

# CARL GUSTAV JUNG'S THREE VIEWS OF RELIGION: RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM AND SYNCRETISM AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD AND/OR THE SELF

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## Abstract

*In this paper we elaborate on Jung's three theses which we consider to be the main "keys" to the understanding of Jung's psychology of religion: the symbolism of the religious, the syncretic-eclectic view of religion, and the thesis that the "mystical unity" of the Soul and the God is the core of any true religiosity. According to Jung's teachings, the Self represents the wholeness of other fragments of the psyche ("ego", "shadow" and "anima and/or animus") – and it is the ultimate aim of the "individuation process". The mystical (Numinous, Sacred) manifests and expresses itself through the "collective subconsciousness", and through individual symbols and archetypes.*

*According to Jung's teaching, God manifests himself in many different languages – these "languages" (or ways of participation with Divine) all are equally valuable. One finds God and is connected with him inside himself, in the depths of his interior – such God is called by Jung "inner God". Moreover, "experience of inner God" and "experience of the Self" (Self – as the inner wholeness assimilated with Absolute) – are equivalent experiences. Christian thought can accept Jungian concept of religiosity only partially, because some of Jung's notions contradict the Christian doctrines.*

Keywords: *symbol; archetype; Self; Individuation; religion; mysticism; "inner God"; symbolism; syncretism; "mystical unity".*

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## Introduction

As taught by the analytical psychologist and psycho-therapist Carl Gustav Jung, the human Soul strives for fullness, the achievement of inner integration, i. e. the realization of the “higher I” – the Self - as an integral unity of three main “Soul’s fragments” – “ego”, “shadow”, and “anima” or “animus”. The „ego“ („persona“ or „mask“) is the “daily I” that is formed in childhood under the influence of the setting and upbringing, modeled, formed and limited as a result of a compromise between selfish impulses and childish desires, on the one hand, and expectations of the environment, on the other hand. The “shadow” is an entity representing those parts of personality that the environment has not encouraged and permitted, but prohibited and punished in a child. These contents are suppressed in a child in its “dark subconsciousness”, wherefrom they occasionally emerge, both in the waking states and in dreams, posing a threat to the adapted ego and its relationship with its environment<sup>1</sup>.

The “anima” represents the “woman inside the man”, whereas the “animus” represents the “man inside the woman” – these two entities represent spiritual guidance toward the realization of the Self, and becoming aware of this “entities” is about assimilating the qualities, tendencies and behaviours inherent to the opposite gender within one’s personality. Finally, the Self is the awakened, integrating, dynamic whole comprising these entities, but also an all-encompassing holistic link with the Universe and/or God<sup>2</sup>. The process of inner integration as unification of partial “psyches” into *the all-encompassing and supra-personal Self* is referred to as the *Individuation process*. Jung’s psychological opus is permeated with esoteric, mystical and religious symbols, whereby God is expressed and presented to people through both individual and collective subconscious (*the collective unconscious*).

It is this collective unconscious, of which any individual subconsciousness is an integral part, representing a source wherefrom all symbols and archetypes known to mankind spring. These symbols and archetypes are *spontaneous expressions of the collective unconscious*. They are found both in dreams of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Marie-Louise von Franz, “The process of individuation”, in: Carl Gustav Jung (ed.), *Man and his symbols*, Anchor Press Doubleday, New York, 1964, pp. 165–176.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 177–211.

individuals, in mythologies, in esoteric and occult systems, mysticism, religions and arts – they constitute the very core of Jung’s psychological teachings.

In the core of all these imagination systems is the religious tendency of the human Soul, which is expressed in a propensity for an all-encompassing whole, the attainment of which gives us the meaning of life. Jung refers to such aspiration of the human Soul as *the religious function of the Soul*, which ensures both inner and outer balance of an individual.

Yet when I point out that the soul possesses by nature a religious function, and when I stipulate that it is the prime task of all education (of adults) to convey the archetype of the God-image, or its emanations and effects, then it is precisely the theologian who seizes me by the arm and accuses me of “psychologism”.<sup>3</sup>

According to Jung, in the human Soul we find the “God-image” (“Imago Dei”), which is the inner archetype of God. God is manifested in the interior of humans through a religious experience of a “*mystical unity*” in which the Soul and God are fused – in this sense God is the “inner God”. To man, he is imminent, albeit secretive and rationally unknowable - rather than transcendent, as predominantly viewed in Christianity. Accordingly, Jung considers *the* experience of the Self as an all-encompassing and supra-personal whole and the experience of the “inner God” – to be identical experience. Christian theologians characterize such Jung’s stances as “psychologisms”.

In the light of the above, in this paper we will try to elaborate on and prove the thesis that the symbolism of Divine, the syncretism of the Divine - and the mystical experience of the Soul and God united as One – constitute the very foundations of Jung’s contemplation on religion. They represent the “three main keys” that unlock Jung’s integrative, psychological and also spiritual insight to knowing, experience, conceptuality and reality of the phenomena of religion, esotericism and mysticism. As stressed in the minority of works well grounded in Jung’s teachings, he is perhaps the most often mentioned yet also most rarely read author<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> C.G. Jung, *The collected works of C. G. Jung: Psychology and Alchemy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gord Barentsen, “Freud, Jung, and the Dangerous Supplement to Psychoanalysis”, *Mosaic: An interdisciplinary Critical Journal – Special Issue: Freud after Derrida*, 44 (2011) 4, pp. 195–211.

## 1. The symbolism of the Divine as a way God is "embodied" in the human's world: Numinosity, symbols and archetypes, the "God-image"

Jung argues that the "God-image" ("Imago Dei") is an impression upon the human Soul. Since it is an imprint, it may be assumed that there is also a Numinous, Sacred reality which imprinted that imprint into the Soul – God himself.

Accordingly when I say as a psychologist that God is an archetype, I mean by that the "type" in the psyche. The word "type" is, as we know, derived from "typos", "blow" or "imprint"; thus an archetype presupposes an imprinter. Psychology as the science of the soul has to confine itself to its subject and guard against overstepping its proper boundaries by metaphysical assertions or other professions of faith.<sup>5</sup>

At the junction between *the imprint and imprinter*, i. e. between the "God-image" and God, Jung locates *the difference between psychology and theology(ies)*. The "job" of psychology is (among other things) to study "God-images" (*archetypes, symbols*), whereas the "job" of theologies is to rely on different religious systems to demonstrate the existence of a Numinous reality, as well as to describe its context, arrangement and dynamics.

The term "Numinous" originates from the theologian, philosopher and religiologist Rudolf Otto<sup>6</sup> and refers to the Divine, Sacred realm immersed in mystery, imperceptibility. The contact with this transcendental (other-worldly) sphere awakes deep and mystical feeling in the human Soul. Numinosity appears *as a mysterium tremendum* (awe-inspiring mystery) -and it is experienced as the awe-inspiring feeling while facing the Sacred. It is a feeling of the grandeur, eminence (*augustum*), as well as the feeling of attraction (*fasci-nans*). On the other hand, the feeling of Numinous is also intimidating and fearsome, awe-inspiring, referred as *tremendum*<sup>7</sup>. Here we are dealing with

<sup>5</sup> C.G. Jung, *The collected...*, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> In his book *The Idea of the Holy* Otto elaborates on the category of the Numinous with regard to its inner qualities, as well as the multiple layers of subjective psychological experience, by using psychologically-phenomenological descriptive method. Cf. Adalbert Rebić (ed.), "Otto, Rudolf", *Opći religijski leksikon*, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, Zagreb, 2002, p. 673.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rudolf Otto, *The idea of Holy: An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, pp. 5–24, 31–41.

the manifestation of the Sacred as dual and ambivalent, and also *paradoxical, contradictory*.

Has it not yet been observed that all religious statements contain logical contradictions and assertions that are impossible in principle, that this is in fact the very essence of religious assertion? As witness to this we have Tertullian's avowal: "And the Son of God is dead, which is worthy of belief because it is absurd. And when buried He rose again, which is certain because it is impossible." (*De carne Christi*, V).<sup>8</sup>

The contact between the human Soul and the Numinous occurs via symbols that are mysterious and (in rational term) unknowable signs of the absolute mystery. Although the Sacred persists in human Soul as its immanent substance, this substance (as the absolute reality) is always at once transcendental, other-worldly, unknown and unknowable when viewed by a religious man.

The sociologist of religion Mircea Eliade divides reality (space and time) into two categories: *the Sacred and the profane*. The profane (worldly) is associated with the material conditions of existence and the social arrangement of daily life, whereas the Sacred is intermingled with and permeates this same existence and daily life. Inside the space human beings founded and worshiped the *Sacred Places*<sup>9</sup> - during the time they perceived some periods of the year as Sacred periods, which were also ritually worshiped. In that way people are stationary and occasionally participants of *Divine dramas, epiphanies, cosmologies and eschatologies*<sup>10</sup>. The Sacred sacralises the world primarily through religions, and religiosity that is an integral part of human particularity – when viewed in such light, we can consider man as a *homo religiosus*.

Whatever the historical context in which he is placed, "homo religious" always believes that there is an absolute reality, the sacred, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real.<sup>11</sup>

The human psyche contains the "God-image" ("Imago Dei") – an archetype of God, of a Numinous and unknown dimension, as well as of (Self)realized

<sup>8</sup> C.G. Jung, *The collected...*, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion – The significance of religious myth, and ritual within life and culture*, A Harvest Book – Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1959, p. 10–33.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M. Eliade, *Sacred and Profane...*, pp. 34–57; M. Eliade, *Myth and reality*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York – Evanston, 1963, pp. 54–69.

<sup>11</sup> M. Eliade, *Sacred and Profane...*, p. 202.

inner whole – the Self. According to Jung, the existence of such “God-image” in the human Soul is a psychological fact, rather than the evidence that a Numinous, other-worldly or Divine reality exists<sup>12</sup>. The reality that is imprinted into the human psyche is referred to by Jung as the unknowable, mysterious, collective unconscious, the “higher I”, the Self, or God - whereas theologians refer to it strictly as God. In Jungian context, the *experience of the integral unity of the Soul and God is also the experience of completeness of the Self (higher I)*. Through the experience of the Self, the Soul experiences its oneness with the Numinous in the same (or at least similar) way as it does through its experience of the “inner God”. From this viewpoint, the experience of the Self and the experience of God are two notions used to refer to a homogeneous inner experience, or these two experiences are at least very close correlates<sup>13</sup>.

Symbols of God and symbols of the Self help us attain a *state of inner integrity*. These symbols are *signs, images, expressions or materializations of the Numinous* and can be found in mythologies, esoteric teachings, mysticisms and religions, but also in arts and in dreams of individuals. There are many *symbols of the wholeness* (imprints of a Numinous reality) – they help people achieve a “sense of connectedness with God or the Universe”, that is, to have an *experience of “mystical unity”* or, in other words, an *experience of the Self*. The most powerful symbols of wholeness for the humanity are, according to Jung, historical persons such as Christ or Buddha – believed to be *embodiments of God*.

Regardless of whether we refer to such historical person, a God-man or a Divine incarnation, in both cases we refer to an embodiment of God, God in the body, God in a human form. *God in human form* is the most powerful religious symbol of the wholeness in the history of mankind<sup>14</sup>. In addition to

<sup>12</sup> Jung leaves the question of what the “God-image” is an imprint, and whether it is imprint at all – or we are dealing with a self-created mental archetype specific to mankind – unanswered: repeating multiple times that answering such questions is the “job” of a theologian rather than a psychologist. Cf. C.G. Jung, *The collected...*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. C.G. Jung, *The collected...*, pp. 47–48; C.G. Jung, *O religiji i kršćanstvu*, transl. Franjo Gruić, Župski ured, Đakovački Selci, 1990, pp. 23–24.

<sup>14</sup> For Jung, Jesus Christ is the most complete symbol of God and/or the Self in human history (cf. Ann Belford Ulanov, “Jung and Religion: the opposing Self”, in: Polly Young–Eisendrath – Terence Dawson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 327–328). Accordingly, it can be established that to him Christianity was the most integral religiosity – of course, provided it is veritable, genuine rather than mere formalism without substance, to which Jung refers by using terms “confessionalism” and “imitatio Christi” (cf. C.G. Jung, *O religiji...*, pp. 29–35).

that symbol, there are many other mythological, mystical, esoteric and religious symbols of the wholeness – yin-yang, mandala, yantra, hieros gamos, lapis philosophorum, etc.

Religious symbols do not originate from the head but from elsewhere, perhaps from the heart, in any event from some psychologically deep layer that has a weak resemblance to consciousness which always remains only on the surface. This is why religious symbols have a pronounced “annunciating nature”, which means they are normally spontaneous products of unconscious mental activity. They are all but well thought-out – rather, they have slowly grown over centuries, as plants, as natural annunciations of the human soul.<sup>15</sup>

Jung treats the Numinous as Numinous and stays true to his argument that there is in the human Soul an image of the Numinous that cannot be rationally conceived. Such Jung’s view is fair toward psychology to which his work is a part of, but it is also fair toward theologies, since he establishes the subject-matter of theology from his own psychological ground, without touching upon theological discussions.

When I speak of God, I always speak as a psychologist as I have expressly emphasized in many places in my books. For the psychologist the God-image is a psychological fact. He cannot say anything about the metaphysical reality of God because that would far exceed the limits of the theory of knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Jung’s teachings about the symbolism of the Divine may be acceptable to Christianity, which is itself immersed in the *symbolism of the Word of God*. Through this symbolism, Jesus Christ is embodied, *his life, death and resurrection representing a living symbol*, which Christians use as a symbolism to form and maintain the union with God. On the other hand, the teachings of the “God-image” as a psychological fact only, of God (the Self) as an archetype whose symbols are historical Divine embodiments such as Buddha and/or Christ – as well as the thesis that the experiences of God and the Self are equivalent experiences – cannot be acceptable to the Christianity.

<sup>15</sup> C.G. Jung, *O religiji...*, p. 12 (*author’s translation*).

<sup>16</sup> C.G. Jung, *Letters: Volume 1, 1906-1950*, Selected and edited by Gerhard Adler, in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffe, translated from German by R. F. C. Hull, Routledge, London – New York, 2015, p. 195.

## 2. The syncretism of the religious: various paths toward the Divine and the necessity of synthesizing the Eastern and the Western spiritual patterns

The syncretism of religion is among the fundamental theses of Jung's contemplation of religiosity. The thesis of the syncretism of the religious appeared on the global esoteric scene after the *emergence of Theosophy*: an esoteric teaching<sup>17</sup> according to which God expresses himself through different religious, mystical, esoteric and occult symbols – and the Divine truth is evenly “distributed” and emitted to mankind via these symbols. In addition, Theosophists were strongly motivated to “reconcile” the Western and Eastern religious patterns and establish a religious truth as an integral synthesis of these two patterns<sup>18</sup>.

Jung's and Theosophical views on religiosity are quite comparable, since they rely on some similar paradigms. Jung considers the East to be an example of introversion and the West to be an example of extroversion – and he is often underlining the need to synthesize and mutually supplement these two cultural systems.

We [the Westerners, *author's comment*] are talking about religious construction and uplifting, to us God is the master of the universe, we have a religion of love for our close ones, the main altar is in our churches that soar toward the sky. On the other hand, India speaks of Dhyana, meditation and introspection, divinity is inside all objects, primarily inside the man, moving away from the exterior toward the interior. In ancient Indian temples, the altar is 2-3 meters in below the ground – on the other hand, what we are most shy to reveal is the most Sacred symbol to the Indian. We believe in action, whereas the Indian believes in motionless being. Our religious practice amounts to bowing, worship and praise. To an Indian on the other hand, Yoga is the most

<sup>17</sup> The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in New York by H. C. Olcott and H. Petrovna Blavatsky – Theosophy represented the *first true syncretic-eclectic spiritual system* created in the West, combining Hinduism, Yoga and Vedanta with Western occult systems: astrology and Kabbalah, as well as the fundamental ideas of Western esotericism and mysticism. As such, the Theosophical teaching represents a true historical predecessor of the New Age worldview. Cf. Christopher Patridge (ed.), “Teozofsko društvo”, *Enciklopedija novih religija: Nove religije, sekte i alternativni duhovni pokreti*, transl. Dolores Bettini et al., Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2005, pp. 320–322.

<sup>18</sup> The syncretic approach often implies the eclectic attitude towards religious – this is particularly emphasized in a present-day New Age spirituality. We would be correct to consider New Age as a syncretic-eclectic worldview, because of mixing and combining different religious and mystical patterns. Cf. Maja Dragun, *New age: Povijesni korijeni i postmoderna tumačenja*, Naklada Jurčić, Zagreb, 2012, pp. 72–81.



important practice, sinking deep into some unconscious state, so today, which he praises as the highest consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

Jung also expresses religious syncretism by using the famous syntagm that *God expresses himself in different languages*, which implies that all these *different languages* (i.e. the different religious, mystical and esoteric patterns) *are mutually equivalent* and jointly represent a mosaic of the Divine truth announced to human kind.

Thus Buber blandly assumes that everyone thinks the same as he does when he says “God”. But in the reality Buber means Yahweh, the orthodox Christian means the Trinity, the Mohammedan Allah, the Buddhist Buddha, the Taoist Tao and so on. Everyone insist on his standpoint and imagines he possesses the sole truth; therefore I council modesty or rather the willingness to suppose that God can express himself in different languages.<sup>20</sup>

Syncretism of the religious did not appear on the Western spiritual scene due to the emergence of Theosophy – it has been there since the *early Christian epoch*. During this epoch, different mythological, esoteric, religious and philosophical patterns mixed on the territory populated by the Mediterranean culture – from the fertility cult with a matriarchic sign of worshipping the Goddess or Divine Mother to Christianity and Gnosticism, Jewish mysticism, Egyptian Hermeticism, Greek philosophy, as well as Mazdaism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and even Hinduism<sup>21</sup>.

The sociologist of religion Željko Mardešić (who published under the pseudonym Jakov Jukić) wrote the following about early Christianity period

<sup>19</sup> C.G. Jung, *O religiji...*, p. 52 (*author's translation*).

<sup>20</sup> C.G. Jung, *Letters: Volume 2, 1951-1961*, Selected and edited by Gerhard Adler, in Collaboration with Aniela Jaffe, translated from German by R. F. C. Hull, Routledge, London – New York, 2015, p. 368.

<sup>21</sup> The presence of the *notion of reincarnation* in the Mediterranean and Europe (especially in ancient Greek culture), which coexisted and intermingled with the notion of vegetative resurrection, points to a possible influence of Hinduism. Both notions are *an integral part of the lunar, vegetative epiphany* which favours nature, celebrates fertility and is dominated by a female deity. In addition, such potential influence of Hinduism is indicated by the Gnostic myth “The Hymn of the Pearl” which describes the *descent of the Soul (Divine spark) into the material world*, which causes its *dream-like Self-forgetfulness*, wherefrom the Soul is awakened by *gnosis or Self-recognition* (cf. M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, pp. 126–134). Notionally, this myth is very similar to the Hindu teachings about bondage, enchantment, fascination of the Soul with “Maya” (the material dream, apparition, illusion) – from these states of non-liberty, the Soul is redeemed through “Moksha” (liberation through the recognition of the oneness of Atman and Brahman: the individual Soul and the Universe).

being a highly syncretic one, filled with all kinds of intellectual and spiritual patterns:

Going, therefore, their separate ways, these two main streams of viewing life after death – the circular one and the linear one – joined each other and were mixed together during the Hellenic era, at the junction of the Christian influence and that of all other religions. It was during this era that they discovered mystery, gnosis, hermeticism, Greek wisdom, Eastern myths, Jewish magic and unbridled polytheism. The collision was presented as a choice between faith in reincarnation and faith in resurrection. In the spirit of pluralism, it was the first time in history that syncretism was allowed on a large scale, which meant that one could at the same time be a pagan and believe in resurrection, but also be a Christian and believe in reincarnation.<sup>22</sup>

Syncretism represents the *structural quality and notional determinant* of esoteric/religious teachings of the Western tradition (from Hermeticism to Gnosticism, Heresy and Alchemy, to Rosicrucianism, Theosophy and New Age). The syncretic set of ideas within these systems has eventually transformed and transcended the boundaries of the *hermetic and secretive discourse* of spiritual subcultures, becoming more and more strongly expressed, only to become unambiguously manifested in Theosophical teachings and, even more transparently, in present-day New Age spirituality<sup>23</sup>.

According to Jung, the collective unconscious represents a medium through which the syncretic truth about mankind is announced in fragments (through specific teachings and annunciations). Symbols of God (i. e. the Self) emerge through the collective unconscious, sometimes as individual apparitions and more often as part of different esoteric, mystical and religious systems. When the dynamics of religion are viewed through this Jung's "hourglass", the syncretism and eclecticism of religious truths need not be specifically underlined or emphasized – they are logically implied.

Despite the integral syncretism of his teachings, Jung claimed on several occasions that it was wrong for Westerners to easily abandon their traditional roots without sufficient forethought and switch to Eastern religiosity. According to Jung, the knowledge of Eastern religions is beneficial and liberating for Western men, including different Western and Eastern spiritual

<sup>22</sup> Jakov Jukić, "Nove društvene prilike i ezoterično okultna religioznost", in: Mijo Nikić (ed.), *Novi religiozni pokreti*, Filozofsko-teološki institut družbe Isusove, Zagreb, 1997, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. James W. Sire, *Izazov svjetonazora: Pregled temeljnih svjetonazora*, transl. Bruna Fili-Terešak, STE-Ppress, Zagreb, 2002, pp. 144–180.

subcultures. However, that religiosity wherein the Western man can most easily “find himself” is Christianity because Christian archetypes are too deeply embedded in the collective unconscious of the West to be dismissed, ignored or simply replaced by Eastern ones. In light of this, Jung wrote as follows:

The growing acquaintanceship with the spiritual East should mean to us only a symbolic expression of the fact that we are entering into connection with the strange elements in ourselves. Denial of our own historical premises would be sheer folly and would be the best way to bring about the second uprooting of consciousness. Only by standing firmly on our can we assimilate the spirit of the East.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of syncretism (let alone eclecticism) of the Divine and of religious, mystical and esoteric patterns that are all equivalent “languages of the Divine” or “paths to God” cannot be acceptable to Christianity, since it represents faith in one God and his son Jesus Christ, regardless of the interreligious dialogues and interconfessional tolerance advocated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century – and there’s no space in it for any other annunciations of Divine, especially not the ones that belong to religious, mystical or esoteric systems other than Christianity.

### **3. The psychological experience of the Self and/or the mystical experience of God embedded in the phenomenon of the “inner God”**

Within the monistic, pantheistic, immanentistic and holistic systems of beliefs, it is clear that the religious and/or mystical truth manifested as *a state of oneness of the Soul and the Universe* is always inevitably a single truth – although different paths may lead to it<sup>25</sup>. In religious terms, God is one, but different mystical, esoteric and religious systems lead to him in specific ways. An exemplary case in point could be the (ab)usage of Yoga techniques as a

<sup>24</sup> *The Secret of The Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*, (the ancient Taoist text), translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm, European Commentary by Carl Gustav Jung, London, Paul Kegan and Trench Trubner, 1947, p. 128.

<sup>25</sup> The examples of these paths are: meditation, contemplation, askesis, Self-redemption, Self-realization, different systems of physical and spiritual exercises, austerity, solitude, prayer, acting within a community, etc. Cf. M. Dragun, “Konzumeristička obilježja današnje sinkretičko-eklektičke duhovnosti”, *Društvena istraživanja*, 17 (2008.) 6, pp. 1053–1056.

language towards seeking the higher spirituality, vs. its perceivment as just bodily physiological training in some Western approaches.

According to Jung's teachings, *the mystical experience of the Universe, the Cosmos, the Divine dimension or God* is the same as the *psychological experience of the Self acquired through Individuation process*. Both aspects of this unique experience bring us in contact with a Numinous reality. The phenomenon of the "inner God" discovered through the recognition that *God is within us* represents the very core of experiencing such Numinous reality in any form it may take. The inner presence of Divine presence is full of contradictions and paradoxes, and the feeling of participation in the Divine is beyond both rationality and linguistic structures.

Oddly enough the paradox is one of our most valuable spiritual possessions, while uniformity of meaning is a sign of weakness. Hence a religion becomes inwardly impoverished when it loses or waters down its paradoxes; but their multiplication enriches because only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life. Non-ambiguity and non-contradiction are one-sided and thus unsuited to express the incomprehensible.<sup>26</sup>

Through history the mystical experience has been present in all religions and in all esoteric and/or mystical systems<sup>27</sup>. "Mystical unity" is usually described as a state in which Soul and God (i. e. Divine, Absolute or Universe) are unified. Having such experience means to become one with God, blended with his omnipresence, participating with the Divine, and be (an integral and inseparable) part of the Divine, or God<sup>28</sup>. According to Jung's attitudes, based both on his body of scientific research and on his psychological and psycho-therapeutic practice, the counterpart to the mystical experience of God

<sup>26</sup> C.G. Jung, *The collected...*, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> Mysticism is always engaged in the *unreachable, unfathomable* – that which escapes human reason, which can only be expressed through an allegory, analogy, metaphor and other symbolic figures. Together with the manifestations in religious, mystical and esoteric systems and in arts - the mystical is also abundantly manifested in the dreams of individuals, through individual subconsciousness, which is an integral part of the collective unconscious. Cf. C.G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconsciousness", in: C.G. Jung (ed.), *Man and his symbols*, Anchor Press Doubleday, New York, 1964, pp. 17–31.

<sup>28</sup> Such experiences are found in Christian, Jewish and Islamic mystics, in Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and in Hermetism, Gnosticism, and Alchemy. Also many individuals in modern age, and in the present-days, are having such experiences, which are independent from any particular religious pattern, they are just the experiences of oneness with Nature, Universe, or God as a supra-personal energy of being. Sometimes they are inspired by some New Age authors and techniques, or generally by the spirit of the New Age epoch as the epoch of the individual spiritual quest for the enlightenment. Cf. M. Dragun, *New age...*, pp. 98–100, 103–109.

is the experience of *being blended and a part of the “higher I”, the Self*, the inner whole, the integrative interior through which we are connected with the collective unconscious. The experience of God and/or the experience of the Self both have a strong therapeutic efficacy.

Fritjof Capra, a quantum physicist, system theorist and ecologist, as well as an advocate of the holistic value paradigm as the foundation of the New Age worldview – described his own experience of “mystical unity” as follows:

As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I “saw” cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I “saw” the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I “heard” its sound, and at that moment I knew that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.<sup>29</sup>

Capra’s description of his holistic experience fits with the mainly described pattern of mystical experiences of the oneness with God or Universe, known thorough the history of religions and mysticism. We find as well an abundance of descriptions of such mystical experiences of God among Christian mystics (to mention only the few: Hildegart von Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Ávila, John the Cross, Nikolaj Berdjajev, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin etc.). Meister Eckhart, a German Dominican, philosopher, theologian and mystic, active in the late 13<sup>rd</sup> century and early 14<sup>th</sup> century, wrote that a truly religious man (*Mystic, author’s comment*) is the man who is conjoined with God in the way he is one with the One, in which any multiplicity is non-multiplicity i. e. one(ness). This oneness with God is reflected in the deeds of such man - his deeds are indeed Gods deeds<sup>30</sup>.

The feeling of mystical oneness is always subjective, yet also representing a *universal and absolute experience* – known and present in all religions, mythological, esoteric and mystical systems, as well as in individual aske-sis: *Self-salvation, Self-redemption, Self-recognition, and Individuation*. Christian mysticism is mostly *monistic, pantheistic and immanentistic*, frequently including the neoplatonic notion of “the World as the Divine emanation”<sup>31</sup>. Beyond the Christian streams, mystical experience in the Western tradition

<sup>29</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, Shambala Publications, Boulder-Colorado, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Maister Eckhart, *Knjiga božanske utjehe*, transl. Ante Šoljić, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1991, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> A. Rebić (ed.), “Emanacija”, *Opći religijski leksikon*, pp. 237–238.

has a crucial place in medieval Alchemy – it is referred to as *opus alchemicum*, and is expressed through numerous allegories referring to a “marriage of the opposites” (lapis philosophorum, filius philosophorum, filius macrocosmi, hieros gamos, hermaphrodite, uruborus, etc.) – but also in other Western esoteric teachings.

Eastern religiosity and mysticism are pronouncedly *pantheistic and holistic*<sup>32</sup>, except for Buddhism which finds the supreme aim in the *emptiness, void* beyond the physical and intellectual realms<sup>33</sup>, i. e. in a liberation from the world itself. Such state of emptiness, liberation from the illusive reality, is expressed in Buddhism by Sanskrit philosophical term “Nirvana” – as a “blowing out” or “quenching” of the restless mind immersed in the desires, longings and sufferings of the human lives.

Hinduism claims that the realm of material conditioning with its desires, longings and fears is just an illusion named “Maya” (Skt. word “Maya” – appearance, dream, make-believe, illusory texture of the material existence). Similar notion to “Maya” in Vedantic and Upanishadic thought, is the notion of “Samsara” (Skt. “Samsara” – the world as a circular flow, an endless circling of life, death and rebirthing, i. e. the reincarnation). The “Samsara” is conceived as a wheel of rebirthing of the Soul thorough numerous lives, and that wheel is at the same time the wheel of endlessly repeating suffering<sup>34</sup>. It is only beyond that realm, in the oneness of Atman and Brahman<sup>35</sup>, that Soul finds the truth, enlightenment, salvation and redemption (Skt. “Moksha” – hinduistic term for liberation, redemption)<sup>36</sup>.

In Hinduism, the most authentic mystical experience is described and elaborated through *the oneness of Atman and Brahman* (the individual Soul and the Universe), and by the sentence “Tat tvam Asi” (“Thou art that.”) from the sixth chapter of the Chandogya Upanishad<sup>37</sup>. In translation from Sanskrit,

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Hajime Nakamura, *Načini mišljenja istočnih naroda*, transl. Goran Kardaš, vol. I, DEMETRA, Filozofska biblioteka Dimitrija Savića, Zagreb, 2012, pp. 215–220.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. H. Nakamura, *Načini mišljenja...*, pp. 68–99; Čedomil Veljačić, *Razmeđa azijskih filozofija*, vol. I, Sveučilišna naklada Liber, Zagreb, 1978, pp. 234–241; *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 217–222.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Jean Varenne, “Hinduizam svetih tekstova”, in: Marie-Maddelaine Davy (ed.), *Enciklopedija mistika*, transl. Milivoj Mezulić et al., vol. II, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1990, pp. 126–131.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128–130, 148, 150–159.

<sup>36</sup> As it is clearly evident, hinduistic term “Moksha” is a chronological predecessor of buddhistic term “Nirvana” – and these two terms are the ideational correlates of the Indian religiosity as well as the philosophy.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Č. Veljačić, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 144–152.; Cf. Č. Veljačić, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 142–146.

this sentence means: “I am the whole.”, „I am all/everything”, “I am the Universe” – i. e. “Atman is one with the Brahman”. This sentence also has a crucial place in the Indian philosophy based on Vedas and Upanishads, mostly in the works of philosophers Shankara and Ramanuja<sup>38</sup>.

Taoism also views the world as a holistic network of relations, a system of interdependent energies, in which all is connected to all, and is part of inevitably defined by the whole – the complex conceptual symbols of “Tao” and “Yin-Yang” provide the solid presentation of the holistic discourse underlying Taoism. The “Tao” is defined and described as “the path, the order, the law of the Universe as a balanced dynamic whole” – i. e. the dynamic synthesis of the opposite physical and spiritual forces<sup>39</sup>. Similarly, the “Yin-Yang” is considered as a delicately uniting, complementary, integrating, dynamic wholeness of the different pairs of the opposites, starting with the most outstanding pair – female principle vs. male principle<sup>40</sup>.

The religious, mystical and psychological experience of God and/or the Self in any of the above examples represents an experience of the “inner God” (the God we are approaching and which communicates with use through the medium of our interior).

The action of the prejudice that divinity is beyond man could be called an almost systematic blindness. Although this prejudice is not exclusive to Christianity, there are certain religions that do not share it. On the contrary, they highlight, as do some Christian Mystics, the essential identity of God and man, whether in the form of some identity by default (prior) or a goal that can be attained through certain practices or initiations, such as those referred to in Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses*, let alone some yoga disciplines.<sup>41</sup>

As the eye to the sun, so the soul corresponds to God. Since our conscious mind does not comprehend the soul it is ridiculous to speak of the things of the soul in a patronizing or depreciatory manner. Even the believing Christian does not know God’s hidden ways and must leave him to decide whether he will work on man from the outside or from within, through the soul. It would be blasphemy to assert that God can manifest himself everywhere saves only

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Č. Veljačić, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 142–146, 152–154, 169–176.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Chevalier – Alain Gheerbrant (ed.), “Tao”, *Rječnik simbola*, transl. Ana Buljan et al., NZMH “Mladost”, Zagreb, 1994, pp. 691–692; C.G. Jung, *Psihološki tipovi*, transl. Miloš Đurić, Kosmos, Beograd, 1963, p. 168.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. C.G. Jung, *Psihološki tipovi*, p. 170; J. Chevalier – A. Gheerbrant (ed.), “Yin-Yang”, *Rječnik...*, pp. 773–774.

<sup>41</sup> C.G. Jung, *O religiji...*, p. 23 (author’s translation).



in the human soul. Indeed the very intimacy of the relationship between God and the soul precludes from the start any devaluation of the latter.<sup>42</sup>

The presence or absence of the inner experience of God is what actually segregates *true religiosity from mere religious formalism* (which is referred to by Jung in the context of Christianity as *confessionalism* and “imitatio Christi”)<sup>43</sup>. According to immanentistic views, such experiences result in the Soul merging into and becoming one with God – however, such immanentism *is not and cannot be complete* – especially in the epistemological manner. Part of the Divine a priori remains unknown, unfathomable, unreachable and unknowable, i. e. other-worldly and transcendental. Ludwig Wittgenstein, a prominent Austrian logician and philosopher from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote as follows about the unknowability of the mystical, and the inability of humans to give to the mystical an authentic linguistic, and even less epistemological expression: “6.522 There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the Mystical.”<sup>44</sup>

The immanentism of the Divine and the notion of the “inner God” can be to the certain extension acceptable to Christianity, in terms of a *mystical feeling, an experience of God* through which God is emerges to the Soul as *the revelation*. From the Christian viewpoint, the religious/mystical feeling of *participation in the Divine* may also be accepted – but *the integral unity of the Soul and God* cannot – because (according to Christianity) man is a creature marked with sin that can only be washed away by living the prescribed religious life, whereas God is the transcendental creator whose Son came to Earth and was resurrected to save all those who believe in him. In addition, Christianity cannot be close to the concept of the equality of the experience of God and the experience of the Self, where *God is a supra-personal and/or impersonal instance, or energy* – with which the Self can be blended and united without an intermediary – and for which different names are used in different mystical, esoteric and religious patterns.

<sup>42</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected...*, p. 47.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. C.G. Jung, *Collected...*, pp. 16–18, 20; C.G. Jung, *O religiji...*, pp. 44–47.

<sup>44</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, transl. Gajo Petrović, Veselin Masleša – Svjetlost, Sarajevo, [1955] 1987, p. 189.



## Conclusion

Jung's views of religion may be generally divided into three groups:

1. Firstly, the entire human world of imagination is based on symbols, through which we are connected with the *collective unconscious, the universal primordial energy, the Numinous or God*. Whichever sphere of life or symbolism our relationship with God may belong to (individual quest, art, mysticism, esotericism or religion), *symbols and archetypes* (structured groupings of symbols) are what sustain us in our link to our Primordial Source, and they are as such the core of the religious. Jung also refers to religious symbols as “God-images” (“Imago Dei”) in human Soul.

2. Secondly, according to Jung, it is very important to study different religious and mystical patterns and *discover the Divine truth dispersed across all these patterns* – God has manifested himself to mankind in thousands of ways, and these ways are like fragments of glass that combine to form a mosaic of the Divine truth. Each of these ways is *equally valuable*, and such Divine truth is inevitably *syncretic and/or eclectic truth*.

3. And thirdly, the most important aspect in religion and other “paths to God” is to achieve a state of “mystical unity” with the Divine, i. e. “mystical participation” in the Divine. This is a state *where an individual Soul merges into the Divine and thus becomes an integral part thereof, uniting with it on a deep level*. The realization that the Soul and God are one is the key to understanding any mysticism or religion – and also the Individuation process as an inner realization of the Self – *this realization is the Self-realization itself*. Such insight is something we acquire by *descending within our Soul* – such God is our intimate God, inseparable from ourselves – the “inner God”. According to Jung, “mystical unity” and “inner God” represent the core of any true religiosity. In terms of discovering such inner unity or inner wholeness that brings us in touch with the Numinous and/or Divine – *the experience of God and the experience of the Self are equivalent experiences*.

Christian views of Jung's theses range between intellectual and substantial acceptance of *the symbolic nature of religion* and also acceptable of immanenism of the Divine thorough the religious experience of *participation with Divine*, on the one hand – and intellectual and substantial rejection of *syncretic/eclectic religiosity with a concept of God as a supra-confessional universal instance or energy* and also rejection of *the oneness of the Soul and God* (which does

not require religious intermediation, and where God is understood to be the “God of all religions”), on the other hand. In addition, *the concept of equality of the experience of God and the experience of the Self* that Jung elaborates on and advocates in his work is by default alien and unacceptable to Christian thought.

## **TRI POGLEDA NA RELIGIJU CARLA GUSTAVA JUNGA: RELIGIOZNI SIMBOLIZAM I SINKRETIZAM TE MISTIČNO ISKUSTVO BOGA I/ILI JASTVO**

### **Sažetak**

*U ovome radu raspravlja se o trima Jungovim tezama koje smatram glavnim ključem za razumijevanje Jungove psihologije religije: simbolizam religioznih ljudi, sinkretičko-eklektičko shvaćanje religije i teza da je „mistično jedinstvo“ duše i Boga srž svih istinskih religioznosti. Prema Jungovu učenju Jastvo predstavlja cjelinu drugih isječaka psihe („Ego“, „Sjena“ i „Anima“ i/ili „Animus“) te je konačan cilj procesa individuacije. Mistično (Duhovno, Sveto) očituje se i izražava pomoću „kolektivne podsvesnosti“ te individualnih simbola i arhetipova.*

*Prema Jungovu mišljenju Bog se očituje pomoću različitih jezika – svi ti „jezici“ (ili načini sudjelovanja u Božanskoj) jednakovrijedni su. Čovjek nalazi Boga i povezan je s Njim unutar sebe, u dubinama svoje unutrašnjosti – taj se Bog prema Jungovu mišljenju zove „unutarnji Bog“. Štoviše, „iskustvo unutarnjega Boga“ i „iskustvo Jastva“ (Jastvo kao unutarnja cjelina asimilirana s Apolutnim) – jesu jednaka iskustva. Kršćanska misao može prihvatiti Jungov koncept religioznosti samo djelomično jer su neka Jungova shvaćanja protuslovna kršćanskim doktrinama.*

*Ključne riječi: simbol; arhetip; Jastvo; individuacija; religija; misticismizam; „unutarnji Bog“; simbolizam; sinkretizam; „mistično jedinstvo“.*