

I define *religion* as reconnection with *archetype*.

And explain this definition by an *ideogram*: Imagine a wheel with spokes; which has “freedom”, “beauty”, “justice”, “truth” and other similar words—which signify values or ideals that have in a similar manner helped people overcome *self-centeredness*—inscribed on its rim; at the points where the spokes meet the rim.

Let the center of this wheel, from which the spokes emanate, bear the label *archetype*.

You *may* call it God; or refer to it by one of its *symbols*, which are written on its periphery, and call it “love” or *jan-e jahan* (the life of the world) as the Sufis do; or “truth” as Gandhi did. I’ll qualify the person connected with the *archetype*—directly or through any of its *symbols*—as *inspired*.

*Religion*, defined in this way, is neither a belief nor an institution but an *aspect* of culture; *anything* can be (*seen as*) *religion*—to the extent that it may help us reconnect with the *archetype*.



This *vignette* will illustrate what all this means.

And contrast (what I defined as) *religion* against the corresponding traditional idea.

In *The Agony and the Ecstasy* Irwin Stone told how Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; a movie was later made based on his account, with Charlton Heston in lead role. Neither the book nor the movie were mere fictionalizations; Stone spent several years in Italy researching his theme, and Italy rewarded him for this work.

Pope Julius II appears in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* as history remembers him—as the Warrior Pope; who defended the interests of the Church against the **power structure** of his day; by *not* ‘turning the other cheek’.

Pope Julius *did*, however, exercise his piety:

By making it possible for Michelangelo, the **inspired** artist, to deliver *his* gifts, pun intended.

Stone’s story follows Michelangelo through a years-long agony of creation, to the ecstasy of completion. And what was the result?

An image of that frail yet all-important connection; finger to finger!



Let’s put **Carl Gustav Jung** on this cognitive map.

We owe to Jung the **keyword** “archetype”; and some of the **phenomenology** of **religion**—as Edward F. Edinger pointed out in the opening of his book *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche*:

“It is only beginning to dawn on the educated world, what a magnificent synthesis of human knowledge has been achieved by C. G. Jung. Starting as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist he **discovered in his patients and in himself** the *reality of the psyche* and **the phenomenology** of its manifestations at a depth never before observed systematically. As a result of this experience, he could then recognize the same phenomenology **expressed in the culture-products of mankind**—myth, religion, philosophy, art and literature. He had penetrated to the root source of all religion

and culture and thus has discovered the basis for a new organic syncretism of human knowledge and experience.”

Like his mentor Freud, Jung saw dreams as messages from the unconscious; and that their function could be therapeutic. But unlike Freud, he saw the unconscious (not as only a repository of forgotten unpleasant events, which come to haunt us and we need to remember them in order to be healed, but also) as storing our vital and *creative* potentialities—which we’ve “repressed” in order to be “successful”.

Opportunities for *human development* are buried in the unconscious, Carl Jung pointed out; from where they try to reach out to us through the symbolic language of dreams.

The *phenomenology* that Jung uncovered—which Edinger was pointing to—was that similar symbols and images and story lines appear in dreams as in religious myths, folk tales and works of art; *across* cultural traditions and historical periods!

And that cultural artifacts have a *therapeutic* or *human development* function; which is yet to be comprehended.

How important within that functions is man’s liberation from the “ego” and his re-connection with the “archetype”?

Jung reported in “Psychotherapists or the Clergy”, in 1932:

“During the past thirty years, people from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. Many hundreds of patients have passed through my hands....Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty-five—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook. This of

course has nothing whatever to do with a particular creed or membership of a church”.



I don't remember where I read this; I'll just share it from memory:

Movie Director: Shoot him! Shoot him!

John Wayne: No I won't. You don't shoot a man in the back.

Movie Director: Clint Eastwood would have shot him without blinking an eye!

John Wayne: I don't care what that kid is doing.

Movies too have become *adiaphorized*, haven't you noticed? There's *more* shooting and bloodshed and dazzling action; but the lead man will no longer perform a heroic act and ride off into the sunset with his lady.

He's in it for *a fistful of dollars!*

And in the next movie *for a few dollars more.*

But if we should listen to Jung—it is not merely accidental that so many movies, and myths and novels and stories too, shared that same pattern; where a selfless, heroic act is rewarded by union in marriage.

Marriage—according to Jung, and his colleagues who continued to develop “analytical psychology” he initiated—is an archetypal symbol of *wholeness*.