal, world-historical plane." (p.148).

What interests Brown, (and Jung) however, is not so much the theological aspect of the Moses/Khidr episode, but its archetypal essence as distilled in a folktale. As Brown points out, conventional western commentators who are quite sure that there is nothing new in the Qur'«n, assume without hesitation that the folktale is to be taken literally and all that is going on in the passage is the transmission of conventional Aggadic-Talmudic piety.

For Brown, however, the episode is prototypical of a particularly prominent dimension of Islamic psychology, namely, a simultaneous perception of two levels of existence, the material and the spiritual, and the need to distinguish between them. In this process, the central issue becomes that of interpretation:

> The Koran makes evident the folktale form and thereby alerts the intelligence to the problem of interpretation. Folktales, like dreams are not to be interpreted literally and the content of the folktale - the episode of the ship, the youth and the wall - tells us in the most literal, even crude way, three times reiterated, that there is a distinction between "what actually happened", events as seen by the eye of historical materialism, and "what is really going on", events sub specie aeternitatis, as seen by the inward, the clairvoyant eye, the second sight. The form and the content of the folktale oblige us, as they have obliged all subsequent Islamic culture, to make the distinction between literal meaning and something beyond - in Islamic terminology between Ê«hir and B«Çin ... between external-visible-patent and internal-invisible-latent; between materialist and spiritual meaning (p.150).

The distinction between levels of interpretation and meaning is of course fundamental to both Freudian and Jungian psychology, in the former's view of dreams and behaviour having a manifest and latent content, and the latter's notions of the symbolic and the literal. Among post-Jungians, James Hillman has perhaps articulated best these different levels of interpretation, highlighting the necessity for an archetypal/symbolic reading of history via interpretations which "see through" behaviour, events, emotions into their symbolic meanings.

Remaining within interpretive framework which is in consonance with both Jungian and Islamic psychology, Brown's postmodern/Jungian vision sees the Qur'«n in quite a different manner from Jung. Whereas for Jung it was "a product of Mohammad's primitive cast of mind ... incoherent"; Brown sees it as a quintessentially postmodern text. In this connection, Brown cites the existing and dominant mindset that even the most scholarly of Westerners bring to the Qur'«n. Similar in spirit to Jung for example, was R. A. Nicholson, translator of many Sufi classics, who remarked that:

> Muhammed with his excitable temperament does not shine as raconteur ... most of the stories in the Koran are narrated in a rather clumsy and incoherent fashion full of vague, cryptic allusions and dim references and digressions...(p.149)

Brown's rejoinder to this type of analytical approach is to examine the 18th Surah from within the various debates in Islamic theodicy, suggesting a very different conception of and psychological relationship to history. For example, Jung interpreted the closing passages of the surah which are descriptions of an apocalypse, as symbolic of the culmination of the inner process of 'individuation' and the subjective experience of the end of the world; that is, when consciousness is obliterated and "sinks into" the unconscious. The apocalypse then is as much an inner psychological event as it is an outer and material possibility. The point here is that while Jung's insight into the psychological dimensions of the surah may be considerably accurate, he was unable to see it as a leitmotif of the Qur'«n itself and by implication, in the Muslim individual and collective psyche. As Brown points out:

> Surah XVIII is a resume, an epitome of the whole Koran. The Koran is not like the Bible, historical, running from genesis to

> Apocalypse. The Koran is altogether apocalyptic. The Koran backs off from the linear organization of time, revelation, and history which became the backbone of orthodox Christianity and remains the backbone of western culture after the death of God. Islam is wholly apocalyptic its eschatology is not teleology... only the moment is real. There is no necessary connection between cause and effect. Time does not accumulate... the only continuity is the utterly inscrutable will of God, who creates every atomic point anew at every moment...(p.154).

The apocalyptic sense of history in which cause and effect are subsumed into a perpetual ever-present cycle of creation-recreation, is further reinforced since it is part of a consciousness that is distinctly non-linear. The rejection of linearity involves a rejection of narrative ... something which has irritated and bewildered western minds from Carlyle to Jung as they grappled to impose a sense of meaning through modern notions of 'order' onto the Qur'«n. Brown makes the startling but crucial comments on the Qur'«n:

> ... there is a mysterious regression to a more primitive stratum, archetypal, folkloristic ... Historical material is fragmented into its archetypal constituents and then subjected to displacement and condensation, as in dreams, It is a rebirth of images, as in the Book of revelation, or Finnegan's Wake. The apocalyptic style is totum simul, simultaneous totality, the whole in every part. Hodgson on the Koran: "almost every element which goes to make up its message is somehow present in any given passage". Simultaneous totality, as in Finnegans Wake, or more generally in what Umberto Eco called "the poetics of the Open Work" ... "We can see it as an infinite contained within finiteness. The work therefore has infinite aspects, because each of them, and any moment of it, contains the totality of the work". Eco is trying to characterize a revolution in the aesthetic sensibility of the West: we are the first generation in the West able to read the Quran, if we are able to read Finnegan's Wake... The affinity between this most recalcitrant of sacred texts and this most avant-garde of literary experiments is a sign of our times. Joyce was fully aware of the connection....(p.157).

Brown presents some fascinating factual and literary-historical material regarding the close connections between the literary harbinger of

postmodernism-the stream-of-consciousness style embodied in western culture in the writings of James Joyce -and the stylistic structure of the Qur'«n. The main point he is making, however, is not so much literary as psychological. That is, that "western historicism, with its well-honed methods of source criticism ... is only too delighted to lose itself in tracing the Koran to its sources, with the usual nihilistic result: the Koran is reduced to meaningless confusion". This type of historicism that attributes meaning only to the original sources seems to be at the heart of the Judaeo-Christian attitude that continues to regard Islam as a twisted, received and thus bogus version of the original(s). Brown quotes many Jewish and Christian authorities and their assessment of the 18th Surah and the Qur'«n:

> ... in Surah XVIII meaning has been "mutilated almost beyond recognition" and "mechanically combined in a most artificial and clumsy manner". Schwarzbaum refers to Muhammad as "making a brave show with borrowed trappings". The notion that Muhammad was a charlatan, who stole from the treasury of Western civilization and passed off his plagiarisms on his unsophisticated Bedouin audience as the voice of God, is still very much alive at the back of Western minds...(p.159)

To sum up Brown's analysis then, the Qur'«n, like Finnegans Wake, centres on a destruction of language. (In strictly historical terms of course, the Qur'«nic vision precedes the Joycean. Also, the psychological impact of the two would be varied, given the (assumed) themes and intention of their sources). While this is not the place to discuss what has been the impact of the de-construction of language and meaning in the West, Nasr has nicely described the psychological impact of the Qur'«n on Muslim consciousness:

> Many people, especially non-Muslims, who read the Quran for the first time are struck by what appears as a kind of incoherence from the human point of view... The text of the Quran reveals human language crushed by the power of the Divine Word. It is as if human language were scattered into a thousand fragments... The Quran displays human language with all the weakness inherent in its becoming suddenly the recipient of the Divine Word and displaying

its frailty before a power which is infinitely greater than man can imagine.[165]

Brown's analysis of the 18th Surah and his ideas regarding the postmodern bent of Qur'«nic Islamic consciousness present an interesting contrast to Jung's understanding of Islam in general and the 18th Surah in particular. Both essays can be considered as appreciations of certain psychological dimensions of Islam, but with significant differences, which can be summed up as differences between modern and postmodern consciousness. Thus, it is not so much a prejudice against Islam as such which made Jung unwittingly relegate it to the least of his priorities in the study of religions, but the dominant modern Weltanschauung of his age and its quest for meaning in certain preconceived notions of 'order'. Despite flashes of brilliant insight as in the 18th Surah, when it came to Islam as a religion, he remained very much within the modern mode.

Ironically then, Sam Huntington's "West versus the rest" can be rephrased in terms of a clash between modernism and postmodernism. The psychological similarities between postmodern consciousness and that of traditional societies have been examined by disciplines other than psychology. Walter Ong's distinction between "oral" and "literate" cultures draws similar conclusions regarding perceptions and interpretations of concepts such as 'order' and 'coherence'[166] Ong's distinction draws from and reiterates research in psycho-linguistics about the differences between for example, the type of consciousness engendered by print as opposed to television. New media technologies, especially in the West, are creating a 'secondary orality', that is, a consciousness which is closer to the oral rather than the literate in terms of the former's ability to cope better with ambiguity, paradox and diversity, in sum, postmodernity. (One can note in passing that

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[165] Gilligan, Carol; *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge. Harvard U. Press. 1982.

[166] See, for example, "When God was a Woman". *Time*. (May 6, 1991). For a comprehensive review of "goddess worship" and feminism, see Charlene Spretnak: *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age*. San Francisco. Harpers 1991. Also Kraemer, R.S; *Her Share of Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World.* Oxford 1993. Pantel, P.s; *A History of Women in the West.* Vol.1. From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints. Harvard. 1993.

Muhammad is known as the 'unlettered prophet' whereas the Bible is the product of literacy).

Cross -Crescent. "Irreconcilability".

THE 'OTHER' WOMAN?

One of the most striking features of postmodernism is the recognition of a "different voice" belonging to women.[167] If there is one, singularly over-riding theme in The Collected Works, it is the highlighting of the feminine aspect of the psyche. Jung's contribution to the women's movement is definitive in his insistence on an inherently feminine matrix to consciousness. His battle with Freud can be seen as a de-throning of the Patriarch or at least an insistence on sharing power with the Great Mother. Thus, according to Jung, in both Judaism and Christianity, the concept of Sophia as the ancient Hellenic companion to Yahweh/Zeus had been obliterated, leaving the currently hyper-masculine ethos in these religions and the psychological culture of their adherents. His reclaiming of the feminine in these religions through analytical psychology is a major contribution whose transformative impact is still in unfolding.

In this connection, Jung had nothing to say about the feminine in Islam and one can only assume that this silence was based on a combination of factors mentioned earlier. Namely, of seeing Islam as a poorly constructed vision rather than a re-visioning of this and other important elements in Judaism and Christianity, and therefore not particularly worthy of much attention vis a vis a theme as significant as the presence of the feminine. To the extent that Islam is indeed part of the monotheisms, the question arises if a similar claim can be made regarding its "lost" feminine aspect of Sophia, or some other concepts suggesting a feminine Presence? Jung has absolutely nothing to say on the subject, except for twice alluding to the "passion" which characterizes the "Islamic Eros". Eros is the feminine is aspect of psychological and spiritual life which is as vital as logos. To the extent that Jung saw it as "passionate" suggests a strong presence of the feminine in Islam, one that was, in Jung's words, simultaneously a "jealously guarded secret". Part of this guarding it seems, is through the veil of a specific type of

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[167] Murata, Sachiko; *The Tao of Islam: A Source Book on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. State University of N.Y. Press (SUNY) 1993.

vocabulary/consciousness not unlike the postmodern. Approaching the Islamic universe from within such a framework would reveal a very different perspective on what the western mind sees as a secretive and 'alien creed'.

While Brown also seems to be unaware of the deep-rooted presence of the feminine aspect to Islam, his summing up of the Islamic imagination implies such a possibility inasmuch as he recognizes in Islam the most pronounced attempt to return to the "eternal pagan substrata of all religions". In contrast, while being undoubtedly aware of the points of entry of pagan elements in western spiritual and intellectual history, Jung consistently failed to connect these facts with the philosophical substance of Islam. (See discussion on Volume II).

The enormous volume of information regarding the centrality of the theme/image of the Great Mother in all religions is by now indisputable fact and forms part of many postmodern constructions of paganism in the feminist return to religion in the West.[168] There is, therefore, every reason to think that Islam, whether in its similarities to the Judaeo-Christian religions or in its distinctive aspects, should have a similar, possibly exceedingly powerful presence, of this archetype of the Divine Feminine.[169] If this is so, and there is ample reason to see it as such, then it is possible to see Islam as a psychologically postmodern religion par excellence.

CONCLUSION

In psychology, as in life, the 'other' is never totally alien since it inevitably re-presents a part of one's own suppressed, forgotten or ignored side(s). Among Huntington's 'the rest' Islam is the only religion which has had a long and at times active relationship with the West. The level of knowledge of Islam and the perception of this relationship as illustrated through The Collected Works clearly indicates that among 'the rest', Islam is the other in western consciousness.

As stated at the outset, the perception of 'otherness' is, in fact, not a pathology but necessary and to that extent even desirable. What is pathological is the denial/suppression of the other, and a refusal to enlarge

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168 *Ibid.*
169 *Ibid.*

one's field of knowledge regarding oneself. It is the refusal to know and learn about the other in relationship with oneself, which draws people and societies into a spiral of violence and which is experienced psychologically as either fear or arrogance. In sum: Paranoia.

The psychodynamics of paranoia between Islam and the West remains to be explored. This monograph has mainly attempted to establish through a rational and empirical framework that Islam is the principal 'other' in the psychological and religious consciousness of the Western intellectual as exemplified by The Collected Works. Given the substance of the materials, it is self-evident that the Islamic 'other' in Jung's writings and thus also in this monograph, has yet to be described in detail. Having identified the 'other' in the context of a historical relationship, the next step would be to explore those elements in Islam that evoke such strong reactions. One framework for research could be a comparative examination of the relationship between masculine and feminine elements within Islam and the West. While one has alluded to such possibilities, a detailed study of these psycho-dynamics remains to be done.