

Jung: Night and Day

Date : December 9, 2011

In general the people asseverated the Creator had made everything good and beautiful. He was beyond good and evil. He was *m'zuri*, that is, beautiful, and everything he did was *m'zuri*.

When I asked: "But what about the wicked animals who kill your cattle?" they said, "The lion is good and beautiful." "And your horrible diseases?" They said, "You lie in the sun and it is good."

I was impressed by this optimism. But at six o'clock in the evening this optimism was suddenly over, as I soon discovered. From sunset on, it was a different world - the dark world of *ayik*, of evil, danger, fear. The optimistic philosophy gave way to fear of ghosts and magical practices intended to secure protection from evil. Without any inner contradiction the optimism returned at dawn.

It was a profoundly stirring experience for me to find, at the sources of the Nile, this remainder of the ancient Egyptian conception of the two acolytes of Osiris, Horus and Set. Here, evidently, was a primordial African experience that had flowed down to the coasts of the Nile: *adhista*, the rising sun, the principle of light like Horus; *ayik*, the principle of darkness, the breeder of fear. In the simple rites performed for the dead, *laibon's* words and his sprinkling of milk unite the opposites; he simultaneously sacrifices to these two principles, which are of equal power and significance since the time of their dominance, the rule of day and of night, each visibly lasts for twelve hours. The important thing, however, is the moment when, with the typical sudden-ness of the tropics, the first ray of light shoots forth like an arrow and night passes into life-filled light.

The sunrise in these latitudes was a phenomenon that overwhelmed me anew every day. The drama of it lay less in the splendor of the sun's shooting up over the horizon than in what happened afterward. I formed the habit of taking my camp stool and sitting under an umbrella acacia just before dawn. Before me, at the bottom of the little valley, lay a dark, almost black-green strip of jungle, with the rim of the plateau on the opposite side of the valley towering above it. At first, the contrasts between light and darkness would be extremely sharp. Then objects would assume contour and emerge into the light which seemed to fill the valley with a compact brightness. The horizon above became radiantly white. Gradually the swelling light seemed to penetrate into the very structure of objects, which became illuminated from within until at last they shone translucently, like bits of colored glass. Everything turned to flaming crystal. The cry of the bell bird rang around the horizon. At such moments I felt as if I were inside a temple. It was the most sacred hour of the day, I drank in this glory with insatiable delight, or rather, in a timeless ecstasy.

Near my observation point was a high cliff inhabited by big baboons. Every morning they sat quietly, almost motionless, on the ridge of the cliff facing the sun, whereas throughout the rest of the day they ranged noisily through the forest, screeching and chattering. Like me, they seemed to

be waiting for the sunrise. They reminded me of the great baboons of the temple of Abu Simbel in Egypt, which perform the gesture of adoration. They tell the same story: for untold ages men have worshipped the great god who redeems the world by rising out of the darkness as a radiant light in the heavens.

At that time I understood that within the soul from its primordial beginnings there has been a desire for light and an irrepressible urge to rise out of the primordial darkness. When the great night comes, everything takes on a note of deep dejection, and every soul is seized by an inexpressible longing for light. That is the pent-up feeling that can be detected in the eyes of primitives and also in the eyes of animals. There is a sadness in animals' eyes, and we never know whether that sadness is bound up with the soul of the animal or is a poignant message which speaks to us of that still unconscious existence. That sadness also reflects the mood of Africa, the experience of its solitudes. It is a maternal mystery, this primordial darkness. That is why the sun's birth in the morning strikes the natives as so overwhelmingly meaningful. The *moment* in which light comes is God. That moment brings redemption, release. To say that *sun* is God is to blur and forget the archetypal experience of that moment. "We are glad that the night when the spirits are abroad is over now," the natives will say - but that is already a rationalization. In reality a darkness altogether different from natural light broods over the land. It is the psychic primal night which is the same today as it has been for countless millions of years. The longing for light is the longing for consciousness.

- *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* by C.G. Jung