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| HOPES AND FEARS TOWARD THE NEW MILLENIUM  Recently a patient came to see me complaining about deep fears. He was anxious that on a certain date, within two months, he was going to die. It was the date when 30 years ago, at the age the patient was now approaching, his father had died. He identified with his late father and felt that he would die at the same age that his father had died. His father's death, and the date of his death, clearly exercised a morbid influence on him, so that he projected his fear of death to the date of his father's death. Yet, somewhere in his soul, he hoped that he would survive the critical year.  And so he did. But throughout the period proceeding the critical date he had been a prey to anxiety.  We have all, on more than one occasion, experienced these twin feelings of hope and fear in relation to some situation. Hope and fear are two opposite emotions that are nevertheless concomitant. The one engenders the other. When we hope for a thing to happen we also, at some level, fear it may not happen. Jung deals at some length with this theory of paired opposites. According to him, everything, both material and immaterial, has an accompanying other side.  It is a fact that in the past 100 years or so revolutionary changes have taken place: conquering space, the communication revolution of computers, cyberspace or cybernetics, the start of the "electronic age", etc. The world has become "smaller" due to the vastly improved global communication. The invention of the railroad, of the telephone, of electric power or of the radio belong to the radical changes in modern times must also be mentioned here.  In depth psychology the new era of 2000 started already a hundred years ago, with Freud and Jung's development of depth psychology. (see also Dreifuss/Weiler 1998)  In order to understand the period of 2000 years from a psychological point of view, one must stress the deep need in human kind to bring order into the flow of time, to throw light upon the archetypal experience of time: the division starts with seconds and continues with minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, hundred years (century), 1000 years (millenium) till 2000 years (eon, Aion). The archetype of order by number regulates the division and thus brings order into the infinite flow of time. Nature itself has ordered time into days and nights and into seasons. In mythological time there is a God of time, the Greek Cronos or the Egyptian Re, who changes his stature at every hour of the day and the night. Man has added further divisions as mentioned. The accent on fixed dates in the flow of time promotes projections. It is as if an "important" date, the year 2000 will bring an end to the period, and fears and hopes go with it.  Here I wish to add some thoughts on the phenomenon of time.  Let us look first at the life span of human beings. From birth to death is a limited time, different from individual to individual. The time of death is unknown, only for old people the end is thought statistically of being near. Death is possible at any age, by illness, accident or war.  The life span is linear, historical and belongs to the masculine archetype or to the Yang energy. It has a beginning and an end, birth and death. It is directed energy, intellect and logos, the left hemisphere of the brain.  The feminine archetype or Yin energy is cyclic, unhistorical, and eternal. It is round, has no beginning and no end. It is expressed in the myths of the immortality of the soul, it is beyond time.  Yin and Yang are joined in the symbol of Taigetu, in which masculine and feminine energy is united and is in constant movement within a circle. The process is also symbolized in the spiral, combining male and female energy.    The realization of the limited life span constellates the wish in man to "overcome" time. And thus the feeling or idea is born that physical death of the body is not necessarily the end: the soul will live on. In a like fashion different myths are created such as the immortality of the soul, transmigration, and reincarnation. As human beings we have difficulty accepting that the death of the body is also the end of the soul.  The theological term for the doctrine and teaching of the last and final things is eschatology. It is concerned with the end of life, death of the individual and the future of the world. There is also a belief about signs that precede the end of the world, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and tornadoes.  In Judaism and Christianity God are both in time and beyond time. At the end of time there is the apocalypse or fulfillment of time. In Judaism, Gog, the king of Magog, is an eschatological figure of the prophetic vision of Ezekiel 38-39; Gog's end precedes the messianic kingdom. According to John in the New Testament, a world catastrophe precedes the final victory of Christ. The birth of Christ, the redeemer, occurred 2000 years ago and is, according to Christian theology, the Christian eon. As the world is not redeemed, as wars and conflicts continue, there is hope that the return of Christ will bring eternal peace.  If you would like to buy the full text, published by the Guild of Pastoral Psychology, it is available from Diana Grace-Jones, 164 Ilbert Street, London, W10 4QD, UK. Price 3.00 English pounds plus postage. | |
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