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*Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor on Psychic Development: the dynamics between the 'psychological' and the 'spiritual'*. G.C. Tympas. London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xvii + 203.

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The chief task of G.C. Tympas' *Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor on Psychic Development* is, in the words of the author, to bring together "two dissimilar theories on psychic development" by introducing "a theoretical framework for a synthesis that integrates and, at the same time, exceeds both" (1). Such a theoretical framework, or *trans-disciplinary* methodology, Tympas argues, is necessary for the critical comparison of Jung's modern psychological model of *individuation* with Maximus Confessor's ancient theological ideal of *deification*, or *theosis*. The aim of this book, then, is to attempt a critical comparison between the psychological and the religious approaches to psychic development or spiritual progress without reducing one to the other.

The immediate question that presents itself is, of course, why Jung and Maximus Confessor? What is to be gained from a comparison between an ancient Orthodox theologian and a modern analytical psychologist? The initial inspiration behind this novel comparison appears to be a personal one: Tympas holds a PhD in psychoanalytic studies and serves as a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. As such, the author's attempt at a non-reductionist comparison between a psychologist and a theologian represents the author's personal attempt at a reconciliation of these two, distinct approaches to interior development. Due to his intimate acquaintance with both parties, Tympas holds the conviction that a "retrospective encounter" between Jung and Maximus could serve to correct Jung's tendency towards psychological reductionism (despite his generally *positive* view of religion), while providing an ontological grounding for his metaphysically ambiguous notions of synchronicity, individuation, and the Self. On the other hand, Jung's insights into the workings of the unconscious psyche could enrich the traditional, theological understanding of the personal journey towards deification, which tends to minimise the personal and socio-cultural aspects of the journey. The "horizontal" approach of Jungian psychology coupled with the "vertical" approach of Maximian theology, Tympas suggests, are ultimately complementary and capable of being integrated by means of a *trans-disciplinary paradigm of development*.

The need for such a trans-disciplinary paradigm compels Tympas to devote considerable attention to the problem of methodology – a problem with which the book begins and ends. In the interests of avoiding a reductionistic approach, Tympas suggests the inclusion of multiple disciplines such as biology, sociology, psychology, and theology. He envisions this inter, or trans-disciplinary approach to psycho-spiritual development unfolding according to a fivefold "ontological hierarchy":

bodily/biological; psychic/unconscious; interpersonal/social; cultural/symbolic; metaphysical/religious. Tympas thus envisions an “evolutionary relationship between the psychological and the spiritual” (34) within this multilevel framework, such that the spiritual journey incorporates and progresses through the multiple levels of human experience culminating in the ultimate goal of deification beyond individuation. In this way, Tympas aims for a synthesis between “wholeness” and “holiness,” in which both the relative and absolute aspects of psychological and spiritual development are included to their mutual benefit.

Having established his methodology, Tympas devotes the central chapters of his work to comparing the respective approaches of Jung and The Confessor. Topics of discussion include individuation vs. deification, the archetypes vs. *logoi*, the psychological God-image/Self vs. the theological understanding of the *imago dei*. Despite his espousal of an egalitarian, non-reductionistic approach to his subject, Tympas’ comparative enterprise possesses a certain asymmetrical character – evident in the oft-repeated phrase “Jung failed to address/overlooked/lacked... etc.” As such, Tympas tends to regard Maximus as a corrective to what he regards as the psychological reductionism of Jung. Granted Tympas’ hierarchical understanding of psycho-spiritual development, it stands to reason that the theological gains precedence over the psychological. Yet, it is worth recalling Jung’s frequent frustration in his own lifetime at the charge of “psychologism” – as though his psychological speculations were “*only* psychological.” For Jung, the psyche was never “merely” the psyche but rather a fundamental principle of reality, a fathomless, infinitely mysterious realm shot through with numenosity. Rather than simply subordinating the psychological to the theological, this reader would have liked to learn something about the “crypto-metaphysical” character of the Jungian Unconscious, with its unmistakable resonance with the Platonic world soul or the Plotinian *nous*.

For the more scientifically and less metaphysically inclined reader, however, Tympas’ comparative synthesis (replete with graphs and diagrams) will prove worthwhile. For those unfamiliar with the thought of Jung and Maximus Confessor, the central comparative chapters provide an excellent, in-depth primer on their respective psychological and theological systems. Of particular interest is Tympas’ comparison of the distinctive “eschatologies” of Jung and Maximus in relation to the problem of evil. In his fascinating and controversial *Answer to Job*, Jung rejects the classical understanding of evil as the *privatio boni* arguing instead for the need to integrate the dark elements of the god-image/Self within the collective psyche. As such, the goal of individuation as the attainment of psychic wholeness involves the synthesis of the contraries of good and evil, light and dark, masculine and feminine. For Maximus, on the other hand, the attainment of deification involves the transcendence of polarity in which male and female are resolved into the higher unity of universal human nature, while evil is abolished in the ultimate triumph of

the Good. Beyond the “wholeness” of individuation, suggests Tympas, awaits the “holiness” of deification.

For Tympas, Jung’s dualistic *telos* stems from the inability of his psychology to rise above the natural, socio-cultural levels of being. Jung’s determinedly anti-metaphysical stance means that he remains stuck at the level of archetypal polarities with “no redeeming power from outside to cast out the devil and man’s evil side” (153). Maximus, on the other hand, takes us beyond Jung thanks to his Logos-theology. Whereas the Jungian Self remains confined to the psychological dimension, Christ the Logos, as simultaneously God and human, is capable of uniting both the psychological and the metaphysical. The central symbol of Maximian *theosis* is thus not merely unifying, but *transfiguring*.

Despite this somewhat asymmetrical comparison whereby Maximus serves as a corrective to Jung, Tympas concludes by emphasising some important ways in which Jung’s psychological insights might complement Maximus’ theological scheme. For example, a one-sided emphasis upon spiritual detachment can sometimes mask unconscious drives which have merely been suppressed rather than properly integrated. This can lead to contemporary problems of distorted loves such as paedophilia in the priesthood. Jungian analysis serves a crucial role in unmasking one’s spiritual *persona*, ensuring that the individual acquires the necessary psychic maturity that undergirds authentic spiritual progress. In sum, Tympas argues for an “emerging complementarity” between the Jungian and Maximian models whereby psychological “wholeness” opens onto the metaphysical level of being, while theological “holiness” manages to incorporate the unconscious, interpersonal, and socio-cultural levels of experience. As such, both models, while challenging each other’s priorities, nonetheless work together to accomplish the whole spectrum of developmental perspectives spanning the five ontological levels (the bodily, psychic, social, cultural, metaphysical).

In conclusion, G.C. Tympas’ *Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor on Psychic Development* offers a carefully considered comparison between two divergent models of psychological and spiritual development. Despite considerable differences with respect to their historical and socio-cultural contexts, Tympas manages to bridge the gap by means of his trans-disciplinary paradigm. As such, Tympas’ work is sure to satisfy all those seeking to reconcile or integrate the discoveries of modern depth psychology with the timeless spiritual insights of antiquity.