

By Anne Streaty Wimberly

A Response to the Responders

I read both responses to my article with great appreciation and gratefulness, especially for the time and care spent and for the depth of scholarship revealed. Of course, I read Rev. Diana T. Beach's response with tremendous satisfaction because of her emphatic treatment of my view point. Ronald Massonari's response, on the other hand, gave me some pause; however, after a short duration I realized that he had raised one of the most salient and central issues confronting humanity today. This issue concerns the way in which values are transmitted in a society where tradition has been challenged by technology and industrialization.

Massonari's analysis focuses upon the methodological approach to symbols. He contrasts the descriptive analytical approach to symbols, which I used, with the incarnational participatory approach to them, which he favors. I contend along with Beach's response that such a dichotomy is too artificial and distorts the circular causal way that reality is actually apprehended by individuals and groups.

The manner in which Massonari presents his critique leaves one with the impression that one must take on an either/or stance relative to the two approaches. The both/and proposition seems to me to be more representative of the nature of reality. After all, we are not just participants in concrete realities, but we are also cognitive creatures that use symbols and language to create meaning and draw conclusions. Language symbols and cognitive processes abstract from concrete experience, and it is out of the cyclical feedback between participation and abstraction that our view of reality is created. When black people sang spirituals they were not just participating in a pre-existent meaning, they were creating a view of reality at the same time. In other words, there is a reciprocal action necessary to recreate what Massonari called the referential system.

Secondly, Carl Jung's whole argument relative to the collective unconscious holds both the incarnational view and the descriptive view in tension. In cultures where tradition was intact, there was no need to make conscious the symbols which were operative in Jung's thinking. All one had to do was to participate in dogma, worship and ritual, and the symbols would have their effect. However, with the dawning of technology, which called tradition into question, modern civilization has had to rely more on conscious processes in order to make symbols come alive in their lives. Consequently, a descriptive comparative approach was used by Jung in his therapy as a beginning step to help the symbol to come alive in the personal lives of individuals. It is for this reason that the central concept in Jung's writings emerge as individuation; that is, it is the process of making the unknown within the psyche of persons known for the purpose of facilitating wholeness. Individuation is an objectification

process as well as a incarnational process. Jung does not separate these processes arbitrarily.

I believe that his reciprocal process for making symbols come alive referred to above also was operative with the Negro slave. Massanari points out that the spiritual emerged from a people who had an acute referential sense, and therefore, there was no real need to objectify the experience. I disagree with this conclusion, because the slave had lost his true referential system temporarily when brought to these shores. In this context, the spirituals were the result of the psyche's effort to recreate meaning and referential system that had been temporarily shattered. In other words, the spirituals were the result of a process of the reciprocal action of participation-objectification. They were the result of a people striving to create a different referential system to meet a new situation in life.

To summarize my remarks I will reiterate the central theme of this response. The artificial separation of the participatory incarnational approach from the analytical descriptive one is a false dichotomy and does not reflect the way in which reality is apprehended. The creation of symbols is the result of a feedback process between participation and abstraction, and this circular process is heightened when traditional worldviews and referential systems have been challenged.