

THE PRIEST AND THE ANIMA

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THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT A CHALLENGE facing male, celibate priests, primarily in the Roman Catholic Church. How can they come to terms with the more or less unconscious femininity within them, with their anima? What are the implications for how they relate to the actual women in their lives?

The anima

The concept of the anima was, of course, developed by Jung:

No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is, rather, that very masculine men have – carefully guarded and hidden – a very soft emotional life, often incorrectly described as ‘feminine’. A man counts it a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible, just as a woman, at least until recently, considered it unbecoming to be ‘mannish’. The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. No less naturally, the imago of woman (the soul-image) becomes a receptacle for these demands, which is why a man, in his love-choice, is strongly tempted to win the woman who best corresponds to his own unconscious femininity – a woman, in short, who can unhesitatingly receive the projection of his soul.¹

During the human growth process – what Jung called individuation – a man will project his anima, this invisible partner, on to a variety of actual women. He will also learn to distinguish the anima from the complex of emotions centred on his mother. One can hope that a specific relationship with a woman will enable him to move beyond projection of the anima to real love. Although a celibate male priest does not have a female life-partner, he faces the same developmental task.

Motifs from the legend of Parsifal and the Holy Grail can help us understand some of the tensions in the priest’s relationship with the feminine.² The Fisher King has been wounded since his adolescence. He lives in a castle where the Holy Grail has been placed. To touch it will bring him healing, but he cannot touch it until an innocent fool

comes to the castle and asks the crucial question: whom does the Grail serve? When Parsifal first arrives at the castle, he has been told by his mentor, Gournamond, that he must ask this question, but he is also grieving over the death of his mother, who had warned him never to ask anyone any questions. There is a ceremony in which a young man carries a sword dripping with blood and a maiden carries the Grail, followed by a great feast during which the Grail is passed round among the guests. But Parsifal nevertheless fails to ask the question. The next morning the Castle has disappeared, and Parsifal has to begin his symbolic pilgrimage all over again.

Parsifal is guided by what Jung would call a strong mother complex. A complex is 'a collection of images and ideas, clustered round a core derived from one or more archetypes and characterised by a common emotional tone'.³ Parsifal's complex centres on the mother figure. His filial loyalty makes him remain identified with the maternal world and its values even after he has left his physical mother.

Like Parsifal the priest must overcome his unconscious mother-dependency, a process which lasts a lifetime. This task may well remain unacknowledged, in the priest's unconscious, for ten or twenty years after ordination. Moreover, his seminary formation may hinder him from addressing the task well. Choices about priesthood and celibacy concern what Erik H. Erikson identifies as the three adult stages of development. Yet conventional seminaries and formation programmes generally bring about a psycho-social moratorium, a kind of prolongation of adolescence. At a certain phase of adolescent development, it is quite normal for males to be sustained by interactions within an exclusively male, latently homosexual group, such as a sports team or a drinking circle. The conventional seminary can effectively protract this phase to a quite unnatural extent, and consequently the central conflicts and tasks of adolescence may be repressed or in some way frozen: the discovery and experience of sexual identity, the development of autonomy with regard to authority, the undertaking of work that meets the challenges of human reality, and the taking of decisions in the light of value-commitments. Thus development can be arrested and the passage out of adolescence hindered.

Nevertheless, even if traditional formation has left the male celibate priest in a state of immaturity, he will still inevitably have to deal with the three adult Eriksonian stages, each of which involves the anima in different ways. In early adulthood (for Erikson the crisis of intimacy vs. isolation), he must find a way of living with his sexual desire which does not devour all his psychic energy. In adulthood (the crisis of

generativity vs. self-absorption) he faces a still more important question: can he live out his maleness fruitfully and maturely, or will he remain sterile, unrelated to his own inner woman, and to women and men outside? During mature adulthood (the crisis of integrity vs. disgust), the priest will either arrive at wholeness, or else feel an inner emptiness leading to disenchantment, a lack of self-esteem, and a denigration both of his own ideals and those of his Church. A further manifestation of this inner emptiness may be his vulnerability to possession by a tyrannical, immature anima.⁴ A partially integrated priest may look at what for him will be neurotic compromises such as a relationship with a woman, and reconcile these with his public persona as a celibate through unhealthy subterfuges. Others will 'prove' their strength as males by promiscuous behaviour, perhaps to the point of becoming clerical Don Juans in a way completely split off from the official persona.

In the dream which follows, the anima appears as an attractive woman. The dreamer is Frank, who is thirty-six and a deacon awaiting priestly ordination.

With friends in a kind of changing room or toilet. They make me bring Coke and other drinks. I come to a basement bar with music. It's about 12 o'clock. I ask a couple who are eating if I can pay them. They just laugh. I come to a young woman. She is naked and very tall. Her I can pay: 1.60. I ask her whether she is in charge of the money box. She laughs in response, but she is also ashamed because she knows me from another context. She animates me, entices me, to come with her to a *séparé*. But there is a young man disappearing with some woman into it. There's no room; we have to wait for a bit. She is touching my trousers; she wants to kiss me. I think to myself, 'that I'll take as a goodbye kiss'. I ask her name, which she doesn't reveal. I kiss her on the cheek.

Frank has been sent, like an innocent fool, to bring drinks. He goes to the basement (the human reality of the unconscious), where he has difficulties paying, i.e. spending his virile energy and investing his libido – unlike the couple, who cannot accept his psychic money. 'They just laugh': he is out of place and risks looking inadequate, like a single person arriving into a structured and self-sufficient partnership. The young woman, the anima-figure in the dream, is both sexually attractive, and terrifying. As always the anima is both leader (*Führerin*)

and seducer (*Verführerin*). She conceals her name. She is not a real woman, but rather the inner-psychic feminine image currently at work in the dreamer's psyche. There is no true dialogue, but only a kind of superficial contact before Frank leaves this fearful scene. Contrast the other men: one disappears quite normally into a *séparé*, and the other is eating and talking with his 'better half'. Frank, however, seems to be stressed by the need to pay, to spend money (psychic energy). He needs to learn to be in touch with his anima if his psychic energy flow is to be normal. 'Her I can pay: 1.60'. The figures may represent 'one [woman] – sex – no'. The anima is 'ashamed because she knows me from another context'. She is not only the *femme fatale*, out to seduce the priest, but also – if she is allowed into consciousness at all – a familiar spiritual guide. 'She animates me, entices me, to come with her to a *séparé*.' The anima invites the man to be in touch with his unconscious. This archetypal invitation is both fascinating and frightening. It is experienced as sexual tension and the dreamer is led to a compromise: he agrees to kiss her, but only on the cheek and as a way of saying goodbye.

Like all the archetypes, the anima and the inner dialogue which it demands come to be recognized gradually. As a man disentangles his anima-projections, his personality is transformed and he can have a true dialogue with his inner woman. This inner dialogue is very clearly symbolized by the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well: 'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did', she says (John 4:29). Jesus enables her to face her biographical truth (to withdraw her multiple animus-projections) because he *knows* his own inner woman, because he is in touch with his anima. He is neither seduced by his anima nor does he seduce the feminine.

According to Jung, Jesus is a personification of the androgyne which holds male and female in balance, complementarity and unity. He is the new humanity, the second Adam. For Jung, the Genesis creation accounts speak of the feminine in Adam (Gen 1:27, 2:23), and the line 'Within thy wounds hide me' in the medieval prayer to Christ, *Anima Christi*, indicates a feminine, maternal significance in Jesus' wounds:

It is curious, Christ having a man's body, that such ideas should be attached to him. But according to the Catholic interpretation Christ was not merely masculine but feminine as well. Take for instance, the passage in Revelation (XIV.4): 'These are they which were not defiled with women for they are virgins.' This refers to the Saints, who were, so to speak, celibate priests, men yet virgins, women. And the same quality is ascribed to Christ. It goes back to the passage in Genesis

[2.21] where Eve is taken out of the side of Adam. That was apparently another wound, which was the gateway to the birth of Eve. That is, so to speak, the ecclesiastical archetype for the birth of the Church from the wound in the side of Christ, so that this wound has a maternal significance.⁵

Despite his daily encounter with the archetypal world the priest is always in danger of failing to make contact both with his anima and with the archetype of the Self, the centre of the soul and nucleus of individuation which Jung often compares with Christ's person. Jung distinguishes between the Ego, the centre of conscious personal identity and cognition, and the Self, the ordering principle of the entire personality. At the beginning the two coincide but later they begin to differ; a healthy individuation process will involve the development of a proper relationship between the two. Jung sees the believer's affiliation to Jesus as a symbol of this intra-psychic relationship.

I have often pointed out that this is really the Self, that higher figure which contains the individual, as well as the totality of mankind, in its corpus mysticum. This is represented by the Church whose body is the body of Christ, his appearance on the earth, his eternal presence. [. . .] We saw in the *Anima Christi* that the believer asked to be hidden in the wounds of Christ, to enter the body of Christ; so that, as Przywara says, he can circulate with his blood, see with his eyes and feel with his heart. He wishes to become entirely identical with the corpus mysticum of Christ which can naturally only take place as mystical experience or, it is mostly assumed, after death.⁶

Although the priest is called to act in public as Christ's representative, he can still be like Jung's father, a pastor who never had a true religious experience. Unlike the Christ whom he represents, he can remain the innocent fool who fails to ask the questions which the anima must be asked.

'The habit does not make the monk': the priestly persona

It may be helpful to set the idea of the priest acting *in persona Christi*, especially in celebrating the eucharist, against Jung's concept of the persona. For Jung the persona 'is a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual'.⁷ The priest's life and ministry involves an interplay between his ecclesial role and his relationship with his anima. This he

can repress, project onto actual women, or integrate to varying degrees. One powerful symbol of the priest's ministerial persona is liturgical clothing. Here is another dream of Frank's, eighteen months later and five months after his priestly ordination.

There is no other celebrant besides me in St John's Chapel. I take off my shoes and a little red cap and I leave them behind the altar. I go to the sacristy in order to vest. I spend a long time looking for an alb, and I put it on. With difficulty, I knot the girdle and I put on a green stole. I discover that there is a new martyr for the 13th of the 11th. I must take a red stole and read up on the biography. The red chasubles are awful. One I can't get my head through, and another is baroque, black and red. Finally Barbara appears and advises me to choose one with a ladybird design. On the way my knees are aching, and she props me up. The telephone is ringing in the toilet, but I don't want to answer it. Brother F. props me up. I sink to my knees; I sit down for the beginning of mass.

The liturgical clothing indicates a very special kind of male persona. Whereas normal clothing enables us to distinguish men from women easily, priestly vestments represent a kind of transvestitism. In the Anglican Church, the same vestments are worn by female ministers, without the kind of modifications common in military or other uniforms. Thus the priest's liturgical clothing represents a transsexual professional persona open to the anima's unconscious influence. The date 13th of November symbolically expresses sexual identity, in that the sum of the figures 1-3-1-1 is '6'.

Again, the Parsifal myth can help us understand what is happening in this dream. The priest is an androgynous figure: as a man he represents God's 'male' authority, but he also stands for Mother Church and his dress can suggest the feminine. Consequently he attracts transferences associated with both maleness and femaleness. At one point in the Grail legend, Parsifal slays the Red Knight, a sign of his passage into manhood, and begins to put on the Red Knight's armour. Parsifal's page interrupts: 'Take off that awful homespun stuff your mother gave you first, before you put the armour on'. But Parsifal refuses, and puts on the armour over his mother's homespun clothes. His new masculinity merely covers his mother complex, and nothing has really changed.

If a priest has not worked satisfactorily through his mother-complex, he will not be able to cope with the bewildering variety of projections

which come to be laid on him. Among the symptoms of such a situation are a defensive clerical machismo and infantile ideas of grandiosity, with all the corresponding counter-transferences. However masculine the impression which they cultivate, such priests remain eternal school-boys, *pueri aeterni*, incapable of loving a real woman yet also incapable of being ministers of Jesus Christ, the one in whom male and female are truly integrated. This mother-loyalty of the *pueri aeterni* may find an expression in a Marian devotion, a devotion which fragments the feminine by idealizing in Mary qualities which are 'holy and heavenly' while denigrating 'earthly qualities' in other women, especially Eve.

Wearing the priestly persona appears to be very difficult for Frank. The habit does not make the monk, nor do the Roman collar and the chasuble make the priest. Frank has to appropriate his priestly persona; he must take off the clothes he was given as a child from top to bottom (from the little red cap to the shoes) before he can put on the priestly vestment. In the dreamer's biographical context, the colour symbolism (white alb – green stole – red and black chasuble) suggests the conflict between aggressive expansion (red) and the need for limitation (black: the colour of time and death). The chasubles which are ugly or which do not fit indicate the dreamer's inability to cope with this conflict. A feminine dream-partner (Barbara) proposes a compromise: a ladybird which is light and airy. Nevertheless the knees ache under the persona's burden. Barbara and Brother B. have to prop the dreamer up. It is too late to answer a telephone ringing in the toilet. One must sit down, indeed kneel, in order to become aware of one's spiritual and human reality before entering into the eucharist, the mystery of transformation and of encounter with God – or, as the Grail legend suggests, the symbol of our life's goal.

Priests need to avoid two extremes if they are to live healthily within their persona: a deflationary approach (I am a sinner, and incapable of acting *in persona Christi*) and an inflationary one, a kind of clerical self-centredness blind to the questions raised by the special role which the priest plays:

These identifications with a social role are a very fruitful source of neurosis. A man cannot get rid of himself in favour of an artificial personality without punishment. Even the attempt to do so brings on, in all ordinary cases, unconscious reactions in the form of bad moods, affects, phobias, obsessive ideas, backslidings, vices, etc. . . . The persona, the ideal picture of a man as he should be, is inwardly compensated by feminine weakness, and as the individual outwardly

plays the strong man, so he becomes inwardly a woman, i.e., the anima, for it is the anima that reacts to the persona. But because the inner world is dark and invisible to the extraverted consciousness, and because a man is all the less capable of conceiving his weaknesses the more he is identified with the persona, the persona's counterpart, the anima, remains completely in the dark and is at once projected, so that our hero comes under the heel of his wife's slipper.⁸

It is particularly in the activity of preaching that priests feel either that their persona 'fits', or else that proclamation provokes stress. 'Do we transmit a healthy part of our unconscious, or a damaged part which can make the whole process destructive?'⁹ The challenge of proclaiming can invite us to a more intensive contact with our unconscious. It is the priest's anima which introduces him into the unconscious: both his personal unconscious and the collective unconscious as it is present in the particular congregation, in male and female sensibility, and in the great images of the liturgy, the Bible and the spiritual traditions of humanity. Thus the priest's anima is important, not just for his proper understanding of the feminine, but also for his being able to serve the community's symbolic quest. Male priests must try to be on good terms with their anima, and to have an appropriate (neither deflationary nor inflationary) persona.

Assimilating the shadow

The priest, with his persona and his unconscious, is an intermediary between the gospel and the congregation. This situation provokes a strong confrontation with the *shadow*: the totality of all the possibilities a person has not realized, of all that they do not consciously wish. In Jung's thinking, the shadow represents the elements of the unconscious that I cannot yet tolerate and which I therefore project onto others. In dreams, the figure of the *personal* shadow is generally a person of the dreamer's own sex. The shadow is not necessarily composed of terrifying or objectionable elements. The shadow of a male celibate priest may include a desire simply to be a father in the biological sense, and he may project this unrealized possibility onto a friend or brother proudly waiting for his first child. Nevertheless, the *archetypal* shadow of the collective unconscious does include humanity's horrible and awful possibilities: destruction, violence and negative emotions.

It is difficult to accept that these fearful sides of human behaviour are also *my* possibilities. If we allow our ethical thinking to be informed by psychoanalysis, we cannot be content with projecting our shadows onto criminals or onto other people perceived as wicked. We

must learn that the shadow possibility is always my possibility and that it fashions my psychic life even if I do not consciously choose a morally bad alternative: 'The shadow is everything which human beings encompass when they are not humane, but merely human animals. As a person, in my specific way of being, I am not the shadow, but as a human being *in toto* I am the shadow as well.'¹⁰

Classical Christian ethics makes a dichotomy between 'good' and 'evil', and there is always thus the risk that the male celibate priest – as one closely identified with such teaching – develops a persona that is intolerantly moralistic. Moreover, he may come to be possessed by a shadow containing all the human possibilities he has rejected. This shadow, and the defence mechanisms that keep it in the unconscious, may operate collectively, and shape a whole clerical culture. The defence mechanisms may go as far as a splitting of the personality: the persona is idealized, while the denigrated shadow aspects (everything a good priest should avoid) are kept out through denial, projection and scapegoating.

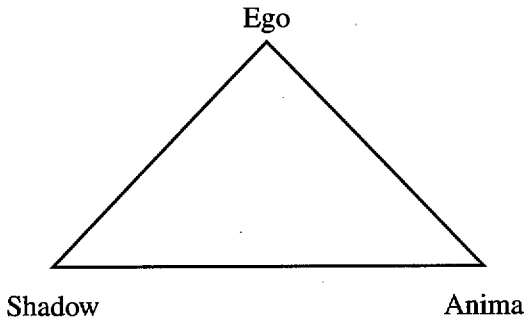
This phenomenon is illustrated with particular sharpness when such priests perpetrate sexual abuse. The acts themselves are terrible enough, but perhaps still more terrible are the institutional defence mechanisms that operate collectively in the Church. As in a family where incest is occurring, a religious community can deny the facts of sexual abuse for a long time, project them onto others, explain them away, conceal them, or even blame the victims.

When the victim is female, it may be that the priest concerned has started with a genuine desire to help the woman pastorally, but that he has ended up exploiting her under the influence of his own anima wound. Peter Rutter sees men in such situations as supposed healers who have become involved in 'forbidden zone relationships': they 'often have as much a need to be healed through them as do their protégées', and the encounter has brought this need to light. This is in no way to endorse the rationalization, put forward by some abusers, that their abusive behaviour is a kind of 'therapy'. But it is to offer some explanation of how such situations can occur. Peter Rutter puts the matter as follows:

Imagine a man in this position – a doctor, lawyer, pastor, professor, or businessman – who has never been able to acknowledge his so-called feminine feelings. Indeed, he has been taught to be quite afraid of them. He looks across the room to the woman with whom he has developed some professional intimacy. The reality of who she is becomes indistinguishable from the inner image of a woman that he

carries with him. As fantasy and reality overlap, the man begins to project into her body and spirit the 'feminine' feeling potential and mystery that he has shut himself off from. He will be drawn to her for healing, for contact with what he hopes will be an unexpected new source of aliveness.¹¹

A useful metaphor for understanding the inner dynamics of the psyche is that of a triangle of forces. When the self is in equilibrium, the ego, the shadow and the anima are all functioning. When the self's equilibrium is lost, two of the three forces pull together in such a way



as to exclude the third. Within the groupings of an exclusively male clerical culture, the ego and the shadow can exclude the anima: witness the phenomenon of clerical misogyny. When a male celibate priest falls in love with a woman, the ego and the anima may exclude the shadow: he denies his dark masculine side, and underestimates the power of attachment needs and emotional forces. When such a priest commits abuse, the ego is being excluded, and the influences of the shadow and the anima are allowed to work without restraint. If a man's relationship with his femininity is poor, he will not be able to feel, to value, and thus to find meaning in his life. His inner-psyche triad will be unbalanced, and he will constantly run the risk of being seduced and possessed by his anima.

The wife or partner of a non-celibate man will help him to withdraw his projections and to create a true object-relationship. For a male celibate, the withdrawal of anima projections is more difficult. His formation is most unlikely to have included anything about how his individuation process requires an inner dialogue with his anima. The dangers of infantile mood attacks and of devaluation of the feminine are considerable. His lack of anima maturation may lead to a failure to understand women's problems, or to his exploiting them either narcissistically or sexually. Seduced by his anima, he may lose the ability to

live by the proper sense of values which, as a priest, he is always preaching to others:

That exuberant, top-of-the-world, bubbling, half-out-of-control mood which is often so highly prized among men is a dangerous thing: it too is a seduction, the man has seduced his anima. He has it by the throat and has said, 'You are going to make me happy or else'. This is plain seduction. And he pays a big price for it later, for the law of compensation says a depression must come later to reestablish the balance.¹²

Ministry with women: the story of Chris

Chris is a 37-year-old priest. He knows he is looking for the kind of family atmosphere which he never experienced during childhood. His father died while he was still small and his mother had to bring up Chris and his younger sister. At present he works as a kind of chaplain – as 'Father' – for young people in a big town. He is trying to behave naturally towards young attractive women and in a way befitting his celibate commitment. But he experiences a problem. He tends to fall in love with young immature women. At present, the situation is normally resolved by the woman going away, leaving Chris to grieve. His tendency is to seduce his anima: she must 'make him happy or else'. Maria is a 21-year-old theology student, but looks 16. That was how old she was when she was raped. The psychological wound from that experience may well have contributed to the very strong and intense mutual attraction that grew up between her and Chris. Chris experienced their four months of hidden relationship as paradisaical intoxication. But Maria left him to go to another university. After a few weeks, it became clear that she was pregnant. Was Chris the father, or was it Maria's new partner, a student of her own age?

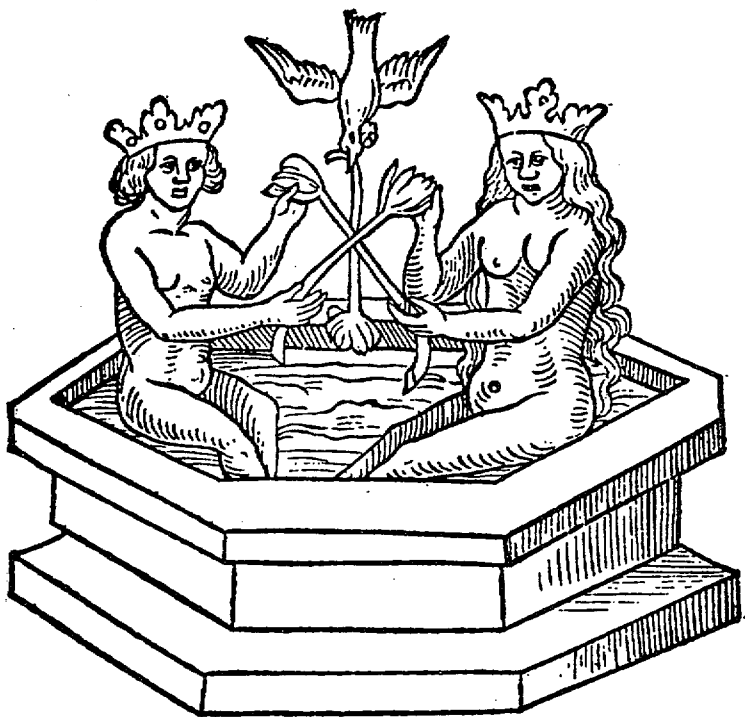
Chris feels a strong ambivalence between his desire to be the father of Maria's child and his fear that he might be. He begins psychoanalytic therapy. His numerous dreams include the two following fragments. The first expresses a quasi-female quality, Chris's psychic pregnancy:

I am pregnant myself. The date of birth is approaching. I feel the child which wants to be born in my belly. A paramedic cuts open my belly – I hardly feel any pain – and bring a little child into the light of day. I think it's a boy.

The second fragment takes place in a castle-hotel:

I have a room with bath. I get into the bath-tub to take a bath. A young woman comes and sits down with me in the bath-tub.

This second dream echoes discussions of bath-scenes in an important essay by Jung, 'The psychology of the transference'.¹³ Like the King and Queen in the following figure, the priest and the woman onto whom he is projecting his anima are interrelated by water and by a radial figure which joins their hands. A dove comes in between. Water represents not only the unconscious feeling realm, but also the night journey into the sea, the *Nachtmeerfahrt*, a shady, risky journey of transformation involving sexual transference and counter-transference. It symbolizes death and rebirthing, the birth of the spiritual and psychic 'child' of individuation.



Both the man and the woman have taken off their clothes, symbols of their personae. The twig held by the dove symbolizes in Jung's interpretation how transference love can foster wholeness and the individuation process.

In his dealings with the feminine, the male celibate priest must learn to handle the true significance both of his persona and of the love which is the driving force of his vocation. This love, however, may be accompanied by strong sexual desires, perhaps linked to incestuous instincts, which come to light in the context of a pastoral relationship.

A male celibate priest must come to terms with these strong transference feelings. Firstly, he must learn from experience to recognize archetypal transferences (directed at the Great Mother, at an almighty Father or at the person of Christ) and distinguish feelings which arise from his priestly persona from those which might be directed at him personally. Secondly, he must withdraw his own (counter-transferential) reactions and anima-projections and subordinate them to the demands of his professional role. The more he is acquainted with his inner woman the more he will be able to relinquish his protégée. A free inner dialogue with the anima results in the complete inner unity or spiritual pregnancy of the priestly celibate that figures in Christ's first dream. John Layard argues:

. . . true celibacy, far from being an affair of sex-repression, is itself, if rightly understood, the most complete expression of the transformed sex instinct. It is in fact the case that sex-repression in any form hinders the celibate even more than it hinders the married man. For what the celibate is seeking is deeper than sex, that is to say a direct union with 'the other' which is God. But, since he is human and endowed with sex instinct without which he would be as nothing, and since individuation of any kind demands the fullest development of all desire, if sex desire is repressed the way to God is to that extent blocked also, and cannot be found until the unconscious inhibition is removed. This is so vital to the priesthood that it is astonishing how frequently it is overlooked.¹⁴

The archetypal significance of the love experienced by priests in Christ's situation – even if it is expressed by a mutual sexual desire – is represented by the dove and the psychic pregnancy which it offers. The priest is in the service of the dove of peace, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Mario Jacoby writes:

The attitude symbolized by the dove carrying the twig involves a kind of love that is directed toward the still-hidden totality, . . . to the process of self-development of the person coming to help. This love is in other words directed towards a spiritual or psychic child and not a physical union.¹⁵

Even in traditions where only males can be ordained, the priest is a minister of inclusive experience. Inclusiveness is more than a matter of language: it involves also 'containing and healing our more damaged selves. We have to confront the question whether we can find in the love of God something to make up for us what we have lacked in human love'.¹⁶

It would be wrong for a situation such as Chris's to be resolved by the priest and the woman entering into a physical relationship. An authentic relationship leads to spiritual growth and wholeness, symbolized by the idea of spiritual pregnancy; by contrast a real physical union in such circumstances would be nothing but the result of abused professional power.

It is useful to distinguish two ways in which the unconscious of a male celibate may react when a woman's strong emotional desire for him surfaces during a pastoral encounter: concordant counter-transference and complementary counter-transference. The former can be constructive:

I am probably experiencing concordant countertransference when I can allow myself to be spontaneously with the patient wherever he really needs me to be, and when I can be open and flexible enough to allow him to 'use' me to a wide extent, according to his needs within the symbolic framework of the therapeutic situation. It is of course important for the analyst to be as aware as possible of where this is leading. But I have seen again and again that if I can let myself be 'carried' to where the patient vitally seems to need me, I experience a deep sense of empathy which allows sensitive new insights to appear spontaneously.¹⁷

Pastoral work is obviously quite different from psychoanalysis, and priests do not have patients. Nevertheless, when this kind of counter-transference arises, the priest must be as aware as possible of where the relationship is leading. He must subject his empathy to careful discernment, checking out that he is not falling victim to what Ignatius Loyola called a temptation 'under the appearance of good' (Exx 10, 332-334). Otherwise he lapses into complementary counter-transference, falling into a trap laid unconsciously by the other person. Complementary counter-transference occurs when the helper virtually becomes identified with some powerful figure in the other person's past without being properly aware of what is happening. It is important to be conscious of this danger and to respect the limits of human reality.

The anima, the Grail and the male priest's identity

A male priest relates to his anima in a complex of ways. Different aspects of this relationship are symbolized by various characters in the Grail legend. The male priest can be like Parsifal, the innocent fool who initially misses out on the feminine and on the Grail under the influence of his mother complex. He can also be like the Fisher King.

The Fisher King is wounded because he burnt his fingers on a roast salmon and because a fish injured him in the thighs:

It is worth looking at the symbolism of this curious set of circumstances, for here we have the first fact of a man's psychology. The salmon is one of the many symbols of Christ. A boy in his early adolescence touches something of the Christ nature within himself, but he touches it too soon, is only wounded by it, and drops it. But notice that he puts his finger in his mouth, gets a little bit of it, and develops a taste that he will never forget. Many psychic wounds in a man come because he touches his Christ nature, that is, his individuation process, prematurely, can't handle it, doesn't see it through, and is wounded by this.¹⁸

Like the Fisher King, the priest can be one who has been wounded through premature contact with the symbol of wholeness. The Fisher King lives in the Grail castle but cannot touch the Grail; so a priest may be a wounded healer, physically close to the symbols of Christian transformation but failing, at the personal level, to be in any real contact with them. Finally, the priest may also resemble the Grail King, the Christ figure. According to one version of the legend, Parsifal later returns to the Grail castle and this time succeeds in asking the key question: 'Whom does the Grail serve?' The answer is: 'The Grail serves the Grail King':

The Grail King lives in the central room of the castle. He has lived there from time immemorial. He worships the Grail constantly, is fed by the Grail, and has nothing to do with anything but the Grail. He and the Grail are in constant communion and exchange.¹⁹

Immediately, the Fisher King is healed and the land and all its people can leave in peace and joy.

The Grail is symbol both of the feminine and of Christ. Alternatively, in Jungian terms, it represents the Self. The myth is telling us that the ultimate value is the service of God rather than our personal happiness as such. The only way we will find true happiness is by dropping our preoccupation with it and focusing on God. Priests are set in close contact with the symbols of individuation, and are thus invited along a personal pilgrimage that has a foundational role for the whole community. If they fail personally, this will also jeopardize the symbolic quest of the congregation. If the priest is male, such failure will particularly affect the women who are making the pilgrimage with him.

NOTES

- ¹ C. G. Jung, 'Anima and animus' in *Aspects of the feminine* (London and New York, 1982), § 297. The essay was first published in 1953.
- ² For the full legend in the form written down by Chrétien de Troyes, and for an illuminating discussion of how it illustrates aspects of masculine psychology, see Robert A. Johnson, *He: understanding masculine psychology* (New York and London, 1974).
- ³ Andrew Samuels, Bani Shorter and Fred Plaut, *A critical dictionary of Jungian analysis* (London and New York, 1986), p 34.
- ⁴ In Jungian thinking, 'possession' means an occupation of the ego-personality by a complex or other archetypal content: 'A restraining effect is placed on consciousness proportional to the strength of the invading autonomous psychic content and an acute one-sidedness results. This imperils not only conscious freedom but also psychic equilibrium. Individual aims are falsified in favour of the possessing psychic agent whether it be a mother-complex or an identification with the persona or anima/animus principle, for example' (Samuels, Shorter and Plaut, *A critical dictionary of Jungian analysis*, p 110).
- ⁵ *The process of individuation. Exercitia spiritualia of St Ignatius of Loyola*. Notes on lectures given at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich (June 1939–March 1940), pp 62–63. Jung often refers to Christ's androgyny, for example in 'The psychology of the transference', *Collected works* vol 16, § 525. The theme is borrowed from Roman Catholic thinkers (e.g. von Baader and Koepgen).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p 71.
- ⁷ 'Anima and animus', § 305.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, §§ 307, 309.
- ⁹ Mary Ann Coate, *Clergy stress* (London, 1989), p 127.
- ¹⁰ Toni Wolff, *Studien zu C. G. Jungs Psychologie* (Zurich, 1959), p 154: *Es ist alles das, was der Mensch auch ist, wenn er nicht human, sondern bloße bestia humana ist. Ich als Person in meinem So-sein bin das nicht, aber ich als Mensch überhaupt bin das auch.*
- ¹¹ Peter Rutter, *Sex in the forbidden zone: when men in power – therapists, doctors, clergy, teachers and others – betray women's trust* (London, 1989), p 89.
- ¹² Robert A. Johnson, *He*, pp 38–39.
- ¹³ The essay can be found in C. G. Jung, *Collected works*, vol 16.
- ¹⁴ John Layard, 'The incest taboo and the virgin archetype', *Erano*s 12 (1945), pp 253–307, here pp 285–286.
- ¹⁵ Mario Jacoby, *The analytic encounter: transference and human relationship* (Toronto, 1984), p 108.
- ¹⁶ Mary Ann Coate, *Clergy stress*, p 138.
- ¹⁷ Mario Jacoby, *The analytical encounter*, pp 38–39.
- ¹⁸ Robert A. Johnson, *He*, p 9.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 74–75.