

CIVILIZATION IN TRANSITION

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ABSTRACT *This opening address to the XI International Symposium of the Associação Junguiana do Brasil portrays a current state of paradigm shift in Western civilization as the concept of modernity is thrown into crisis. It traces the roots of this crisis to the 'disenchantment of nature' by science, which discredited animism without putting anything in its place; and uses the myth of Prometheus as a way of considering possible new paradigms.*

Key words: Jung, paradigm shift, modernity, Prometheus, Twin Towers

It is with joy that, as President of the XI International Symposium of the Associação Junguiana do Brasil (AJB), I welcome on behalf of the Instituto Junguiano do Rio de Janeiro, the AJB Institute that is organizing the symposium this year, all the speakers, round-table coordinators, workshop coordinators, participants in the open topics and everyone who came to participate in this event.

The annual symposia of the AJB aim to bring together society as a whole, and are especially important in the dynamic of our institution, since we consider the individuation process conceived by CG Jung as being a process of subjective development and also as interaction with the social. The AJB has been working since 1991 with its analyst-training institutes, currently five: Instituto Junguiano do Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Campinas and Rio Grande do Sul. If the symposia were initially conceived for an interaction between the various institutes, an academic exchange and even more institutional cohesion, they have also been for a dynamic

with the social, since social exchange and exchange with other visions of the world are fundamental tasks of analytical psychology.

It falls to the Institutes of the AJB to organize the symposia every year with a specific theme, and this year the Institute of Rio de Janeiro opted for the theme *Civilization in Transition* after the attack on the Twin Towers in New York. We think that this attack will have a profound symbolic meaning for the collective and political imaginary. The theme was chosen when we began to organize the symposium, in September of last year, and the choice also seems quite appropriate with the political changes in Brazil and Latin America; with the extension of the war in Afghanistan and with the invasion of Iraq and its yet unpredictable consequences. We are, therefore, passing through enormous political, cultural and social transitions of dimensions yet unknown, which I think we should discuss in depth.

The epigraph on the folder and on the Web site of the Eleventh Symposium is a

citation from Jung at a conference in 1928 in Prague for the Congress of the League of International Collaboration, but it seems to apply currently to these bellicose days. It is striking how an affirmation from that time has not lost its validity for our days. We can only understand how a statement like this can remain valid by taking into consideration that in all these situations of transition it is man in his subjectivity who is called to interact with the full extent of challenge situations. Allow me to recall some words of Jung: 'The modern man has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his mediævel brother . . . and begins to see that every step in material progress adds just so much force to the threat of a more stupendous catastrophe' (Jung, 1928/1993, par.163).

In *Essays on Contemporary Events*, Jung (1945) comments on the original state of the world when nature started to be disturbed by science and left its virginal, obscure, initial state. I adopt some of the poetic words of Jung to describe this movement of discriminatory consciousness from undifferentiated nature:

It is difficult to imagine the great psychic changes in the mental life of humanity when the natural world was disenchanted or was de-psyched. A question seldom asked is the following: what happened to the fairies, nymphs, gods and celestial messengers when we abandoned the enchanted state? We recall Jung, who said that criticism of myths does not annul the mythologizing factor in the psyche. Even when we think that mermaids are impossible, we need them, even when we think that the whale that swallowed Jonah would be incapable of spitting him out alive afterwards, this rebirth from the unconscious is a psychological necessity and even rationalized by the Enlightenment it will later take on other forms.

Man only seemed to triumph over the demons of nature, and in truth he swallowed the demons into himself and became a *puppet* of the gods. This happened because he believed that he would have abolished the demons just by declar-

ing them a mere superstition. After it became impossible for the spirits of nature to inhabit the rocks, the rivers, the woods and mountains, they used human beings as much more dangerous places to live. The natural objects were much less dangerous: only occasionally a rock would fall onto a dwelling or a river would flood a house. But a man does not realize when he is governed by a demon; he puts all of his ability and intellect to the service of his unconscious lord, in this way elevating a thousand times his power. These are the dangers in living in a *disenchanted* world.

When humanity passed from animated nature to inanimate nature, only animated by the cold examination of the distant scientist, this passing happened in a rigid way, without a *rite of passage*: animism was taken as ridiculous and seen as superstition. Christianity substituted the ancient gods for the one god. But when science *disenchanted* nature, science did not provide nature with another soul, but only subordinated it to scientific reason. If science had considered the *Anima Mundi* worthy of greater attention, it would have been more careful in this disenchantment transition of the world, and would have processed the passage to the scientific era without losing contact with the world of gods, through, perhaps, a *rite de sortie*, a ritual of reconciliation with these natural gods. (Jung, 1945)

The dissociated technological world is the world of destructive wars that have taken on a dimension never seen in the last century, accompanied by great social crises. We are at a moment of great changes permeated by great crises. In fact, we are living a great paradigmatic crisis, a loss of metaphysical certainties; in the words of Jung, humanity has sunk into a great identity crisis, in divergence with itself. The word *paradigm*, coined by Thomas Kuhn (1962), which has become a kind of common ground in contemporary thought, needs perhaps to be well understood. It comes from the Greek *para* = beyond, *deigma* = direction. This translation of the word 'paradigm' seems to us much more accurate than the translations normally given as model or prototype, in the platonic

sense, since seen this way, paradigm is something static, trapped in the past, while as a manifestation of a new value, points dynamically to the future, and it is in this meaning that paradigms function to help orientate the body of scientific thinking.

Paradigm shift is considerably more evident in times of crisis, although it not clear which directions it points, as the so-called post-modernity, which is suppose to succeed modernity. There is a certain difficulty in connecting the paradigmatic shifts to a specific statute of contemporary *zeitgeist*, to a post-modern era that would follow on from a modern era. If it is known that the modern age commenced with the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in the fourteenth century, we should not forget that this beginning did not occur at this precise date, but slowly, through gradual historical exchanges.

In the same way, one can debate whether the modern age has come to an end. It is a fact that we are experiencing a great crisis of the ideas of modernity. Instead of the values of the French Revolution of *liberty, equality and fraternity*, we have had a century of two great wars, with millions of casualties, numerically much greater than those of the Black Death of medieval Europe. *Globalization*, instead of promoting the archetypal fantasy of *inclusion*, has been encouraging, in contrast, the benefit of a small minority and the exclusion of the great masses. The current war in Iraq only reaffirms the right of the stronger over the weaker, and the old maxim of the court of the victor: 'there is only one true war crime: not to defeat the enemy'. All this evident failure of the ideals of modernity does not reveal clearly a post-modernity with its sharp outline. What we have, without doubt, are evident global changes on sociological, anthropological and psychological levels, paradigmatic shifts.

Millennial fantasies have been paradigms of the Western imaginary for many centuries. They have become an archetypal pattern of the civilizing, transitional changes. Counting time starting from the beginning of Christianity in the first millennium, the turn of the first millennium was marked by messianic figures of distinct social influence, such as Joachim de Fiora, an Italian abbot who at the start of the XII century prophesized a new aeon of the Holy Spirit, which would commence with Saint Benedict and the monastic order of the Benedictines. For Joachim, the millennium before Christ would be that of the Father, the first millennium of the Christian era, that of the Son, and the second millennium which was beginning, that of the Holy Spirit. Joachim de Fiora' followers declared their Pentecostal movement to be a substitute for the evangelism of Christ. Joachim de Fiora would be possessed by the archetype of the Spirit, in the sense that the religious experience would be reached much more through meditation (the meeting with the subjective Holy Spirit) than through exterior revelation. These movements are more introverted, more a subjective religious inflation than the extrovert, collective psychopathic attitudes that dominate the political and social movements of today (Jung, 1951, para. 137).

Millennialism is fertile ground for mythologizing based on projections of the European collective unconscious. In the latter half of the second millennium, the great voyages of discovery could occur in part due to the great mythological expectations that earthy paradise would be discovered by the navigators. The manner in which the indigenous people received the navigators Cortez, Pizzaro and Cabral as gods is described in an extremely ethnocentric way, rather than emphasizing the intense mythologizing of the New World

from the perspective of projections from the European collective unconscious. The Americas always were archetypically seen as paradise on earth, the legend of Eldorado, of the Amazons, are all millennial archetypal myths, since the discovery of the New World is the fulfilment of the prophecy of the discovery of paradise at the end of 500 years of the second millennium.

Global crises have been foreseen since the approaching of the end of the second millennium, at the end of the last century. Millennial fantasies intensified on that occasion, the most *techno* of them being the so-called *millennium bug*. It was persistently repeated that machines based on digital systems would fail, due to the repetition of the 00 figures in the digital systems from the year 2000. We cannot fail to smile at how these predictions were then considered extremely dire, considering everything that has happened in the last years. Given everything that has occurred in the first years of the new millennium, the millennium bug seems like nonsense, a joke in bad taste, a child's silly pastime.

Instead of the millennium bug, we have had, among other things: fratricidal wars in Eastern Europe, which decimated ethnic groups. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ending of the Soviet Union, sub-Saharan Africa no longer presented any strategic interests to the so-called Great Powers. The AIDS epidemics and internal revolutions have made this region, apart from South Africa, economically unviable according to the UNESCO; in other words, if nothing is done in coming years, whole populations of various countries could disappear. In Latin America, poverty and illiteracy have increased significantly and the IT of the last 50 years still has not had the expected results in terms of improving the quality of life of the population in general. Brazil is the country with the greatest

concentration of wealth in the world. Yugoslavia splintered into various nations. Ethnic fighting led to the American intervention in Kosovo. Chechnya continues with its situation unresolved, as a dependent enclave of Russia. All the instability of ethnic wars in Europe and Asia have added to the grave problem of terrorism versus American colonialism and the confrontation of religious doctrines that culminated in the events of September 11.

The military responses to the attack produced, as is known, an invasion of Afghanistan in search of the guilty parties, and culminated in the war in Iraq. The political and psychological unfolding of the attack continue until today and it seems difficult to predict the consequences for the following years. What we know for certain is that there has resulted a deep and irremovable scar in this civilization in transition. We can perceive that it is the task of each one of us to look for responses inside the microcosm of each one's individuation process, to produce transformations in the macrocosm of living together of families, societies, cities, cultures, and even the human species. Like Jung, we believe that only the individual's personal experience can bring a genuine collective transformation.

The third millennium was inaugurated with the events of September 11, which marked a new era of civilization in transition. Last year was a year of the god Janus, the ancient Roman god of portals, a *capicua* (head-and-tail) year, 2002, symmetrical and mirror-like, in which opposite extremities contemplate and confront each other. It was the year of the radical confrontation between the civilization of the new, the disposable, of IT that renews itself every month, and the traditional, medieval, permanent and immutable. Will there be a possible synthesis from this clash of opposites?

Luigi Zoja reflected on the *History of Arrogance* (Zoja, 2000) (in Italian, in the original edition, *Crescita e colpa – psicologia e limiti dello suluppo*) that has permeated Western culture since its beginnings in the Hellenic seas. The myth of the hero is, by its nature and essence, arrogant, and the problem of civilizing arrogance has now reached the planetary level and a maximum level of destructiveness. The hero arrives with his *hybris* to the maximum destructiveness and can destroy not only himself but all the planet; there is a hypertrophy of civilizing arrogance at the planetary level. The hero who destroyed Troy is capable of destroying the world, species, ecology, rivers and forests. The Great multilinguistic Tower of Babel threatens to fall down, and the event of September 11 is the archetypal expression of excess. The Western hero is no longer content with the totality of 10, the number 10 as mandalic expression of totality, but exceeds 10 and arrives at the arrogant 11, the number of *hybris*, excessively arrogant, the additional one, the one creator that recommences, the one that restarts when he should not, beyond the ten.

Zoja (2000) recalls the myth of Prometheus, that one who thinks in advance, *pró-manthein*. Prometheus' is a particular form of hubris, that one who, as fire-bearer, anticipates, looks to the East while chained to a lonely rock in the Caucasian Mountains, last retreat of the West, contemplating the East. The horizon that Prometheus contemplates is that of the East, the perspective lacking is the Eastern perspective. Prometheus, with his spiritual, igneous emphasis, is punished with a liver disease, psychosomatic. The bodily ailment is the compensation for the spiritual hubris, for an equalled spirituality and intellectual development. The corporal spirituality of India, China and even the Arab world

perhaps compensates for the overly cerebral paths of Greece. However, the Greek myth is not only cerebral, it is imaginative, and the imagination is also visceral, it is corporal, involving the whole body. The images of the Greek myth speak, as it were, a free association of the collective unconscious in mythological images. These images say that Prometheus is chained without escape with his hypochondriac sickness while he wants to confront the spiritual world of Zeus who, as a vulture, devours his innards. But the images speak of a solution, a solution through an exchange of places, another great wound, the centaur Chiron, occupies Prometheus' place, and is transformed into the constellation of Sagittarius. Being immortal, the titan become mortal, freeing himself of his punishment, having the destiny of human beings. The movement of the healing energy of the wounded healer-god, who looks at his body, it is what removes us from the Prometheus impasse. The path to the solution to Prometheus' enigma is the meeting with limit and the dialectic of the wound. Prometheus and Chiron both have the secret of the wound, the learning for the wound, and the wound brings the notion of the limit that perhaps is the solution to omnipotence without limit.

We cannot predict what the future will bring to us. Archetypically, we can only reflect that the great crises are possibilities for growth and transformation. The East offers itself to the West as a possibility for renovation and all renovation takes place through suffering. Already it is possible to perceive that the Western heroic standard is wearing away and that conquest with destruction is no longer a valid course of action, since it leads to ecological planetary destruction, of the species and of the planet itself. Relations between cultures and

people should be made not through destruction and annulling of others anymore, but through interaction and learning, though constructive dialectics, through a relationship of interactive complexity.

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