

SYMBOLS OF INDIVIDUATION IN E. S. STEVENS'S *THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD*

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The article provides an accurate account of Jung's theory of individuation, making use as it does of reputable secondary sources (Edinger, von Franz, Hall) and Cirlot's widely acknowledged *Dictionary of Symbols*. The application of Jung's theory to Stevens's *Mountain of God* is, however, perhaps a little mechanical or formulaic. Everything is made to fit so that certain events in the novel (Underwood rowed in a boat by four boatmen to the steamer on which he will travel to the Holy Land, for example) are made to assume an archetypal significance that tends to belie their more obvious necessity. The danger of an archetypal approach (the word *archetype* and the phrase *archetypal pattern* might have been used and explained) is a flooding of the narrative that can lead to the drowning of the story. The author might perhaps question his apparent assumption that, of the two classes of literature described by Jung as psychological and visionary, Stevens's novel is visionary. From what we learn of the novel itself, it may not quite qualify as a "force of nature that achieves its end either with tyrannical might or with the subtle cunning of nature herself, quite regardless of the personal fate of the man who is its vehicle" (Jung quoted in Rollins 60). In short, the writer, in making it clear that he is not concerned with "the merits of Stevens's novel as a literary work," is perhaps avoiding the issue of whether or not it is in the Jungian sense a visionary work.

Perhaps more implicit than explicit throughout the article is the very interesting and valuable assumption that the Jungian path of individuation conducting to the Self is in our day one path leading to the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh. Edinger, perhaps the most spiritually oriented Jungian in America, raises the issue in a passage from *Ego and Archetype*, which Rollins quotes: "whether or not a new collective religious symbol will emerge" to heal the "general psychic disorientation" resulting from "the decline of traditional religion," which is to say, the collapse of the Christ image as the symbol of the Self. Rollins might very fruitfully place the Jungian path beside passage number 125 of *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*¹ concerning the "true seeker." Is Bahá'u'lláh the "new collective religious symbol" of the Jungian path of individuation that many as yet have failed to recognize? Is that what Jung "really" means when he speaks of a visionary work as a "force of nature" that will of its own inner necessity come to fruition with or without the individual support "of the man who is its vehicle." When in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* the ghostly figures descend upon Jung at five o'clock on a Sunday afternoon determined to find in him what they could no longer find in Jerusalem, was Jung's first answer, dictated to him for three

1. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976) 264-70.

days and nights, *The Seven Sermons of the Dead*, a vision not unlike John of Patmos's vision in Revelation of the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, holding in his right hand "seven golden candlesticks"?

Needless to say, I am not suggesting that this article should raise and deal with the question of whether or not Jung "unconsciously" recognized Bahá'u'lláh as the inner force of his God-given nature that was driving him toward recognition. Who was the "more unknowable" to whom he surrendered at the end of his life? Had he found a symbol of that "more unknowable" beyond his own incarnate form, the form of his own life? Had he been driven to surrender to a reality beyond his human encompassing that a personal memoir could not embrace or contain? Was Bahá'u'lláh the very presence of what at the end Jung still found absent in himself? What I am suggesting is that this article raises by its very nature such issues, and I hope the writer will go on in the future to explore them.

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