

An interview with Alice Howell written by Nancy Pope for The Educational Center's *IN TOUCH* newsletter, April, 2007. Reprinted by permission of The Educational Center, 6357 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63117. *IN TOUCH* is published three times per year – April, August and December. A one-year subscription cost \$15 for individuals and \$25 for organizations. For more information please visit their web site: www.CENTERPOINTec.com or email Sara McDonald: Sara@educationalcenter.org.

FEAR AND THE END TIMES: Suggested Jungian Solutions

Christmas Season, 2006. CNN hosted a series on the subject, "What is a Christian?" Anderson Cooper interviewed evangelical clergy who fervently believe that the Book of Revelation both predicts and justifies the war in the Middle East. This first century book is their guide to contemporary history. They are referring to Revelation as if it contains the blueprint of the Iraq War as well as containing the secrets of the end of the world.

It need not harm us as a culture if a group of religious leaders promote End Times beliefs. But when prominent political leaders of either major party make their bed with these fundamentalists in order to win elections, then they are adding their weight to the beliefs of the End Times. This could have the effect of pushing us as a culture and as a country into making manifest the prophecies of Revelation.

Alice O. Howell embraces a compelling way to view these events, one that sees them as the last hurrahs of the end of an Age as we enter more fully into the Age of Aquarius. She discusses that during the interface between the constellations, the "dawning" of the Age of Aquarius (c. 1760), she introduced the concept of the importance of the Common Man. Psychologically, now with its true beginning, the task ahead is the true discovery of that inner Self (Divine Guest) that each of us shares in common. The dichotomy of the Age is that of the individual and the collective. Its icon surely is the picture of the earth seen from the moon.

In Touch (I.T.): In your book *The Heavens Declare: Astrological Ages and the Evolution of Consciousness*, you touch on the topics of evolving consciousness and astrology. What was Jung's relationship to astrology?

Alice O. Howell (A.O.H.): Let me start by saying that my own definition of astrology is that it is a symbolic language of archetypal processes. My definition of an individual chart is that it is a description of the unique way that any individual processes experiences. That is my approach and it is all thanks to Jung. I'm 84 as I speak and I've been developing these ideas for 63 years.

Now we have to look a little bit at the history.

When Jung started defending astrology, it had fallen into disrepute, the gutter. This happened during the Age of Reason when the Church turned against astrology because it gave too much power to individuals to think for themselves. Science completely pooh-poohed it. Descartes and Newton influenced the period immensely. At that time, in my opinion, religion lost its proof and science lost its sense of the sacred.

Astrology fell into the streets and into the hands of people like Madame LaZonga and fortune tellers, and it still suffers from that terrible reputation. But there has been incredible progress since Jung stuck his neck out to defend it. Theoretical physics is

beginning to view the solar system as a hologram, in which case “as above so below; as without, so within” begins to make sense.

Historically, people have thought that the stars were going to influence us. However, it is more helpful to understand it symbolically as a cosmic pantograph. That is the gadget that enables one to engrave the Lord’s Prayer on the head of a pin, the large and the small working together in the unus mundus. It is functioning as one.

We can breathe consciously or unconsciously. We can use astrology consciously or unconsciously. People have this gift of astrology to turn to. Why not? Whether you believe in it or not, it is going to work.

My first book is called *Jungian Symbolism in Astrology* but I didn’t want to write another cookbook. Then I had a dream that I was writing letters to Sylvia Perera, the Jungian analyst. I had met her a couple of times at conferences where we both lectured. I just loved her on sight. I knew I had to take the dream seriously so I called her and asked, “What do you think?” She graciously said “It’s a great idea!” That’s why both books have an informal feminine flavor. I feel my function is to simplify Jung and make him more available. I am devoted to the archetype of Hagia Sophia, feminine wisdom. In the Old Testament, she is described as being full of delight. This teaches that there is joy in wisdom and wisdom in joy!

IT: You were planning to write about the evolution of consciousness through the ages anyway, but tell us what validated your decision.

A.O.H.: When I married my beloved, Walter Andersen, he was living in California and I was living on Long Island, N.Y. I moved out to California and taught at the Jung Institute of Los Angeles. The analyst, Dr. James Kirsch, was nearing 90 and prided himself on being the oldest living friend of Jung. He was stone deaf and had this complicated machine that we used to talk to one another. We became good friends.

When I told him that I had planned to write on the evolution of consciousness through the ages, he got greatly excited. He said, “Guess what? Well, when I was staying with Jung on one occasion, he invited us to go on a picnic. We sailed across Lake Zurich and he brought with him a huge piece of paper. He spread it out and on it was this great ellipse of the constellations and he talked about the Platonic Year and the evolution of consciousness through the Astrological Ages. I was so impressed, I never forgot this. But the problem was, it was a picnic, so no one took any notes!”

After this conversation with James Kirsch, I went sailing back home knowing that I was on the right track.

I.T.: Your book, *The Heavens Declare*, explores the evolution of consciousness through the ages. Can you give us some of the basic ideas?

A.O.H.: Indeed! There is ample archeological proof to support the synchronistic coincidence between the nature of the symbols for the visible constellations in the sidereal zodiac and the religious, mythic, and psychological development of humanity. The Ages themselves average 2000 +/- years with varying interfaces and were discovered by the Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, around 200 B.C.E. The Platonic Year is the result of the astronomical Precession of the Equinoxes.

I.T.: As the end of this Age occurs and we move more fully into the Age of Aquarius, what are your concerns?

A.O.H.: I am profoundly disturbed by the myth that is gripping half of our nation. The myth is that these are the End Times with war and chaos, that there is going to be a Rapture of Christians, and that Jesus will appear in the sky. I would like to counteract the growing and pernicious mythology of these End Times that is captivating more and more gullible fundamental Christians in our own nation. I truly believe that these prophecies, as well as those of Vedic and Mayan origin, are pointing to an end in time, namely the end of the Age of Pisces and the beginning of the Age of Aquarius, and not the end of a place, namely the world. This may be the result of confusion between the words kronos and kosmos.

Each Age presents a basic dichotomy and the traps these involve. The dichotomy of Pisces/Virgo has been faith and reason and this is coming to a head, big time! The split between science and religion could be healed by a new cosmic science involving theoretical physics and a spirituality involving the esoteric mystical traditions of all the faiths which see our underlying unity. This is already happening quietly all over the world and *In Touch* is an example. *The Heavens Declare* comes from Psalm 19, a mystical declaration from the past. Also the phrase, “The kingdom of heaven is within” gives a hint to what astrology is about which Jung translated into psychological terms.

I.T.: As we look at apocalyptic myths, how do we prevent a self-fulfilling prophecy?

A.O.H.: I think the explanation lies in the reframing. The Hindus speak of the end of the Age, not the end of the world.

I’m old enough to remember how a myth ruled Nazi Germany and the impact of that myth upon the world. And today, it is not just Christian fundamentalism that presents a danger with its End Times myth.

It appears that Ahmadinejad of Iran is also convinced that, as soon as Israel is destroyed, the Twelfth Imam will appear and that he is preparing his country for this Twelfth Imam. All Islam believes in a divine savior, known as the Mahdi. The “Twelver” sect believes that Mohammed ibn Hasan, regarded as the Twelfth Imam, went into “occlusion” in the 9th century, at the age of 5. His return will be preceded by cosmic chaos, war and bloodshed. After a cataclysmic confrontation with evil, the Mahdi will lead the world to an era of universal peace. This Twelfth Imam is expected to return in the company Jesus.

Some speculate that Ahmadinejad relishes a clash with the West in the conviction that it would re-ignite the spirit of the Islamic revolution and speed the arrival of the Twelfth Imam.

There is also a fundamentalist Jewish belief that as soon as the Temple on the Mount is destroyed, there will be a whole new Time.

All these myths swirling around are causing us increased fear. Fear is crippling and makes us less than who we are. It may lead to collective hysteria as we approach 2012.

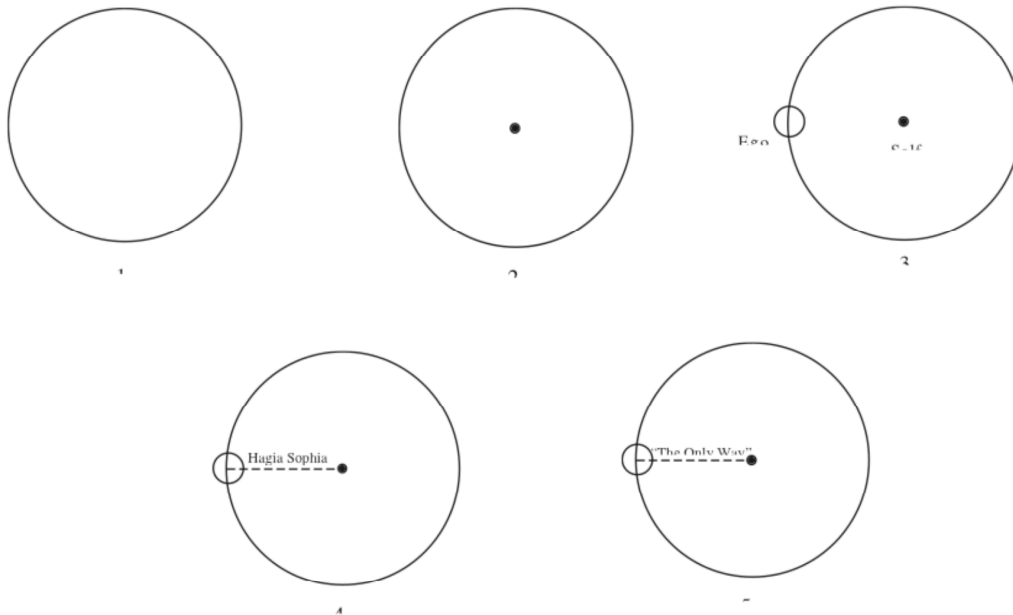
I.T.: What do you think is the antidote?

A.O.H.: Jung's insistence on symbolic thinking as against the idolatry of literalism! Here is a demonstration that I have found that explains Jung in a nutshell. The diagram is in the book (p. 252). I have yet to find a client who has not found it helpful. An empty circle represents Spirit unmanifest. If you draw one and ask a person if they can see the whole thing, they usually say "yes." What is the formula for the area of a circle? It is pi times the radius squared, and pi never works out! This means that every circle is a mystery. Jung assigns the Self as the center and totality of the psyche. He describes the ego as the center of consciousness and says it circumambulates the Self. If you look at the diagram, you can see the ego on the circumference and bisected by it. It looks outward and it also looks inward, to the inner world. Consciousness functions through duality, even physically.

I have chosen to term what Jung calls the Self "the Divine Guest" because it represents, symbolically, the mystery of the atman or the Christ Within. Different religions name it with different words. The idea is that the center is Spirit wanting to be us. The ego is needed to enable us to live in a three-dimensional world. If you look at that diagram and put your initials next to it, then you identify with the ego. You think that's all you are because the Self, Jung says, lies in the unconscious. So then, you go round in circles, searching. The words circle and search come from the same root. Around middle age, you start to say there must be more to life. Do you notice the dotted line from the center to the ego on the circumference? This is not from Jung but I learned it from Jung. I call it "the Only Way."

I think of Krishna, Buddha, and Jesus and all the avatars, saints, and wise people who really "made it" and connected their ego to the Divine Guest or the Christ Within or the atman. When that happened, they felt blissful and wanted to share this process with the people of their time and culture. Each said this is the "only way." As we are talking, at this minute, people are killing each other saying, "My guy's right. Your guy's wrong."

But this process is within each individual and this concept is one of Jung's great gifts to the world. He gives the whole process a new vocabulary.



I.T.: Outside of religion.

A.O.H.: Exactly! By giving this process a psychological rather than a religious vocabulary. Most words carry so much semantic baggage. The scales fell from my eyes when I read in Jung that salvation and individuation are the same thing. Salvation, to me, was one of those yucky words which sounded so selfish, as if you only wanted to save yourself. But to be individuated means simply to become transparent, allowing the Light that is within you to shine through you.

The dotted line symbolizes the process of Hagia Sophia, Holy Wisdom, and her motto is *ego coniungo*—I unite. What does she unite? She unites the ego with the Divine Guest.

Wisdom goes by many different names, but she is always a feminine archetype, another personification of a process. I have written at length about her in *The Dove in the Stone*, another one of my books.

Now Jung again defines the Self as presenting a big problem. It dwells in the unconscious! So, no matter how much theology and definitions we know, it will always be a conscious attempt to define the undefinable. “The Tao that can be defined is not the Tao.” That centerpoint has no dimension, thus it connects us to what is beyond time or space.

In my first dream of Jung, he poked a hole in the ground with his cane and said, “A hole is also a mandala.” It is where the “imprisoned splendor” of Spirit dwells in us.

Take the circle again, with the dot in the center just by itself. Guess what heavenly body in astronomy it represents? The sun! What metal in metallurgy? Gold.

And using the diagram allows you to see with your right hemisphere, where language drops off.

I.T.: It sounds like you're saying that learning to think symbolically can make a difference in how we face these challenging times ahead.

A.O.H.: Absolutely! If you want to understand the invisible world, you have to start with the visible world of nature. In the last dream I had of Jung, he shouted at me, "Consider the obvious! I did." I woke up and wondered what he meant. I looked up the word "obvious". It comes from the Latin *ob via*, lying on the road. One of the alchemists wrote that the Philosopher's Stone is lying on the road and wagon wheels roll over it. In other words, nothing is hidden. It is we who are blind.

As an example, look at a cup. What does it do?

I.T.: It holds.

A.O.H.: Yes. It contains. This is *yin* and feminine. For the pagans, it was a cauldron. What two great religions celebrate weekly with a cup? Christianity's chalice and the Jewish Sabbath cup. What great western myth involves a chalice?

I.T.: The Holy Grail?

A.O.H.: What is the problem with the Holy Grail?

I.T.: It's lost! We're still searching for it.

A.O.H.: And what have we lost in the last 2000 years?

I.T.: Sophia, the divine feminine?

A.O.H.: Pull that thought up to the highest level and you get the Mother Goddess. And what do mothers do? The essential function of any mother, human or animal, is to give form to life. So that is what the archetypal goddess represents, Mother Earth and Mother Nature. Matter and mother are cognate words. I love her medieval name, Dame Kinde. A child hereabouts asked if Mother Nature was God's wife!

I.T.: What are the tasks and traps, the dichotomy of the Age to come?

A.O.H.: Mother Teresa put it in one sentence: "I believe in person to person and that God is in everyone." The trap is depersonalization. We become numbers. There is no love in the envelope with our Social Security check! The task of the Age of Aquarius is to realize the unity behind our diversity; the dichotomy of the individual and the collective. It is already happening! It is the Age of the Common Man/Woman, each finding the Royal Self of Leo (the opposite constellation), within. We have 2000 years ahead to realize that the Divine Guest in me is the same as in you. Remembering this helps us to love even those on the ego level we do not necessarily like! The same flame burns on every candle; that's obvious. It is just that the lanterns are all different!

But as much as we differ, we are basically One. We have to learn to love our neighbor, not as thyself, but because he is thyself.

Alice O. Howell. is a warm, funny, astoundingly sharp, and long-time student of Jungian thought, astrology, and sacred geometry, not to mention classics and ancient history.

Alice was born in Cambridge, MA, in 1922 and from the age of five, lived abroad in hotels and boarding schools, never more than three months in one place. By the age of eighteen she had lived in or traveled to 37 countries and undertaken a lifelong study of comparative religion and mythology. She earned the Deutsch Diploma at the Buser Institute in Switzerland. Returning with her parents to the U.S. during WW II, she studied under renowned astrologer, Marc Edmund Jones, as his youngest student. She married, had four children, and taught English and history in private schools on Long Island, N.Y. for eighteen years, progressing to the university level.

Howell continued her study of Jung depth psychology and astrology for 30 years. At the advice of Jungian analyst, Dr. Edward F. Edinger, she began her serious attempt to prove astrology a useful diagnostic adjunct to Jungian psychology. She then devoted her time successfully with patients sent to her by psychiatrists and analysts. Howell taught at the Jung Foundation in NYC and later at the C.G. Jung Institutes of Chicago and Los Angeles and became a worldwide lecturer. Today, she is recognized as a pioneer in linking psychology and astrology.

Encouraged by her second husband, Walter Andersen, she became the author of seven books, including Jungian Symbolism in Astrology (Quest Books, 1987), The Dove in the Stone (Quest Books, 1988), The Web in the Sea (Quest Books, 1993), and The Beejum Book (Bell Pond Press, 2002), all written in her seventies. Now widowed and a great grandmother, Howell lives in the Berkshires in Massachusetts and, despite her age and physical handicaps, continues to work actively in her practice and as moderator of an online Jungian group. "Beats those doilies in the rocking chair!" she grins.