Introduction

by Jakob Lusensky

In the experience of analysis—first as a patient and today as a Jungian psychoanalyst myself—I have often been confronted with the unavoidable suffering a human life entails. The analytical room has shown me that the questions Jung faced in his lifelong wrestling with Christianity are just as alive for individuals in our own time. Many people are first introduced to Jung through his psychological concepts and analytic theory, which can and do provide a helpful map for those in emotional pain. Jungian psychology opens to the existential and spiritual dimensions of life, yielding the possibility of interpretive depth in the search for meaning. As a depth psychology, it enables a more holistic understanding of the underlying significance of suffering—and of the psyche's potentials for healing.

But the experiences of an individual's life or analysis are not always founded on or explainable by psychological concepts and theoretical formulations. In the midst of anxiety, despair, and depression, psychological concepts offer handrails at best to help us position ourselves in the encounter. At worst, as renowned Jungian scholar Sonu Shamdasani observes, the same vocabulary can become a kind of guardrail or safety net, "vital for some, no doubt, for protection," but that may "block access to the very experiences in question."[1] In the analytical room, in our lives, in the process of individuation, we are often left naked: too wounded and vulnerable

[1] Sonu Shamdasani, *Carl Gustav Jung and the Red Book (Part I)*, (symposium presented at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, June 19, 2010), video, https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-4909.

for concepts to become illuminating for us. Like Jung, we too must struggle alone with the unresolved complexes of childhood, with the unanswered questions of living, and with an often bewildering imperative to find language for these experiences.

As analysis deepens, or as we mature into life, we can learn to listen to what Jung refers to in *The Red Book* as "the lament of the dead": not only to our individual unresolved complexes, unanswered questions, and unlived life, but to that of our parents and ancestors. Understanding how parts of our suffering are linked to a past that goes beyond personal history—generational trauma, as it is often called today—can become a way to broaden the story we tell ourselves about ourselves and why we suffer. Listening to the lament of the dead can in this way help us find more compassion for the people we grew up with and the suffering they caused, as well as for ourselves, for the wounds inflicted internally in relation to them. If we consider the human self as like a sapling growing through life into a tree, we can begin to connect to this broader story—in noticing the depths of our roots, the soil in which we have been planted, and the seed that was our beginning. We can begin to appreciate the trees that grow around us.

But there is a level of human suffering that lies beneath the personal and generational, beyond the laments of the dead. It is the painful confrontation with the limits of human life itself. It is the inevitable tragedy that everyone and everything we love will be taken from us. Classical psychoanalysis speaks, with its atheist ethos, of the necessity of adapting to the *reality principle*; in Christianity, the paradox and painful limits of human life and the Self are symbolized by the cross.

At the center of the Western imaginary, there is Christ on the cross. A figure of the unavoidable suffering in a human life. A painful reminder that our psyche's defense mechanisms invent the most creative ways of avoiding facing what we must. No one will be free from accident, disease, death. It is at this raw level of

human existence, at the imagined or real threat of loss, separation, sickness, poverty, suffering, and death, that the question of faith and belief—the questions of religion—often first become relevant. It is as we are waiting on the examination results from the doctor; as our child is suddenly struck with illness; as our vehicle collides head-on with two others; as a loaded gun is pointed at our head that we find ourselves turning to pray, to a faith that is able to become part of our reality. Looking into reality's tragic face, depth psychology cannot save us. Standing before reality, we have reached a limit, an impasse, a crossroads: the cross at the end of the road, the choice of whether or not to pick it up.

Where do Christ and Christianity fit into a new psychology?

James Hillman, well known for his archetypal psychology and emphasis on the importance of a polytheistic approach to the human psyche, may be an unlikely person to voice the question: "Where do Christ and Christianity fit into a new psychology?"[2] The question emerged in a 2010 public dialogue between himself and Shamdasani, who answers, "Well, it's the central figure for Jung. It's the central figure in his personal iconography, but also, as you say, for much of Western culture, given the effects that Christianity has had, as Jung says in the work, upon the soul."[3]

The question of Christ—the message of Christ, the meaning of *imitatio Christi*—is a central question for Jung in *The Red Book* and in the conversations presented in the book you are now reading. It is, if you like, the cross around which these thirteen dialogues ambulate, as well as the crossroads where psychology and Christian

[2] James Hillman and Sonu Shamdasani, *Lament of the Dead: Psychology after Jung's Red Book* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 219.
[3] Hillman and Shamdasani, *Lament of the Dead*, 219.

faith intersect. It is a well-known fact for many Jungians that Jung understood Jesus Christ psychologically, as a symbol of the Self—or rather, an incomplete symbol of the Self, since Jung viewed Christ as too perfect and one-sided, as having lost his shadow. In a letter to Adolf Keller on March 21, 1951, Jung puts it bluntly: "If Christ means anything to me, it is only as a symbol. As a historical figure he might just as well be called Pythagoras, Lao-tze, Zarathustra, etc. I find the historical Jesus completely unedifying, simply interesting because controversial."[4] For Jung, Jesus of Nazareth of two thousand years ago was of little importance, whereas Christ had become for him one symbol of many in a pantheon bearing witness to Jung's psychological theory of individuation.

The question C.G. Jung

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to lecture in introductory courses on Jungian psychology for master students of psychoanalysis in Berlin. I usually start the lecture by letting the students freely associate and share what first comes to mind when hearing the words *Jungian psychology*. The responses are usually somewhat the same: archetypes, the collective unconscious, individuation, complexes, shadow, anima, self, introversion, extraversion.

In a similar way, when you ask today's most powerful algorithm to associate (in other words, if you google *Jungian psychology*), the first results you will find are links to the same well-known concepts—illustrations of Jung's theories of the psyche, quotes of his writings, and black-and-white photos of the wise old man smoking his pipe. Since Jung's passing in 1961, analytical psychology has established a powerful persona in the cultural

[4] C.G. Jung and Adolf Keller, "Letter 31," in *On Theology and Psychology: The Correspondence of C.G. Jung and Adolf Keller*, ed. Marianne Jehle-Wildberger, trans. Heather McCartney and John Peck (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 143.

discourse, not least through the increased presence of the internet and social media, making Jungian concepts and theory an integral part of the psychologized vocabulary of the *Zeitgeist*.

The idea behind the conversations with Jungian scholars and analysts that form this book has been to go beneath the theory and concepts Jung left behind, to unearth the underlying existential questions he wrestled with in his own life. Unearthing the questions that lie below Jungian concepts is like pulling a plant from its soil to study the roots. Such roots are the questions about the purpose of human existence that Jung would ask himself, questions with which philosophy, theology, and religion have always grappled. Jung, through the new science of psychology, found a language in which to try answering them.

In old age, Jung famously summarized the meaning of his life for Aniela Jaffé in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: "The meaning of my existence is that life has addressed a question to me. Or conversely, I myself am a question which is addressed to the world."[5] Jung explained that his life task was to communicate an answer to the question that was himself, in order not to depend on the world for an answer. He continued: "Perhaps it is a question which preoccupied my ancestors, and which they could not answer."[6] Considered this way, what we are left unearthing—the plant whose roots are studied by the conversations in this collection—are not only the questions beneath Jung's concepts but the question of Carl Gustav Jung himself.

The naked Jung

With the publication of Jung's *The Red Book: Liber Novus* (2009) and *The Black Books: 1913–1932, Notebooks of Transformation* (2020),

[5] Aniela Jaffé and C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Random House, 1961), 350.
[6] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 350.

we find an intimate account of Jung's passionate struggle with the questions life had addressed to him. Imagining Jung as a question asked by life itself, we become witnesses to his reckoning with parts of his Self, his complexes, the lament of his ancestors, and a religious tradition and God in which he could no longer believe. Beginning with his break with Sigmund Freud and intensifying after the release of *Psychology of the Unconscious* (published in 1912), Jung found himself in an existential vacuum. In the book, he treats the myths of peoples of the past—myths that had long helped such peoples orient their lives. In his own day, Jung had, himself, to face the question, *in what myth might man live now?* "In the Christian myth, the answer might be, 'Do *you* live in it?' I asked myself. To be honest, the answer was no."[7]

Jung's wrestling takes the form of an inner dialogue in which he is summoned to engage with the characters of his unconscious. Painstakingly he takes account of his encounters in his *Black Books* journals. The initial entry on November 12, 1913, begins with a petition: "My soul, my soul, where are you? Do you hear me? I speak, I call you—are you there?"[8] What we witness today with new access to these intimate personal accounts is a raw, naked, vulnerable portrayal of a man in existential crisis—a Jung without any helpful psychological concepts to hold onto. A Jung without clothes, if you like. A person in emotional pain who, recognizing that his myth has lost meaning for him, sets out in despair on a process of self-experimentation, actively allowing images and visions to rise from the unconscious. Carefully noted in his *Black Books* entries and later illustrated and calligraphed in his *Red Book*, these are the visionary

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[7] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 195.

[8] C.G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, Reader's Edition, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, trans. Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 238.

experiences that, late in life, Jung would admit were the *prima materia* for his psychological thinking and theory-building.

A few years after the publication of *Liber Novus*, Shamdasani, professor at the Welcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College, London, along with Jungian analyst James Hillman, published their forementioned conversation and commentary on the importance of *The Red Book* for our own time. In *Lament of the Dead: Psychology After Jung's Red Book* (2013), they emphasize that the questions Jung attempted to work through in *The Red Book* were intimately related to Jung's personal life and Reformed Protestant heritage but could also be understood as Jung's wrestling with the unanswered questions of his parents and ancestors.

Hillman points to personal biography when observing Jung confronting his own inheritance: Jung is "wrestling with his actual father, he's wrestling with the Church, he's wrestling with the world he grew up in, with nineteenth-century Christianity as he knew it in Switzerland, and with theologians."[9] Shamdasani proposes in his 2010 Library of Congress lecture celebrating *Liber Novus'* release that we understand it as Jung's articulation of a "theology of the dead."[10]

In his theology of the dead, human redemption takes the form of Jung taking up the legacy of answering the unanswered questions of the souls of the dead. Shamdasani, in his conversation with Hillman, highlights a footnote in *The Red Book* in which Jung writes: "Not one item of the Christian law is abrogated, but instead we are adding a new one: accepting the lament of the dead."[11] It is a statement clarifying the extent both to which Jung himself saw his confrontation with the unconscious as unfolding within a Christian context, and of his having wished to add to it the psychoanalytical

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[9] Hillman and Shamdasani, *Lament of the Dead*, 123.

[10] Shamdasani, *Carl Gustav Jung and the Red Book (Part I)*, 2010.

[11] Jung, *The Red Book*, 297.

principle of learning to listen to (and attempt to answer) the unanswered questions of our ancestors' unresolved complexes.

The specific questions that Jung's unconscious lamented and that he attempted to work through in his years writing *The Red Book* between 1913–1930 (he would resume writing at the end of his life only to put it down again and not finish it), and later in his psychological concepts and theory-building, are summarized by Shamdasani: Throughout the work, the question for Jung is what does it mean to be a Christian? How are we to understand the Christian ideal of imitating Christ today? Does it still have meaning?[12] For Shamdasani, such questions reveal Jung attempting to recover a genuine experience of being a Christian.[13]

Essential questions these were for Jung, and in my opinion, they remain essential both to Jungian psychology and Christianity in our time. I decided to bring these and other questions to my interlocuters in the conversations that make up this book. The purpose of these conversations has been to ambulate around, to analyze, to linger with the same questions Jung himself wrestled against. Each conversation is singular, unfolding and standing on its own. Readers are invited to explore the world of each dialogue in whatever way suits their subjective disposition.

Jung's wrestling with Christianity

For anyone who has spent time with analytical psychology, it is not news that Jung's unconscious was steeped in Christian soil or that many of the questions he wrestled have their roots there. Shamdasani and Hillman's analysis of *The Red Book* merely highlights anew the importance of Christianity and Christ in this formative period of Jung's life and for his psychological theory-building. Shamdasani summarizes:

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[12] Jung, *The Red Book*, 213.

[13] Jung, *The Red Book*, 213.

"One of the most striking things about *The Red Book* when one first encounters it is the extent and the character of Jung's involvement with Christianity. The central character of the work is Christ."[14]

As the story goes, C.G. Jung was born, raised, and buried as a Christian. His father was reared in a Swiss Protestant family and worked as a pastor of the Reformed Church, as did his maternal grandfather and six of his uncles. Jung was baptized, took communion in, married, and was laid to rest in the Protestant Reformed Church of Switzerland. He understood himself culturally to be a Christian, and so, he believed, was his unconscious. Jung stresses his life mission as being fundamentally linked with Christianity, writing: "My problem is to wrestle with the big monster of the historical past, the great snake of the centuries, the burden of the human mind, the problem of Christianity"[15]

The problem of Christianity and its linkage with the existential questions Jung was asking himself—about the loss and recovery of a myth to live by—would accompany him through childhood and adolescence until his later years. But it was after his visit to India in 1937–1938, and an impressive dream about the search for the Holy Grail, that there was a clear turn of focus in his writing, and he shifted his attention more firmly to topics related to Christianity. From his *Terry Lectures on Psychology and Religion* in 1937 onward, Jung produced a series of works aimed at working through Christian ideas and concepts. These ideas and concepts had long been present as questions in Jung's personal life, and were those he grappled with in the active imaginations collected in *Black Books* and *Liber Novus*.

It was in this *Red Book* period (1913–1932) of actively writing down, illustrating, painting, and working through his active imaginations that Jung would start looking for ways to translate

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[14] Jung, *The Red Book*, 213.

[15] C.G. Jung, *The Symbolic Life: Miscellaneous Writings*, Vol. 18 of *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), ¶ 279.

these experiences into theoretical and psychological language. In his 1918 essay "The Role of the Unconscious," he analysed a patient's dream to illustrate the idea that Christianity in its traditional form can have a repressive psychological effect on the unconscious, instinctual side of man.

In 1923, he returned to the theme of Christianity's prohibitiveness in fourteen summertime seminars held at the small seaside resort Polzeath, on the southeast coast of England. The latter part of these seminars focused on the historical and psychological effects of Christianity, on what Jung reiterated is traditional Christianity's repression of the unconscious.

Jung distinguished between ecclesial Christianity and what he understood as *real* Christianity, the former of which, he said, does not work in order to inspire individuals anymore. He goes on to address how Christianity has repressed part of our human nature, has tried historically to exclude the animal side in humanity, what Jung referred to as the *inferior man*. He highlighted how more traditional or doctrinal Christianity especially attempted to suppress man's individual capacity for fantasy and symbol formation, which the Church had seen as a threat to its power that would often be labelled heretical.

Jung attacked traditional Christianity with the voice of a Protestant Reformer, but also presented his own revisioning of a Christianity that might yet transform if it were to be open to integrating a depth-psychological approach:

> If the old Christianity can assimilate the new powers from the unconscious which analysis has made available, it will go on, having gained a fresh understanding of the teachings and renewed power. The Jesuit spirit may well take over analytic methods, and in the future the Church may become the greatest exponent of analysis.[16]

[16] M. Esther Harding and C.G. Jung, TS (27 leaves) of lecture "Human Relationships in Relation to the Process of Individuation," July 1923, *Cornwall Seminar, July 1923, C .G. Jung: Unauthorized Notes / by M. Esther Harding*, Kristine

Before an audience of about thirty participants, Jung passionately proclaimed that the fire of the Holy Spirit is at work in the analysis between analyst and analysand within this early movement of analytical psychology. He ended these lectures by speaking about how individual relationships lay the foundations of what he calls the *invisible church*—a term Jung was very fond of and that Murray Stein expands on in the first conversation of this book.

Alchemy as the Christian unconscious

Jung's turning back to Western culture in the late 1930s, his commencing the working-through of his own Christian tradition, was accompanied by his growing interest in alchemy. Jung understood alchemy not only as the chemical process of trying to distill gold, but as the psychological process of the individual alchemist trying to redeem their soul. Jung came to understand the alchemical tradition's symbolism as having a psychologically compensatory function to what he believed was the too-one-sided Christian tradition's at times reductive symbolism and dogma. Throughout the 1930s and until late in his life, Jung would write and lecture on alchemy to reveal its compensatory function for the Christian man. This started with him writing a psychological commentary on the Chinese text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, which was sent to him in 1928 by Christian Sinologist and missionary to China Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930), who would later become his friend. In his later book *Psychology and Alchemy* (1941), Jung summarized the link between Christianity and alchemy that "alchemy seems like a continuation of Christian mysticism carried on in the subterranean darkness of the unconscious."[17]

In 1930, Jung had stopped working on *The Red Book* and focused more of his attention on the comparative study of the

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Mann Library, C.G. Jung Center, New York, leaf 20. https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10076043.

[17] C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, Vol. 12 of *Collected Works* (1968), ¶ 452.

individuation process. The lectures he gave at the Swiss Federal Institute for Technology in Zürich (ETH) between 1933 and 1941 would become the mainstage for this. These lectures were open, the audience comprised of students of the ETH, the general public, and Jung's followers who had moved to Zürich in the last two decades. The ETH lectures were the locus of Jung's theoretical attention through this decade, and many of the ideas that would take the form of books in the last decade of his life were introduced and elaborated in these lectures.

In the semesters of 1939–1940, leading up to start of the Second World War, after Jung had delved into comparative studies between individuation and Eastern spirituality, Tantric Yoga, and meditation, he decided suddenly to turn west more specifically to Europe, and his interpretative lens to *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola lived and worked in sixteenth-century Europe. As the founder of the Jesuit order, he had put together a structured form of spiritual exercises practiced by Christians to this day. Jung, who had prepared his lectures while examining Eastern spiritual practices and their relationship to active imagination and the process of individuation, suddenly shifted focus to what he saw as a specifically Western form of meditation.

Jung would, as in the earlier lectures, use his own psychological theory and concepts to explain the exercises. He paid special attention to the visions Loyola reports to have had in the latter's semi-autobiographical account "Reminiscences," indirectly comparing them to his own visions and active imaginations of 1913, and to his writing in *Black Books*. Interestingly, at the time of preparing these lectures and meditating on Loyola's exercises, Jung himself had a vision of Christ that he later describes to his secretary and longtime collaborator Aniela Jaffé in the following account (June 27, 1957):

> When I was engrossed with psychology and alchemy—no, to be more precise, it was when I was giving the seminar on Ignatius of Loyola—once, in the night, I had a vision of Christ. One night I awoke and there, at the foot of the bed, I saw a crucifix. Not quite life-sized. It was very clear and couched in a bright light. In this light, Christ was hanging on the cross and then I saw that it was as if his entire body were made of gold, as if of green gold. It looked wonderful. I was scared to death by it.[18]

The late Jung

It is in the important late decade of Jung's life that his wrestling with and working through Christianity finds full theoretical expression. Well known to Jungians is his work *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, which aims at a psychological understanding and thoroughgoing interpretation of the Christ image. In the foreword of this book, Jung writes: "I have been requested so often by my readers to discuss the relations between the traditional Christ-figure and the natural symbols of wholeness, or the self, that I finally decided to take this task in hand."[19]

The hypothesis that Jung presents in *Aion* is that the symbol of Christ represents the Self, but only partially, because the Self had been split into good and evil components. "Nevertheless the Christian symbol lacks wholeness in the modern psychological sense, since it does not include the dark side of things but specifically

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[18] Martin Liebscher, "Introduction to Volume 7," in *Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises*, Vol. 7 of *Lectures Delivered at ETH Zürich*, ed. Martin Liebscher, trans. Caitlin Stephens (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023), xlvii.
[19] C.G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Vol. 9 (Part II) of *Collected Works* (1969), x.

excludes it in the form of a Luciferian opponent"[20] For Jung, the Christ symbol represents only one side of human nature, the other being shown by his enemy, the Antichrist or Satan. The result of this, argues Jung, creates a doctrine, tradition, and ultimately a Christian culture and collective unconscious that is split, characterized by unreconciled oppositions in man.

The book is a return to and clarification of ideas Jung had broached earlier on, especially in his essay "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity" (1948). It was there that Jung had spelled out theoretically his hypothesis of a disproportionate Christian theology, which he contrasted with his own vision of human wholeness, namely a wholeness stressing the importance of including the dark side of God by adding "a fourth" to the doctrinal Trinity.

In Jung's late, much-discussed work *Answer to Job* (1952), he draws an arc back to questions he had been formulating and attempting to answer in *Black Books* and *Liber Novus*. Murray Stein describes *Answer to Job*, also known as a "psychotheology,"[21] as Jung's working through of the Christian image through his own countertransference. "What Jung presents in *Answer to Job* is both an analysis of himself—of his father complex and unresolved transferences to his father Paul Jung and Sigmund Freud—and a therapeutic analysis of the biblical Christian image of God through the counter-transference."[22]

A leitmotif throughout the book is the idea of reintegrating evil back into the godhead, and Jung's lifelong difficulties with the Christian concept of *privatio boni*—evil as merely the absence of good. The basic notion of this doctrine is that evil has no substance;

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[20] C.G. Jung, *Aion*, 41.

[21] See James W. Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of C.G. Jung's* Psychology of Religion (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1973).

[22] Murray Stein, *Jung's Treatment of Christianity: The Psychotherapy of a Religious Tradition* (Asheville, NC: Chiron Publications, 2015), 165.

only the good exists on its own power. Evil exists only insofar as there is possibly deviation from the good. In the course of Christian theology, the development of the dark side of human existence was, for Jung, deprived of substance and thereby regarded as the absence of good. Jung viewed this as the byproduct of psychological denial. The end result was that certain unwanted aspects of our psychological reality had to be repressed, relegated to the unconscious. According to Jung, Christianity had suppressed evil from self-awareness, and so too did we, as Western individuals equipped with an unconscious informed by such repressions. It would become part of the task of analysis and individuation to transform parts of these repressed elements.

Murray Stein writes that, in Jung's view, ecclesial Christianity had unmoored evil from reality: "Theologically it denied evil the status of ontological reality, in the doctrine of God as *Summum Bonum* and in the understanding of evil as *privatio boni*."[23] In *Answer to Job*, Jung returned to what had also been a major theme of *Liber Novus*, offering a theodicy in trying to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil. Jung's rendering is a passionate critique of the nature of God as the "highest good." In Jung's mind, God is beyond the human categories of good and evil. The religious task for contemporary man, says Jung, is to prepare for the next development of human incarnation and the integration of the dark side of the God-image through the process of individuation.

Imitatio Christi

Another leitmotif of Jung's *The Red Book*, one he returned to in his late works, is the *imitatio Christi*. In Christian tradition, the imitation of Christ is the practice of following the example of Jesus Christ. It is the development in one's own life of an attitude inspired by Christ's

[23] Stein, *Jung's Treatment of Christianity*, 151.

way of living a life of self-sacrifice in service and brotherly love. Jung's wrestling with and working through this central pillar of Christianity leads him to propose, rather than a literal following or imitation of Christ (which he believed the traditional Church and most theology emphasized), an exclusively psychological interpretation.

For Jung, Jesus became an ideal of how to live life as an individual, as authentically as Christ did. Jesus' life could thus be read as an analogue for our psychological development toward individuation. Jung wrote in his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:

> *The imitatio Christi* has this disadvantage: in the long run we worship as a divine example a man who embodied the deepest meaning of life, and then, out of sheer imitation, we forget to make real our own deepest meaning—self-realization . . . . The imitation of Christ might well be understood in a deeper sense, namely as the duty to realize one's best conviction, which is always also a complete expression of the individual temperament, with the same courage and the same self-sacrifice as Jesus did.[24]

In a 1940 lecture, he elaborated:

> This is a critical point: the question of the *imitatio Christi*. Should it be an imitation of the life of Christ such that one even gets the stigmata, like Saint Francis, or does it mean that each person should live life to the full, in their own way, until the bitter end, as Christ did? Those are two very different paths. It is clear that for medieval and more recent Christianity it was certainly a matter of the *imitatio Christi*, not about living one's life *sine imitatione*—without imitation.[25]

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[24] C.G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies,* Vol. 13 of *Collected Works*, ¶ 80–81.

[25] C.G. Jung, "Lecture 16," in *Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises*, 229–39.

In *Answer to Job*, Jung questioned the Church's teaching that the incarnation was a unique historical event; he formulated instead a psychologically-informed Christology, where the incarnation did not cease with the ascension but continues through the Holy Spirit in man. In the final paragraph of the book, he explained that this process, the "indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the third Divine Person, in man, brings about a *Christification of many*."[26] Jung proposed that we understand Christ as an archetypical pattern of how God continues to incarnate in the human being.

The *mysterium*

Jung's last major work, to which he dedicated more than a decade, finishing it in his eightieth year, is *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (1955). It summons the work he had begun on alchemy twenty-five years earlier with his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*—and much of Jung's late works besides. This work extended the dream of healing Christianity's one-sidedness by attending more deeply to the psychologically compensatory symbolism of alchemy. Herein he examined and interpreted classical alchemical texts in detail, focusing his investigation on the alchemical process of separation and synthesis of chemical substances, which he understood as a symbolic language for the process of psychological integration and individuation.

As the subtitle indicates, its focus is on the *coniunctio* and the preceding stages leading up to a synthesis of opposing elements. Jung regarded the alchemical process also as an analogue for the psychotherapeutic process, a process of transformation of *chaos* and *prima materia* into what the *lapis philosophorum*—the philosophers'

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[26] C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, Vol. 11 of *Collected Works* (1970), ¶ 758.

stone—is able to shape. The *lapis* was the substance that alchemists observed could turn base materials such as mercury into gold. Jung's own thesis was that the *lapis* is not only parallel to the Christ figure, but also a symbolic image of the whole Self. He saw both the alchemist's laboratory and the analytical room as a vessel where psychological transformation can take place: the unfolding of the human Self.

Jung's social conscience

In one of his last well-known public works "The Undiscovered Self" (1957), Jung considered how the deeply personal, the depth-psychological, has also a political dimension. This essay, written at the escalation of the Cold War—the clash between communism and capitalism alongside imminent threats of nuclear disaster—is as relevant today as it was in the late 1950s. In it, Jung argued that individual self-knowledge, the fostering of religious development through a process of individuation, is necessary to counterbalance the collectivist totalitarian and technocratic ideologies of the day. He wrote:

> The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world. For this he needs the evidence of inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect him from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass.[27]

What is required for resistance to collective forces is a depth psychology that can help facilitate the transformation of individual selves through reconnection with one's unconscious dreams and symbols. Through cultivation of the inner world of an individual,

[27] C.G. Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, Vol. 10 of *Collected Works* (1970), ¶ 511.

resistance to the collective erasure of difference in the name of communist and capitalist ideology can take form.

Another of Jung's last essays emphasizing the social conscience of Jung's thinking, and which in my opinion has been too little discussed by Jungians, is the essay "A Psychological View of Conscience." Written in 1958, three years before his death, it was published as part of a collection of essays entitled *Das Gewissen*, released by the C.G. Jung institute in Zürich. In it, Jung continued to explore the link between individuation and the collective, specifically the role of *conscience* in psychological development.

In the essay, Jung differentiated between two levels of conscience, *the moral* and *the ethical*. He related the former to Freud's theory of the superego, and the latter to his own theory of individuation, the archetypes, the *Pax Dei*, and the voice of God. In essence, Jung argued for how individuation can best be understood as a process of *making one's conscience conscious*. He argued that it is through the development of the individual's conscience—through learning to listen to the inner voice of God—that they might transform into a human Self.

> If the voice of conscience is the voice of God, this voice must possess an incomparable higher authority than traditional morality. Anyone, therefore, who allows conscience this status should, for better or worse, put his trust in divine guidance and follow his conscience rather than give heed to conventional morality.[28]

Altogether, this brief overview of Jung's wrestling with Christianity should help clarify to what extent Christianity forms a touchstone of Jung's lifework and psychological theory. We remember that Jung imagined himself a question posed by life itself;

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[28] C.G. Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, ¶ 840.

we can appreciate in this light how trying to answer this question became his vocation.

Jungians wrestling with Jung's Christianity

It is helpful to have some understanding of what has been done in the research field of Jungian– Christian dialogue since Jung's passing in 1961. That Jung wrestled with Christianity is nothing that we became aware of for the first time with the publication of *Liber Novus*. But what the book does help highlight is the extent to which his psychological crisis, and later psychological concepts and theory, are intimately related to his working through of Christianity.

In the half-century that has passed since Jung left the scene, a small group of independent Jungian scholars and analysts have made important individual contributions. This introduction will not exhaust the important research in the field, but it hopes to inspire you as a reader to continue your own explorations. Nonetheless, a few persons behind the research at the nexus of analytical psychology and Christianity should be mentioned insofar as their respective insights inform the conversations contained herein.

Murray Stein, who himself contributes the first conversation in this collection, argued almost forty years ago, in his seminal work *Jung's Treatment of Christianity: The Psychotherapy of a Religious Tradition* (1985), that Jung's psychology can be understood as an attempt at treating the ailing Christianity Jung had experienced as a child and adolescent growing up in a Reformed Protestant family. Stein presents the hypothesis that Jung acts as a therapist for the healing and transformation of Christianity: "Jung's stance toward Christianity was fundamentally that of a psychotherapist,

and so the goal of all his efforts with this 'patient' Christianity was its psychotherapeutic transformation."[29]

According to Stein, throughout Jung's life, Jung took on the role of psychotherapist of what he argued was a psychologically too-one-sided Christian tradition—a tradition that had lost its therapeutic effect of offering a sense of psychological wholeness to its believers. Viewed through this lens, Jung's analytical psychology can be understood as a possible treatment plan aimed at helping Christianity in its psychotherapeutic transformation. "This image of Jung as a psychotherapist to an ailing religious tradition accounts for what he was trying to do with Christianity and why he made the specific recommendations he did for fundamental changes in Christian doctrine."[30]

Murray Stein's collected writings are a trove of insights for our field of research. Most notably mentionable here are Jung's writings on the topic edited in the volume *Jung and Christianity* (Princeton University Press, 1999) and Stein's own 2015 book, *Solar Conscience, Lunar Conscience: An Essay on the Psychological Foundations of Morality, Lawfulness, and the Sense of Justice*. The latter discusses the forementioned late essay of Jung's, "A Psychological View of Conscience," and the role of conscience in psychological development and individuation, a topic of concern in some of the conversations presented in this book.

Stein studied at the University of Chicago with Peter Homans, his main professor and dissertation advisor for the thesis that became Stein's 1985 book on Jung's treatment of Christianity. Homans had already analyzed Jung's relationship to Christianity from a more

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[29] Stein, *Jung's Treatment of Christianity*, 18.

[30] Stein, *Jung's Treatment of Christianity*, 18.

traditional psychoanalytic and sociological lens in his book *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology* (1979).

Homans was interested in how Jung's psychology fit into the picture of modernity, how psychology in a sense replaces religion for some people. *Jung in Context* situated Jung's work in the context of the nineteenth and twentieth century, examining psychology and its connection to the decline of religion. For our research on Jung and Christianity, Homans's book offers rich insights and a nuanced picture of the complex relationship Jung had with the Christian tradition he grew up in, the faith of his father, and his own attempt to reconcile them.

Not being an analyst himself, Homans was nonetheless unafraid to put Jung on the couch. He showed how Jung's relationship to his father appears at times to have tainted his interpretations of Christian theology and faith. Drawing closely from Jung's life, Homans showed how Jung's childhood and adolescent experiences were inseparable from his experience of religion. In Homans's words, "To study the former is to become preoccupied with the latter."[31]

Foremost, Homans elucidated to what extent Christianity is a foundation for Jung and those of us trying to decipher his psychological project. "While it is true that at one level he repudiated [Christianity], it is equally important to recognize that, at another level, he also attempted to assimilate elements of it; for that religion was also, in part, the *experiential matrix* out of which his psychology emerged."[32] Homans described how, as a child and adolescent, Jung experienced this matrix in two fundamentally different modes: through the Protestant Reformed tradition as his father, family, and culture had taught it; but also through his own personal and mystical experiences as a child and young adolescent. He explained this as

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[31] Peter Homans, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 115.

[32] Homans, *Jung in Context*, 131.

Jung's having a *double relation* to Christianity in both assimilating and repudiating it.

This double relation might help to explain some of the ambivalence toward Christianity expressed throughout Jung's writings and teachings, a psychological tension coming to life both in his attacks on traditional forms of Christianity and in his desire to reform and dream the Christian myth onward.

Jung on evil

It is around the doctrine of evil and the dark side of the God-image that Jung gets into conflict with theologians, and many Christians alike will have to start their wrestling with Jung there. For Jung, the human Self, as the symbol or image of God in man, psychologically encapsulates both good and evil. "For in the self good and evil are indeed closer than identical twins!"[33] To clarify Jung's position and how it differs from a Christian view, we turn to Jungian analyst and Episcopal priest John A. Sanford (1929–2005), and his mentor and analyst Fritz Künkel (1889–1956).

Sanford, influenced by Künkel's position, described it as Jung's having misunderstood the *privatio boni* to mean a denial of evil. Instead, explains Sanford, the Christian doctrine shows how evil came into being and what kind of existence it has.

He contends the existence of evil is not denied in this doctrine; the scripture is full of examples of it and the devil is seen as a real and active agent in the human life. Evil is allowed for the higher purposes of God and relates rather to the freedom and choice given us as humans. Künkel's position differs fundamentally from the Jungian in that it does not ascribe evil to the human Self but to the *egocentricity* of the human being.

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[33] C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, ¶ 24.

Evil is not understood as an intrinsic part of God or in its reflection in the human self of man. Rather, evil is to be found in deviation from the Self, from our center and totality, in the focus on our ego's longing to fulfill its endless desires and needs related to our position and status in the world. Egocentricity is an individual's going beyond God's will, putting himself instead at the center. In contemporary terminology, it is our narcissism that produces evil, not God. The origins of evil are not God-given nor born into human selves, but found in our childhood traumas, in our own grappling with egocentric fears and longings.

Jung in correspondence

Another way to illuminate the intimate and at times complex nature of Jung's working through of Christianity is to consider his private letters of correspondence. Throughout his life, Jung was an active correspondent. It is in his letters that one often finds a more uncensored voice, one that expresses itself freely on matters close to the heart, and without deference to an audience or his scientific persona.

Jung's friendship with Dominican priest Victor White (1902–1960) has been thoroughly documented, analyzed, and interpreted by another Jungian scholar and conversation partner in this book, Ann Conrad Lammers. Her book *In God's Shadow: The Collaboration of Victor White and C.G. Jung* (1994) brings to life the tender, fruitful, and complicated exchange between the two friends and colleagues, providing a view to a pioneering exchange between the fields of Catholic theology and analytical psychology.

Jung—initially excited about the learned Catholic theologian, Thomist, and scholar showing interest in and appreciation for his psychological thought—wrote to White early in their correspondence: "You are to me a white raven inasmuch as you are the only theologian I know who has really understood something of what the problem of

psychology in our present world means. You have seen its enormous implications."[34]

Significantly, Lammers places Jung as working within the context of the Protestant Reformed tradition. She writes that "Jung's own path was through the wilderness of Protestantism,"[35] and further, that "Jung was thus genuinely a Protestant, not in the sense that he regularly went to church . . . but by temperament and ingrained intellectual habit."[36] This decisive placement of Jung's work within the spirit and tradition of Protestantism are points that Murray Stein also emphasizes in some of his writing.

Though Lammers and Stein largely agree on Jung's formative influences, Lammers does not subscribe to Stein's hypothesis of Jung as a psychotherapist of Christianity. Acknowledging that Jung at times viewed himself as a therapist of the Christian faith, she reminds us of the guiding principles he had established for himself as a clinician: first, the patient must be *seeking* treatment; the therapist, moreover, must learn and use the language of the patient. On the discrepancies at issue in Jung's approach, she remarks: "First, the institution of the Western church did not come to Jung asking for help, and so was not truly accessible to his care. Second, Jung could not act as a therapist if he failed in one of the basic conditions he required of himself as a doctor . . . we have seen that to a great degree he rejected the church's language."[37] Jung's proposed treatment, Lammers suggests, may have been originally biased by his outright refusal of the "conceptual coinage of theology."[38]

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[34] C.G. Jung, *C.G. Jung Letters*, Vol. 1, *1906–1950*, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1973), 383.

[35] Ann Lammers, *In God's Shadow: The Collaboration of Victor White and C.G. Jung* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 135.

[36] Lammers, *In God's Shadow*, 138–39.

[37] Lammers, *In God's Shadow*, 151.

[38] Lammers, *In God's Shadow*, 151.

Lammers's book offers rich insights into Jung's own rendering of Christianity, but also highlights the difficulties of bridge-building between the field of analytical psychology and theology. The creative collaboration and bridge-building between White and Jung would eventually break down following White's critical review of *Answer to Job*, although the two would privately reconcile their friendship before White's early death.

Another important lifelong correspondence of Jung's that centers on the exchange between Christian theology and analytical psychology—this time with the Protestant side of the Christian tradition—is documented in the book *On Theology and Psychology: The Correspondence of C.G. Jung and Adolf Keller* (2020), by Swiss historian Marianne Jehle-Wildberger. Adolf Keller (1872–1963) was a lifelong friend of Jung's, a celebrated Protestant theologian in his time as well as a pioneer of the modern ecumenical movement. Their friendship spanned half a century, and their correspondence documents and offers unique insight into the development of Jung's psychological theory, and especially its relationship to Christianity.

Their private and rich exchange is full of insights into how analytical psychology and Christian faith can enrich one another, but also how they at times stand in conflict. The tension between knowledge (*gnosis*) and faith (*pistis*) is at times put in flesh in these two individuals, who learn to agree to disagree on fundamental positions. In response to receiving one of the first copies of *Answer to Job* in August of 1951, Keller, always gentle but unafraid of confronting Jung, asks a poignant question: "Will the religious motif of integration, or totality, possess the same religious binding power as the need for forgiveness, for personal fellowship, for salvation instead of for insight, for sanctifying transformation instead of for complementary 'becoming whole'?"[39]

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[39] C. G. Jung and Adolf Keller, "Letter 42," in *On Theology and Psychology: The Correspondence of C.G. Jung and Adolf Keller*, ed. Marianne Jehle-Wildberger,

To my mind, this is a question as significant for Jungians and Christians to ask today as it was fifty years ago. With the publication of the Keller–Jung letters, we have access to a correspondence that promises to continue to inspire and offer rich insight for further research in our field of study.

Jung's dream of the temple

Regarding more contemporary scholars working in this field, I would like to single out the writings of Berlin-based Jungian analyst and scholar Wolfgang Giegerich. In Giegerich's collected works, *Dreaming The Myth Onwards: C.G. Jung on Christianity and on Hegel* (2020), one finds a collection of essays offering poignant points of critique of many of Jung's central interpretations and reformulations of Christian thinking. In particular, I have found his essay "Jung's Millimeter: Feigned Submission—Clandestine Defiance: Jung's Religious Psychology" particularly helpful in preparing questions for the conversations in this book.

The essay offers an analysis of a dream shared in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, which Jung himself claimed led him to write *Answer to Job*. In the later part of this dream, Jung's dream-protagonist is together with his father, who to Jung's surprise is presented as a distinguished scholar of theology, inside what looks like the exact replica of the *divan-i-kaas* (the council hall of Sultan Akbar at Fatephur Sikri, which Jung had visited during his trip to India), the whole forming a gigantic mandala.

From the center, Jung's dream-I sees a steep flight of stairs ascending to a spot high up on the wall, "which no longer corresponded to reality." At the top of the stairs is a small door, and Jung's dream-father announces, "Now I will lead you into the

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trans. Heather McCartney and John Peck (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 179.

highest presence." His father kneels and touches his forehead to the floor. "I imitated him, likewise kneeling, with great emotion. For some reason I could not bring my forehead quite down to the floor—there was perhaps a millimetre to spare."[40]

Suddenly, Jung understands (perhaps his father had told him, he explains) that the upper door led to the solitary chamber where lived Uriah, King David's loyal general, whom David shamelessly betrayed in the Old Testament[41] to steal Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Jung offers an interpretation of this scene wherein he likens Uriah to a prefiguration of Christ, the God-man—like Job, abandoned by God. Only later, Jung explains, did he understand that this allusion to Uriah in the dream signified that Jung would have to speak publicly about the ambivalence of the God-image in the Old Testament, and that his wife Emma would be taken from him in death. Jung appears to identify with Uriah, writing: "These were the things that awaited me, hidden in the unconscious. I had to submit to this fate, and ought really to have touched my forehead to the floor, so that my submission would be complete."[42]

But what about the millimeter? Jung's thinking about what prevents him from bowing entirely to the floor, being a millimeter away, is that it was human freedom: "Something in me was defiant and determined not to be a dumb fish." He likens his own to Uriah's and Job's faith: If there were not something of the sort in free men, no Book of Job would have been written. "Man always has some mental reservation even in the face of divine decrees. Otherwise, where would be his freedom? And what would be the use of that freedom if it could not threaten Him who threatens it?"[43] Jung concludes his

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[40] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 245.

[41] 2 Samuel: 11-12, 23.

[42] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 246–47.

[43] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 247.

self-interpretation by observing that the dream discloses the idea of the creature that surpasses its creator by a small decisive factor. The relationship between Jung's ego and the God-image becomes one that appears to involve a certain competition.

Let us now turn to Giegerich's radically different interpretation of this important (for our topic) late dream of Jung's. In Giegerich's interpretation the sincere submission to the authority of God enacted by Jung's dream-father was not accessible to Jung's dream-I at the time of this dream. Touching his forehead to the ground would have meant a complete submission bowing down to the suffering God-man Uriah (whom he interestingly enough never sees in the dream; faith is belief in the invisible). "Jung, condoning and ennobling the defiant behavior of the dream-I as its demonstration of freedom, is not ready to show the humility that would be a prerequisite for acknowledging the image of suffering man as '*the highest presence*.'"[44] There is still some reservation, a lack of humility: a millimeter remains between Jung and surrender to what the dream describes as the highest presence.

In order to further illustrate his point about Jung's faith (or lack thereof) in the dream, Giegerich borrows a theological concept from the great Protestant reformer Martin Luther: his "theology of the cross" (*theologia crucis*) versus a "theology of glory" (*theologia gloriae*). Giegerich writes: "If it would not have been Uriah but a majestic God who was the highest presence, Jung could have willingly touched his forehead to the ground without hesitation."[45] He goes on to say that in his whole psychological thought, Jung could not go the "way of Uriah." He could not face a "psychology of the cross" (*psychologia crucis*) within the spirit of *kenosis* and

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[44] Jaffé and Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 247.

[45] Wolfgang Giegerich, *Dreaming the Myth Onwards: C.G. Jung on Christianity and on Hegel*, Vol. 6, *The Collected English Papers of Wolfgang Giegerich*, ed. Wolfgang Giegerich (London: Routledge, 2020), 13.

self-emptying, and thereby access the humility necessary to bow down to the suffering God-man (Uriah as a refiguration of Jesus). In Giegerich's interpretation, "He [Jung] went the way of the numinous God-image in the psyche, represented by mandalas and other splendid symbols"[46] and a psychology of glory.

To summarize, Jung's dream-I refused to humble himself before God. In Jung's own interpretation, he identified instead with the suffering Uriah; that is, his fate would be like Uriah's: betrayed and lose his wife. He feigned total submission and hailed his resistance, which takes the form of a defiant attitude, in terms of human freedom. Defiance is Jung's final answer to the God who takes the form of a suffering servant—and to his millimeter distance from accepting a psychology of the cross.

The conversations

The conversations published in this book were initially recorded and made available for the podcast *Psychology & The Cross*. The podcast is an initiative I started a few years back as part of my own research and writing within the field of Jungian psychology and Christian faith. It became a medium for establishing a dialogue with Jungian analysts and scholars who have spent much more time than I have wrestling with these matters.

The decision to put some of these conversations into print has also to do with the limits of the podcast medium, and the realization that some of the insights brought to light in these recorded meetings merit further study and I believe more attention also from the Jungian community. Publishing edited versions of these conversations in printed form is an attempt to plant seeds in firm soil so that they might continue to engage a wider range of individuals within the Jungian community, as well as people

[46] Giegerich, *Dreaming the Myth Onwards*, 13.

interested in the further fields of theology, philosophy, and Christian faith.

Each of these thirteen conversations starts with a background story, with the scholar sharing a little bit about their engagement with analytical psychology and eventual relationship to organized religion. The conversation then goes deeper, into the specific area of study of a given interlocutor, before it begins to ambulate around Jung's engagement with Christianity, the questions he was asking, and his attempts at answering them throughout his life.

Given its importance for Jung, the concept of the *imitatio Christi* and Jung's rendering of it is a recurring theme to which many of these conversations circle back. In some of these conversations, specific dreams from Jung's life are discussed, such as the one-millimeter dream analyzed by Giegerich, as well as his provocative statement later in life, in answer to BBC journalist John Freedman, when asked in an interview filmed at his home in Küsnacht:

Freeman: Did you believe in God?

Jung: Oh, yes!

Freeman: Do you now believe in God?

Jung: Now? Difficult to answer . . . I know. I don't need to believe; I know.[47]

As you will learn from the following conversations, no two scholars make the same sense of Jung's claims about God here. The wrestling continues.

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[47] C.G. Jung, "Face to Face: Carl Jung," interview by John Freeman, *Face to Face*, BBC, October 22, 1959, video, 38:00, https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p04qhvyj/face-to-face-carl-jung.