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JUNG'S DIVINE MADNESS

Christopher MacKenna

Introduction

Belief in divine madness – the idea that we can be out of our rational minds but inspired in life enhancing and creative ways – can be traced back at least to the ancient Greeks (Dodds 1951). Jung's own account of his crisis and the way he responded to it has recently been published in the *Red Book* (Jung 2009); making this an opportune moment to reassess our understanding of Jung and to enquire what light his achievement can throw on our understanding of spirituality in relation to psychotic states of mind.

Divine madness

Jung experienced a series of visions that caused him to fear for his sanity. In retrospect, though, he came to believe both that they were prophetic and that the insights gained through the sixteen years of introspection that followed could have wider therapeutic value for many other people. Such beliefs raise questions about the relationship between individual psychology – perhaps psychopathology – paranormal experience, and psychotherapeutic practice. Towards the end of his life Jung wrote that all his thoughts circled round God like the planets round the sun and were as 'irresistibly attracted' by God (Jung 1976: 236). This was no late conversion on his part. In the first chapters of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1963), he described the haunting religious dreams and fantasies that elevated and disturbed his lonely early years. Now that the *Red Book* has been published, we can also see the quite remarkable extent to which Jung – at a critical moment in his adult life, when he appeared to be sliding into a psychotic illness – apparently turned his back on external forms of help and appealed directly to the Spirit of the Depths[1] to come to his aid.

Jung's disturbance

Jung first spoke publicly about the disturbance that gave rise to the contents of the *Red Book* in a seminar for advanced students of his ideas, held in 1925.

On 20 April that year, he recalled a dream he had had in 1912, while he was working on the Miller fantasies, in which he had dreamed of Freud in the guise of an Austrian customs official; but Jung's companion (he suggests it was his shadow) said, 'Did you notice him? He has been dead for thirty years, but he can't die properly.'[2] The scene then changed and Jung found himself in a medieval southern town on the slopes of mountains. The sun was blazing at full noon – the hour, he said, spirits are abroad in southern countries – when he saw a crusader dressed in a coat of mail with the Maltese cross in red on his back and front. '"Did you notice him?" Jung's shadow asked, "He has been dead since the twelfth century, but he is not yet properly dead"' (Jung 1990: 38f.). Jung says this dream bothered him for a long time. He claimed that when he dreamed it he was still unaware of the conflict his book on the Miller fantasies would precipitate with Freud. At the same time he felt there was an antagonism between the figure of Freud and the crusader, yet there was also a similarity between them. Both were dead but they could not die properly. Jung says the dream left him feeling 'oppressed and bewildered' and that Freud was similarly affected, and could not interpret it (Jung 1990: 39f.). In retrospect, it is not difficult to imagine that the dream's judgment on Freud – that he had died thirty years ago – might express Jung's growing impatience with the older man; but what of the crusader? Jung himself was physically tall and of a crusading temperament, as is shown by his combative defence of psychoanalytic ideas in medical circles.[3] Although, theoretically, he was still Freud's heir apparent, tension was growing between them. At the same time, although Jung says that he was no longer living in the Christian myth (Jung 1963: 166), the *Red Book* reveals how deeply he was imbued with it; and his later decision to create the *Red Book* (Jung 2009) almost in the form of a medieval manuscript with elaborate calligraphy and illuminated capitals demonstrates his affinity with this era.

Jung's crusader is a complex figure. At one level I think he represents Jung's conscious understanding of the Christian Church, which, although still locked in the thought world of the Middle Ages, had not been able to die. On the other hand, I think the crusader also depicts an insignificantly recognised religious part of Jung himself. Writing about this dream towards the end of his life, he recalled that the stories of the quest for the Holy Grail had been of the greatest importance to him since the age of 15. In the deepest sense the Grail quest was Jung's quest,[4] which had scarcely anything to do with Freud's. Like the Grail knights, Jung was desperate to find something still unknown that might confer meaning upon the banality of life.

> To me it was a profound disappointment that all the efforts of the probing mind had apparently succeeded in finding nothing more in the depths of the psyche than the all too familiar and 'all-too-human' limitations.
>
> (Jung 1963: 161)

We can hear the note of desperation in Jung's voice. The great tragedy of Jung's teenage years had been to witness his father's loss of Christian faith and premature death (Jung 1963). Now, as he approached midlife, Jung seemed to be caught in the same blind alley. Psychoanalysis had discovered nothing, in the depths of the psyche, beyond all-too-human limitations. Although Jung always eschewed the role of preacher, the contents of the *Red Book* suggest that, through his experiences of divine madness in his encounters with the 'spirit of the depths', he felt he had been able to glimpse the nature of ultimate reality and that his vision somehow provided a resolution to the deepest needs of the unquiet spirits of the dead – doubtless his father among them – which had beset him. In this sense the *Red Book* is a messianic text and the reader must decide – as with Schreber's *Memoirs of my Mental Illness* (Schreber 2000) – if its contents are inspired. In neither case, though, can an objective test be applied. If we are to follow Jung and Schreber we will have to engage with them from the depths of our own beings – and then see whether they have addressed the deepest questions of our souls.

Jung had a second bewildering dream at Christmas time in 1912, in which a white dove transformed into a little girl with golden hair. When she was gone, the dove reappeared and slowly said, 'I am allowed to transform into a human form only in the first hours of the night, while the male dove is busy with the twelve dead' (Jung 1990: 40). The dream disturbed him, and puzzled Freud. Until this time, Jung had shared Freud's understanding of the repressed unconscious, but now he began to entertain the idea that 'the unconscious did not consist of inert material only, but that there was something living down there' (Jung 1990: 40).[5] During 1913, confused by his dreams and troubled by increasing symptoms of disturbance, Jung attempted to re-analyse his infantile memories, but found no relief. In a further attempt at self-cure he sought to recover the emotional tone of his childhood by playing at building 'houses of stone, all sorts of fantastic castles, churches, and towns'. But, although he enjoyed this 'like a fool' (Jung 1990: 41), his disturbance persisted until

> Towards autumn [1913] I felt that the pressure that had seemed to be in me was not there anymore but in the air. The air actually seemed to be darker than before. It was just as if it were no longer a psychological situation in which I was involved, but a real one, and that sense became more and more weighty.
>
> (Jung 1990: 41)

In October 1913, while in this disturbing state of mind, Jung was on a train when he fell into a fantasy in which he was looking down on a map of Europe. As he watched, the northern part of Europe sank down and was inundated by the sea. When the water reached Switzerland, the mountains rose to protect

it. As he watched the wreckage of Europe and dead bodies tossing in the water, which turned to blood, Jung's dispassionate observation gave way to a sense of catastrophe that gripped him with 'tremendous power' (Jung 1990: 41). He tried to repress the fantasy, but it came again, holding him bound for two hours. Three or four weeks later it was repeated, with the blood more prominent (Jung 1990: 42). Identifying himself with Switzerland, Jung feared the visions showed that he was 'an over-compensated psychosis',[6] yet he lacked confirmatory symptoms (Jung 1990: 43f). The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 reassured Jung, because it proved, to his satisfaction, that his visions of Europe being submerged in water, ice and fire were genuinely prophetic; that the spirit of the depths, which had furnished his vision, was also driving world affairs. Sometime after he had received this reassurance, he began to inscribe the contents of the dreams and fantasies that followed his Europe visions into the *Red Book*.

The *Red Book*

To open the pages of the *Red Book* is to be transported into another world. Jung tells us that he transcribed the dreams and active imaginations that followed the flood vision from his original notebooks into a large, leather-bound volume, known by its colour as the *Red Book*, because he knew that his experiences contained something precious and could think of nothing better than to write and paint them in a valuable book, reliving the original experiences as best he could. As the recently published reproduction of the *Red Book* shows, it is a work of art. The text is executed in elaborate calligraphy, with illuminated capitals, reminiscent of medieval manuscripts. Jung also illustrated the text with pictures and designs, some relating directly to the text, others of which have simply to be pondered. The book looks and feels arcane, as if it comes from another time and place. Jung would say that it does: it has the strange rather compelling foreignness, which both attracts and repels, that he would associate with the spirit of the depths.

Some passages, like the opening section, are composed in a high-flown scriptural style. These passages are interspersed with lively dramatic interludes – Jung's active imaginations – in which he encounters a cast of characters who emerged spontaneously from his inner world, with whom he engages in animated activity, discussion and debate. When he argues with them he is very much his conscious self. At other times, they challenge, confound and instruct him. Along the way, through this apparently unsystematic journey, Jung was initiated into the paradoxical workings of his unconscious mind. Readers used to therapeutic conversations, in which the patient's personal life is to the fore, are likely to find themselves puzzled by the contents of this book. At first sight it has nothing to do with Jung's daily life. Where are his wife, his children, his professional colleagues, his patients – the world he inhabited? Strangely missing. Instead the book is taken up with the

conflict and collision between two opposed points of view that he refers to as the spirit of this time and the spirit of the depths.

The spirit of this time is concerned with practical questions of use, value, justification and meaning; but the spirit of the depths, whose activity Jung detected in his flood visions and in the outbreak of the First World War, is more powerful than the spirit of any age. According to Jung, during his introverted journey:

> The spirit of the depths took my understanding and all my knowledge and placed them at the service of the inexplicable and the paradoxical. He robbed me of speech and writing for everything that was not in his service, namely the melting together of sense and nonsense, which produces the supreme meaning.
>
> (Jung 2009: 229)

As these two spirits collided within him, Jung struggled to discover if he was speaking 'the greatness and intoxication and ugliness of madness', or deeper truth, as the spirit of the depths avowed (Jung 2009: 230). Jung's divine madness begins here, because to be in harmony with the spirit of the depths, as Jung believed all truly inspired religious people are, is to appear mad according to the spirit of this time. In an amusing but disturbing section, Jung imagines himself admitted to a psychiatric hospital where the professor of psychiatry rapidly diagnoses religious paranoia on the grounds that he is manically aroused, hearing voices, hallucinating and using neologisms. To cap it all, the prognosis is bad, because Jung appears to lack insight; he is not behaving according to the dictates of rational common sense (Jung 2009: 295f.). In another place, he writes,

> if you enter into the world of the soul, you are like a madman, and a doctor would consider you to be sick. What I say here can be seen as sickness, but no one can see it as sickness more than I do.
>
> (Jung 2009: 238)

Composition

The engine that drives the *Red Book* and provides its underlying drama is the almost daily record of dreams and active imaginations, which sometimes read like visions, which Jung dates between 14 November 1913 (within a month of his first flood vision) and 11 February 1914. There are then some entries for April and May 1914, after which the spirit of the depths appears to have been silent until June 1915, when Jung saw an osprey rising from the water with a fish and his soul said, 'That is a sign that what is below is born upward' (Jung 2009: 336f). Thereafter, there are dated entries for September and December 1915; then January and February 1916, which include the *VII Sermones ad*

Mortuos (Jung 1925). There are a few further entries, dated April, May and June 1916, and one from July 1917, but it seems that the essential material on which the *Red Book* is based was predominantly delivered in late 1913 and early 1914, with further, more occasional amplificatory material emerging during the next three years. As the notes to the published edition indicate, Jung's original material underwent substantial development and some modification as he transcribed it into the *Red Book*. At the end of the text Jung tells us that he worked on it for sixteen years, until his study of the Chinese alchemical text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, later reprinted in Jung's *Alchemical Studies* (Jung 1967), began to supersede it.[7] He finally stopped in 1930, when his alchemical researches convinced him that the contents of the *Red Book* were not some private madness, but his own initiation into experiences familiar to the alchemists before him:

> To the superficial observer, it will appear like madness. It would also have developed into one, had I not been able to absorb the overwhelming power of the original experiences. With the help of alchemy I could finally arrange them into a whole.
>
> (Jung 2009: 360)

The *Red Book* is too massive to be summarised in an essay, but it is important to introduce the reader to its contents and flavour. The quality of Jung's divine madness must be experienced, not abstracted, if we are to make any assessment of its worth. For reasons of space, I will concentrate on the first section – *Liber Primus* – which gives a sense of the underlying nature of Jung's disturbance. I will then sketch some of Jung's more significant discoveries about the dynamics of the unconscious world, relating to my theme. Sadly – because my focus is divine madness – there will not be room to consider the original version of the *Seven Sermons to the Dead* (Jung 2009), which suggest Jung's most developed understanding of the emergence of conscious processes from the unfathomable depth of the unconscious world. This revisioned metapsychology finally allows Jung's dead to rest.

Liber Primus

The first part of the *Red Book* is prefaced by four messianic texts from the bible,[8] suggesting the revelatory nature of its contents and its healing potential. Yet, although his thoughts are often scriptural in form, Jung insists he is not giving general teaching, but merely describing his own path (Jung 2009). He tells us that in October 1913, when the first flood vision came, he was in his fortieth year and at a stage in life when he had achieved all his desires, 'honor, power, wealth, knowledge, and every human happiness' (Jung 2009: 231). From a psychotherapeutic point of view it may be significant that Jung is wrong about his age – he was actually in his thirty-eighth year.[9]

Equally, it is difficult to reconcile his claim to total contentment with what we know of his life at this time. The Fourth Private Psychoanalytic Meeting had taken place on 7 and 8 September 1913, in an atmosphere described by Ernest Jones as 'disagreeable', and by Freud as 'fatiguing and unedifying' (Freud and Jung 1974: 550). At this meeting, when Jung stood for re-election as president, 22 out of 52 participants abstained from voting so that Jung's election would not be unanimous. The following month – the month of the first flood vision – only one letter passed between Jung and Freud. On 27 October 1913, Jung wrote:

> Dear Professor Freud,
> It has come to my ears through Dr Maeder that you doubt my *bona fides*. I would have expected you to communicate with me directly on so weighty a matter. Since this is the gravest reproach that can be levelled at anybody, you have made further collaboration impossible. I therefore lay down the editorship of the *Jahrbuch* with which you entrusted me. I have also notified Bleuler and Deuticke of my decision. Very truly yours, DR. C. G. JUNG.
>
> (Freud and Jung 1974: 550)[10]

The rupture with Freud had been coming for several years, but its gravity to Jung, in personal and professional terms, can hardly be overstated. Years later, Jung would write that although he had always had some doubts and hesitations about aspects of Freud's theories, Freud was the first man of real importance he had ever met. In Jung's experience up to that time, no one else could compare with him (Jung 1963). Loss of Freud's friendship, under whatever circumstances, would have been a grievous blow to Jung. Far from being full of contentment, as Jung asserts, we know both from the seminar on analytical psychology (Jung 1990) that he gave in 1925, and from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1963), that he was becoming increasingly isolated. The floods that threatened Europe were also threatening him. If, in the eyes of the spirit of this age, he had achieved 'honor, power, wealth, knowledge, and every human happiness', inwardly – in terms of the spirit of the depths – he was still a pauper.

Jung evidently found the process of introversion – his introspective search for the spirit of the depths – difficult. His rational and intellectual defences were very strong. He needed to be in control of his life and thoughts. Until now he had regarded the soul as an object of intellectual enquiry. It was only when the spirit of the depths forced him to address his soul as 'a living and self-existing being' that he became aware that he had lost his soul (Jung 2009: 232).[11] In desperation, during the nights of November 1913, Jung began to cry out to his soul as if she was an independent person. Despite his psychoanalytic training, he still had to learn that dreams, which he revealingly calls 'the dregs of my thought', were actually the speech of his soul; that

dreams determine us without our understanding their action.[12] In this quest, scholarliness alone was not enough; 'there is a knowledge of the heart that gives deeper insight' (Jung 2009: 233). The thought that his soul possessed a life of her own, a life not controlled by his conscious mind, seems to have terrified Jung. Must he learn to do without rational meaning? But this would be nonsense and madness. Is there a supreme meaning? But he must not think, only learn to trust – to love his soul. Fearfully, he begins to sense that, in the world of the depths, meaning gives way to meaninglessness and eternal disorder, from which nothing can deliver us since this is the other half of the world. But – and this saving thought develops through the *Red Book* – he will discover that there is a pattern even here, because order and meaning grow out of disorder and meaninglessness. In fact, there is something dead about order and meaning alone, because what has become is no longer becoming.

For six nights Jung failed to elicit any reaction from his soul, while he swayed between fear, defiance and nausea, and was 'wholly prey to my passion'; then, on the seventh night, he received the command to 'look into your depths, pray to your depths, waken the dead' (Jung 2009: 234). In the light of what is to come this was a terrifying command, but it was also central to Jung's task because, as we will discover, Jung was haunted by the dead, and:

> not just [Jung's] dead, that is, all the images of the shapes you took in the past, which your ongoing life has left behind, but also the thronging dead of human history, the ghostly procession of the past, which is an ocean compared to the drops of your own life span. I see behind you, behind the mirror of your eyes, the crush of dangerous shadows, the dead, who look greedily through the empty sockets of your eyes, who moan and hope to gather up through you all the loose ends of the ages, that sigh in them. Your cluelessness does not prove anything. Put your ear to that wall and you will hear the rustling of their procession.
>
> (Jung 2009: 296)

But this is to anticipate. After twenty-five nights of fruitless introspection, Jung was torn between scorn for the spiritual task he was attempting and the conviction that he was really writing a book. Yet it seems that he reached a point where he finally desired to become 'an empty vessel for his soul' (Jung 2009: 237). The following night, he says, accompanied by an excited chorus of voices, he allowed himself to fall great depths into the world of his soul. In a dark cave, full of shrieking voices, he glimpsed a luminous red stone covering an opening in the rock where '*something wanted to be uttered*' (Jung 2009: 237; my emphasis). At this point in the narrative, hearing and speech become confused because, although Jung places his ear to the opening, he sees the bloody head of a man on the dark stream. 'Someone wounded, someone slain floats there' (Jung 2009: 237). Shuddering, he wondered what it meant.

A plausible interpretation might wonder about a connection with the slain or wounded Jung. Was he finally becoming aware of his distress at being ostracised by the psychoanalytic community? If there is any truth in this interpretation, Jung characteristically rejects it, just as he dissented from Freud's reductive interpretation of Schreber's paranoia.[13] He claims that the imagery was so archetypal it needed no personal associations (Jung 2009: 238, n.85). Instead, as the vision continued, he noted a large black scarab floating past and then a red sun in the depths of the water with many tiny serpents striving towards it. Night fell, and a stream of thick red blood sprang up, surging for a long time before it ebbed. Jung was terrified. What had he seen? If Jung was harbouring any murderous rage about his coming break with Freud and the psychoanalytic world, he somehow absorbs it into larger thoughts about life and death. He interprets the black beetle as the death that is necessary for renewal, and seeks for life within, rather than without. Again, rather than nursing illusions about his own innocence, he says boldly, 'I myself am a murderer and murdered sacrificer and sacrificed. The upwelling blood streams out of me' (Jung 2009: 239).

From one point of view, this attitude seems grandiose. By embracing the symmetric logic of the spirit of the depths, according to which he can be both the murdered and the murderer, Jung is occluding others from his field of view. This could be interpreted as a strategy for maintaining an illusion of responsibility for events that were largely beyond his personal control. On the other hand, given that the vision belongs to December 1913, when Europe was spiralling towards war, we might think that Jung was refusing the war-mongering madness which projected evil into a foreign foe. Instead, says Jung, we should sacrifice the hero in ourselves, for we only murder our brothers because we do not know our brother is ourselves. 'Frightful things must happen until men grow ripe' (Jung 2009: 239). The timing of Jung's visions, and his interpretation of them, give pause for thought. In August 1914, when Europe was possessed by collective paranoia, Jung – who had reason to feel aggrieved – refused to impute his suffering to other people, but tried rather to use its energy to explore his own blood guilt.[14] In part, this may explain one of the most poignant features of the *Red Book*, which is the deep sense of isolation that pervades it. Although Jung talks with many people, they all belong to his inner world. By opting for the spirit of the depths Jung had chosen a solitary path, but his choice may not be unconnected with the fact that he appears deeply suspicious of love; of anything that might inhibit him. Much later in the *Red Book* he reveals that to love would be to hoist the fate of another onto his shoulders. He wants love, but that

> really would be too much and would bind me like an iron ring that would stifle me . . . Love, I believe wants to be with others. But my love wants to be with me. I dread it.[15]
>
> (Jung 2009: 324)

Why did Jung fear love? Towards the end of his life he recalled a time, when he was 3, when his mother was hospitalised for several months, apparently for problems associated with difficulty in his parents' marriage. He tells us that he was 'deeply troubled' by her absence and that, thereafter, he always felt mistrust when he heard the word 'love' (Jung 1963: 22). Difficult as this separation must have been, his mother's return created its own terrors. By the time Jung was 7 or 8, he was sleeping in his father's room – his parents slept apart. At night, strange and mysterious presences emanated from her room. He experienced them as luminous visions. It was as if 'the nocturnal atmosphere had begun to thicken' (Jung 1963: 31) – reminiscent of Jung's experience in October 1913, when 'the air actually seemed to be darker than before' (Jung 1990: 41). Small objects became large. Once, a tiny ball gradually approached until it grew into a 'monstrous and suffocating object' (Jung 1963: 31). Again, we can note the echo between this 'suffocating object' and Jung's fear that love will stifle him (Jung 2009). If there is a psychotic core to the *Red Book*, I believe it lies in Jung's childhood nightmare of being unable to separate from the mother, whose psyche threatened to engulf him. As we will see, this primal terror appears also to be reflected in the *Red Book*'s constant preoccupation with the God, 'who makes us sick'; the God from whom we must heal ourselves, 'since he is also our heaviest wound' (Jung 2009: 338). Finding a relationship with God, which avoided the inflationary risks of identification, yet allowed the unknowable mystery to incarnate and transform itself in him, was Jung's ultimate achievement. I think that this was the Holy Grail he sought all his life. But in late 1913, Jung was still at the beginning of his journey. Faced with the vision of the murdered man, Jung says that if we slay it in ourselves, instead of seeking to kill the heroic spirit in our brother, the sun of the depths will begin to rise in us. In other words, unconscious contents will begin to be activated by the energy no longer needed consciously to sustain a heroic image of ourselves. This is far from being a glorious or inflationary experience. As unconscious contents were animated within him, Jung's darkness came to life. He experienced this as the crush of total evil, as the conflicts of life that lay buried in the matter of his body – a significant recognition of the way repressed experiences can be somatised – began to stir. The serpents in his vision are now found to be 'dreadful evil thoughts and feelings'. But, in stark contrast to the spirit of this age, which glorifies achievement, the spirit of the depths maintains that 'The one who learns to live with his incapacity has learned a great deal' (Jung 2009: 240). Jung may have been determined to locate the villain in himself, but the battle was far from won. In his fantasy, an assassin appeared from the depths and levelled his murder weapon at the 'prince'. Jung felt transformed into a 'rapacious beast'. His heart glowered in rage against the 'high and beloved, against my prince and hero'. Might this be Freud? Or, perhaps, Jung's father or God or Jung himself?

> I felt betrayed by my king. Why did I feel this way? He was not as I had wished him to be. He was other than I expected. He should be the king in my sense, not in his sense. He should be what I called ideal . . . It was civil war in me. I myself was the murderer and the murdered. The deadly arrow was stuck in my heart, and I did not know what it meant.
>
> (Jung 2009: 241)

Jung's rage and the rebirth of God

Jung's murderous thoughts spread like poison through his body. Disturbingly, he says that 'the murder of one' (Jung 2009: 241) – does he mean the Archduke Ferdinand? Or was this a psychotic fantasy, which caused Jung to blame himself for the First World War? – 'was the poisonous arrow that flew into the hearts of men and kindled the fiercest war'. Yet, Gods must die. 'Everything that becomes too old becomes evil, the same is true of your highest . . . If a God ceases being the way of life, he must fall secretly' (Jung 2009: 241). During the following night, in a 'frightful dream' (Jung 2009: 241, n.112), Jung found himself enacting these murderous fantasies when he assisted in the assassination of Siegfried, the archetypal hero prince (Jung 2009: 241).[16] In the *Red Book* Jung describes Siegfried as 'my power, my boldness, my pride', who seems to have personified Jung's rather grandiose defences (Jung 2009: 242). Later in his life, in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1963), Jung associates Siegfried with the Germanic desire to achieve, heroically to impose their will, to have their own way; and admits that this is what he had wanted to do.

These associations are probably correct. But there may have been a more painful, personal and poignant motif underlying Jung's sacrifice of Siegfried. The great underlying theme of Wagner's opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which revolves around the birth, life, and death of Siegfried – is the renunciation of love in the quest for the Ring.[17] As is now widely accepted, between the years 1908 and 1911 Jung had a passionate relationship with his former patient, Sabina Spielrein (McCormick, 2001).[18] During their romance, Spielrein dreamed of mothering their love child, a boy who would be called Siegfried. Following the termination of her relationship with Jung, Spielrein – who had qualified as a medical doctor – married and gave birth to her first child, a daughter, in September 1913. On the 29th of that month – almost exactly a month before Jung's letter to Freud, quoted above – Freud, who was familiar with the details of Jung's affair with Spielrein, wrote to congratulate her, incidentally expressing his own feelings about 'Siegfried':

> Dear Frau Doktor,
> Well, now, my heartiest congratulations! It is far better that the child should be a 'she'. Now we can think again about the blond Siegfried and perhaps smash that idol before his time comes.

For the rest, the small She will speak for herself. May she fare well, if wishes still have a vestige of omnipotence!
Yours, Freud.

(Carotenuto 1984: 121)

Jung was also aware of the birth, 'I congratulate you most warmly on th happy event!' he wrote, probably at the end of December 1913 (Jung 2001 186). It is difficult to believe that such deeply personal associations t 'Siegfried' are unrelated to Jung's assassination of him in the *Red Book* although, even here, Jung seems more overtly to associate him with grandiosity and power.

As always happens with Jung, though, the personal aspect of his conflict is transmuted into archetypal imagery: the assassination of Siegfried, which Freud interpreted in personal terms, becomes the prelude to profound reflections on the birth, life and death of our images of God. At one level, Jung longs for stasis. Ambitiously, he would like to have succeeded as Siegfried. Siegfried's death leaves him defenceless, as his proud self-image crumbles into the bitter and conflicted conflicts of his internal world. Yet, through his self-analysis, pictured in the *Red Book*, Jung is coming to believe that this is the necessary fate of every self-image, of every image of God that has become static and rigid – beyond its sell-by date. The bitterest truth for mortal men, Jung contends, is that 'our Gods want to be overcome, since they require renewal' (Jung 2009: 242). An ageing God image becomes nonsense, and the greatest truth becomes the greatest lie. So meaning must become absurdity to enable fresh meaning to arise. In the mythological language beloved by Jung, the 'blond savage of the German forests' had to betray 'the hammer-brandishing thunder to the pale Near-Eastern God' (Jung 2009: 242). Christianity succeeded the old Germanic images of God; but Christian images of God are equally vulnerable. They too must die.

It is very important that we try to read these statements in a psychological way. Throughout his life Jung was adamant that our images of God are a *complexio oppositorum*: a complex of opposites (Henderson 2010). They are not simple. As a child, growing up in his father's parsonage, Jung had been taught that God is simply love. But love is complex – as Jung well knew. His mother had taught him a prayer, which was meant to comfort him at night. To the young Jung, though, it seemed to picture Jesus as a bird who took children. Jung associated this with the activity of Satan and of the undertakers' men, whom he saw at work in his father's churchyard. As a result he began to distrust Lord Jesus (Jung 1963: 24), a distrust that grew with his earliest dream – at the age of 3 or 4 – when he encountered 'Lord Jesus' as an underground phallus and heard his mother calling, 'Yes, just look at him. That is the man-eater!' He awoke 'sweating' and 'scared to death' (Jung 1963: 25). These early terrors were compounded, a few years later, when the sight of the local cathedral, its new roof glittering in the sun, precipitated a fantasy

God dropping a great turd from under his throne, which shattered e building's roof and walls (Jung 1963). For the rest of his life – whatever e church might teach – Jung knew that God was as dangerous as God s loving.

In the *Red Book* three things seem to move in parallel. First, there is Jung's est to liberate himself from his two-dimensional identification with egfried. He needs to own his own shadow, even if this means killing his eroic self-image. Second, there is the terrible object lesson of what failure to o this can lead to, provided by the crowds that cheered when the First World Var broke out. They could identify with Siegfried because they had projected heir murderousness into their enemies. Third, at the deepest archetypal level, here are the images of God, which sanction and drive both personal and ational self-images. Much later in his life, Jung would write:

> As the highest value and supreme dominant in the psychic hierarchy, the God-image is immediately related to, or identical with, the self, and everything that happens to the God image has an effect on the latter. Any uncertainty about the God-image causes a profound uneasiness in the self, for which reason the question is generally ignored because of its painfulness. But that does not mean that the question remains unasked in the unconscious.
>
> (Jung 1968: 109)

When war broke out, the British and the Germans each claimed the Christian God as their ally; as God is righteous, so their causes were righteous too, they maintained. But, beginning with the *Red Book* and throughout his life, Jung would contend for a darker truth. Mythologically speaking, he believed that the church's picture of a sinless Christ was only achieved by splitting off Jesus' shadow and locating it in Satan, whom Jung interprets as Christ's alter ego. In Jung's reading of the Easter story, when Christ descends into hell after his crucifixion, he does so in order to unite with antichrist. In due course, Jung believed, their union would lead to the birth of a new God image, which would transcend them both. In Jung's opinion, 'Gods are unavoidable. The more you flee from the God, the more surely you fall into his hand' (Jung 2009: 242).

As the *Red Book* unfolds, though, a terrible option emerges: either we go into the depths and confront the forces that drive world events within ourselves, as Jung is attempting to do, or the depths change themselves into death and get enacted on the world stage. In contrast to the euphoric sense of universal brotherhood that Jung experienced, as he travelled through northern Europe at the beginning of the First World War, the spirit of the depths called him into icy solitude.[19] Why? Because, Jung contends, new life comes not from following the crowd, but only from becoming centred in ourselves – where the life of God within us can begin. Jung believed that the assassination

of Siegfried, his conscious hero, would lead to the birth of a new God image in his soul. The psychotic potential of this notion is evident when Jung says that it seemed to him, for a time, that his soul was God. In due course, though, he resisted this identification, helped, perhaps, by his ambivalence, because he says that he pursued his soul to kill the image of the divine child within it, 'for I am also the worst enemy of my God' (Jung 2009: 244). At the same time he also claims that his enmity was decided on in God, since God's ambiguity means that he is also mockery and hate and anger. These are awesome and paradoxical thoughts. What becomes of human agency, if we believe that everything happens from beyond us? That God lives us, rather than us living our own lives? Jung was haunted by these questions for decades, until they finally erupted in *Answer to Job*, where he sought to express the 'shattering emotion which the unvarnished spectacle of divine savagery and ruthlessness produces in us' (Jung 1969b: 366). In my opinion, Jung's whole *oeuvre* was driven by his need to discover how he could both be lived by God, but also, somehow, take responsibility for his own actions. In intensely paradoxical language, Jung says that, far from imitating heroes, the new God needs no imitators or pupils, for 'He forces men through himself. The God is his own follower in man. He imitates himself' (Jung 2009: 245). If we are outside ourselves, living a communal life, our self suffers 'privation' (Jung 2009: 245). But if God moves into the self, 'he snatches us from what is outside us and we arrive at singleness in ourselves' (Jung 2009: 245). Paradoxically, Jung claims it is only when we are solitary that God leads us to the God of others and through that to the true neighbor, to the neighbor of the self in others (Jung 2009: 245). By owning our own incapacity, we are freed from the need to be heroes and no longer have to compel others to be heroes in our place.

Elijah, Salome and Jung's deification

During the night when Jung was preoccupied with these profound speculations, he had his first conversation with three figures who appeared spontaneously from his internal world: an old man, Elijah; his blind daughter Salome; and a serpent. Elijah personified the power of forethinking, while Salome represented pleasure. Their association, given their biblical backgrounds, scandalised Jung. But he had to learn that, in the depths of the unconscious, the opposites are joined. Here the serpent has a vital role to play in bringing them to consciousness because it writhes from right to left and left to right between them; being an adversary, but also a bridge. A crystal, which had appeared in an earlier fantasy, is now found to represent the thought that arises in the tension between these opposing forces.[20] In another image, Jung likens this emerging third to the divine son, the supreme meaning, the symbol, the passing over into a new creation. In an important clarification, given the danger of psychotic identification with God, Jung states that he does not

become the supreme meaning or the symbol, but the symbol becomes in him such that it has its substance, while he retains his own (Jung 2009: 250). Although not the divine son, he has effectively become a mother to God (Jung 2009: 250).

Through this visionary encounter, Jung's understanding of psychic reality is enlarged. At one point Elijah chides Jung for imagining that his thoughts are part of him: 'your thoughts are just as much outside yourself as trees and animals are outside your body' (Jung, 2009: 249).[21] In another place, Jung tries to distance himself by declaring that Salome and Elijah are symbols, but Elijah rejects this: 'We are just as real as your fellow men' (Jung 2009: 246). Somehow this rebuke brings Jung to the point where he can acknowledge his yearning – its exact nature is not revealed – which requires unusual honesty, because usually we do not wish to know, fearing that the object of our yearning will be impossible or too distressing. Yet, yearning is the way of life. If we deny our yearning we will be tempted to follow the way of the hero, which means seeking to live our life through others' achievements. Instead, Jung learns that the greatest psychological and spiritual imperative is to live oneself; to be one's own task. This is not a call to narcissistic indulgence but to protracted suffering, since we must become our own creator, beginning not with our best and highest qualities but with the worst and deepest. The culmination of the first part of the *Red Book* is reached when Jung sees further visions in the crystal: Christ is in his final torment on the cross, the black serpent coiled at its foot. The serpent winds itself around Jung's feet, and then around his whole body, his arms held wide. Salome appears, saying, 'Mary was the mother of Christ.' Jung demurs, but she continues, 'You are Christ.' As he is entwined, Jung finds his face transformed into the Mithraic *Deus Leontocephalus* (Jung 2009: 252 n.211).[22] Blind Salome kneels at Jung's feet, her hair twined around them, his blood streaming down, till she exclaims that she can see. Commenting on this fantasy in 1925, Jung interpreted Salome as a representation of his feeling function, which, being his inferior function, was surrounded by an aura of evil. In other words, he was afraid of his ability to feel. Because his feeling function was poorly developed – in contrast to his thinking function – feeling and thinking, Salome and Elijah, needed to be harmonised in Jung, for 'whoever distances himself from love, feels himself powerful' (Jung 2009: 253).[23] Commenting on these vivid archetypal images of divinisation and healing, he said:

> One is assailed by the fear that this perhaps is madness. This is how madness begins, this is madness. You cannot get conscious of these unconscious facts without being gripped by them. If you can overcome your fear of the unconscious and can let yourself go down, then these facts take on a life of their own. You can be gripped by these ideas so much that you really go mad, or nearly so.
>
> (Jung 1990: 97)

Despite his reservations, Jung later asserted the supreme importance of such an experience of deification – experienced in the ancient world by the devotees of Mithras – because it gave 'immortal value to the individual' (Jung 1990: 97). Perhaps it was here, in this internal experience of deification, which gripped Jung with all the certainty of divine madness, that he finally found the antidote to his despair. Perhaps this was the 'something still unknown which might confer meaning upon the banality of life' (Jung 1963: 161), which he had failed to find in his father's religion or with Freud.

In a more symbolic interpretation of this union of opposites, Jung likened the lion to the young, hot, dry July sun – the culminating light of summer – and the serpent to humidity, darkness, earth, the winter (Jung 1990: 98). Through this union, effected by Jung's willingness to make himself his own enemy and symbolically enacted in his identification with the Mithraic *Deus Leontocephalus*, we learn that Jung's blind pleasure is converted into sighted love. According to Jung, if we try to evade the spirit of the depths it will force us into the mysteries of Christ. This was evidenced, for him, in the Great War, when Christians who wanted heroes and ran after redeemers piled up a mountain of Calvary all over Europe. But the result, according to Jung's implacable vision of the spirit of the depths, is that:

> If you succeed in making a terrible evil out of this war and throw innumerable victims into this abyss, this is good, since it makes each of you ready for sacrifice himself. For as I, you draw close to the accomplishment of Christ's mystery.
>
> (Jung 2009: 254)

We have choice. Either we can practise voluntary self-sacrifice and contain conflict within ourselves, as Jung sought to do, thus becoming a Christ. Or, by externalising conflict into the terrible forces of war we will be propelled into sacrifice despite ourselves. The first part of the *Red Book* ends on a note of promise: one day the opposites would be harmonised in Jung: 'The mystery showed me in images what I should afterwards live. I did not possess any of those boons that the mystery showed me, for I still had to earn all of them' (Jung 2009: 254).

Liber Secundus

The first part of the *Red Book* is marked by a huge sense of internal desperation and conflict. It tells us something about Jung's initial disturbance and his need to overcome his Siegfried complex before he could move fluently in the depth of his unconscious. With the opening of the second part – *Liber Secundus* – we find ourselves in a slightly different world. Here Jung records a vivid sequence of encounters with figures who seem to have emerged

spontaneously from his internal world, as he turned his consciousness within. From these meetings, Jung learns about the dynamics of the unconscious. With the Red One, Jung discovers how opposites can experience mutual transformation. A process he would come to know as the 'Transcendent Function' (Jung 2009: 259). Through his encounter with a scholar's daughter, being held captive by her father's love, he discovers that the contra-sexual principal – the anima in men and the animus in women – must be allowed free rein, because 'humankind is masculine and feminine, not just male and female' (Jung 2009: 263). The most difficult thing is 'to be beyond the gendered and yet remain within the (limit of) the human' (Jung 2009: 261). Meeting a hermit in the desert, Jung learns about the importance and the limitations of religious language and concepts. In a deeply poignant encounter with the God of nature – Jung calls him Izdubar – Jung discovers more about the ways in which our conscious images of God are always subject to change. They live and die, but we, like Mary, by our conscious attitude towards the emergent symbols in our internal worlds, can assist in the rebirth of God. Jung finds this process deeply painful. Science may have destroyed our capacity for belief but, characteristically, he still yearns for a God against whom he can rail, 'That way I would at least have a God whom I could insult, but it is not worth blaspheming against an egg that one carries in one's pocket' (Jung 2009: 285). At the same time, in a passage which reveals his ambivalence towards God and, perhaps, echoes his feelings towards his reliable but powerless father, he asks:

> did I not sing the incantations for his incubation? Did I not do this out of love for him? I do not want to tear the love for the Great One from my heart. I want to love my God, the defenceless and hopeless one. I want to care for him, like a child.
>
> (Jung 2009: 286)

Significantly, Jung learns that if we project all our goodness into God we may feel overwhelmed by emptiness and evil. On this deflated note, Jung's thoughts are drawn to envy. Years before Melanie Klein, he reflects on the devil's envy – which must be his own envy – in relation to God: 'Because the emptiness lacks the fullness it craves fullness.' The devil 'sees the most beautiful and wants to devour it in order to spoil it' (Jung 2009: 289).

Divine madness

These intense preoccupations profoundly disturb Jung, who finds himself commanded to eat a piece of liver cut from the corpse of a murdered child. It is a form of communion, but Jung wants to be reasonable. The divine now appears to him as irrational craziness; an absurd disturbance of his meaningful human activity; an unbecoming sickness which has stolen into the regular

course of his life. Unfortunately, as Jung is discovering, 'You can . . . leave Christianity but it does not leave you' (Jung 2009: 292). In this frame of mind, while Jung is reading *The Imitation of Christ,* a host of dead spirits come rushing in on their way to Jerusalem to pray at the Holy Sepulchre.[24] They have no peace, even in death. It is at this point that Jung is carted off to the madhouse, as mentioned above.[25] Jung seems to be torn between two points of view. In Jesus' kingdom other laws are valid than the guidelines of Jung's wisdom. Here the 'mercy of God,' which Jung could never rely on, is the highest principle of action (Jung 2009: 295). At the same time Jung is in a state of confusion. Everything appears accidental, everything apparently misleads. With this thought:

> to your shivering horror it becomes clear to you that you have fallen into the boundless, the abyss, the inanity of eternal chaos. It rushes toward you as if carried by the roaring winds of a storm, the hurtling waves of the sea . . . Chaos is not single, but an unending multiplicity. It is not formless, otherwise it would be single, but it is filled with figures that have a confusing and overwhelming effect due to their fullness.
>
> These figures are the dead.
>
> (Jung 2009: 295)

Although Jung does not make the connection he seems to be describing, in more personal terms, his fantasy of Europe being flooded. He is falling into a void:

> Madness is a special form of the spirit and clings to all teachings and philosophies, but even more to daily life, since life itself is full of craziness and at bottom utterly illogical. Man strives toward reason only so that he can make rules for himself. Life itself has no rules. That is its mystery and its unknown law. What you call knowledge is an attempt to impose something comprehensible on life.
>
> (Jung 2009: 298)

In a terrifying sentence, Jung records: 'This is the night in which all the dams broke, where what was previously solid moved, where the stones turned into serpents, and everything living froze' (Jung 2009: 299).

In face of this apparently total loss of meaning, the *Red Book* asserts that we build the road by going on; that our life is the truth that we seek. We create the truth by living it. While there may be no distinctions in primal chaos, we grow if we stand still in the greatest doubt and therefore steadfastness in great doubt is a veritable flower of life.

The onward journey

To the end, Jung was preoccupied with God. In a passage which seems to encapsulate the meaning of Jung's internal struggle to achieve a working distance from God, he wrote:

> in the first instance the God's power resides entirely in the self, since the self is completely in the God, because we were not with the self. We must draw the self to our side. Therefore we must wrestle with the God for the self. Since the God is an unfathomable powerful movement that sweeps away the self into the boundless, into dissolution.
>
> Hence when the God appears to us we are at first powerless, captivated, divided, sick, poisoned with the strongest poison, but drunk with the highest health.
>
> We must strive to free the self from the God, so that we can live.
>
> (Jung 2009: 338f)

These sentences suggest a desperate developmental struggle to achieve separation and individuation from a primal other. Freud would doubtless have interpreted Jung's dilemma in terms of his oedipal struggle with his father, whereas Jung was aware that his fundamental problem lay in relation to his mother.[26] As I read the *Red Book*, Jung's constant resort to archetypal, rather than personal, language was, at least in part, driven by his need to relate his personal experience to universal themes. Had he kept it on the personal level it might either have overwhelmed him or led to the banality of reductive interpretation he so greatly feared. In words that might serve as Jung's *credo*, he wrote:

> I daily weigh up my whole life and I continue to regard the fiery brilliance of the God as a higher and fuller life than the ashes of rationality. The ashes are suicide to me. I could perhaps put out the fire but I cannot deny to myself the experience of the God. Nor can I cut myself off from this experience. I also do not want to, since I want to live. My life wants itself whole
>
> . . . the God I experienced is more than love; he is also hate, he is more than beauty, he is also the abomination, he is more than wisdom, he is also meaninglessness, he is more than power, he is also powerlessness, he is more than omnipresence, he is also my creature.
>
> (Jung 2009: 339)

The *Red Book* is not so much an evasion of personal analysis as Jung's mighty attempt to free himself from being enslaved to God and to establish himself on sounder foundations than he was able to achieve in childhood. In this sense

the *Red Book* is indeed an engagement with the madness of his inner world. Looked at this way, Jung's whole psychological enterprise is about the self-redemption of the self. Not exorcising or denying God, but seeking to establish the self at a safe distance from God, who may also be the mother whose terrifyingly dual nature is described in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1963), and given greater psychological objectivity in chapter 7 of *Psychology of the Unconscious*, aptly titled 'The Dual Mother Rôle' (Jung 1991: 294–368).

Discussion

What might Dr Jung, the psychiatrist, have made of the *Red Book* had it been the work of a patient? By happy chance we have two papers, both addressing psychotic processes, read by Jung to medical audiences in Aberdeen and London in July 1914. Although he does not refer to his then ongoing self-analysis, these contemporary papers provide the theoretical rationale that must have informed his approach to his own internal world. *On the Importance of the Unconscious in Psychopathology* (Jung 1960) begins by suggesting that the function of the unconscious is to compensate for the one sidedness of our conscious attitudes and opinions.[27] This process can be seen at work in the parapraxes highlighted by Freud and in dreams. In more severe forms of mental disturbance, though, the sufferer refuses 'to recognise the compensating influence which comes from the unconscious' (Jung 1960: 207), with the result that when unconscious material finally erupts into consciousness it comes clothed in the language of the unconscious.

> Such material includes all those forgotten infantile fantasies which have ever entered into the minds of men, and of which only legends and myths remain . . . [such] material is frequently found in dementia praecox.
>
> (Jung 1960: 209)

Perhaps this is a sober reference to the dead who stalk Jung through the pages of the *Red Book*, and an acknowledgment that the archetypal nature of the material that erupted during Jung's confrontation with the unconscious was due to the fact that for too long he refused to recognise the compensating influence which comes from the unconscious.

In *On Psychological Understanding* (Jung 1960), Jung comments on Freud's study of Schreber's *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (Schreber 2000).[28] While conceding that Freud had been able to suggest a plausible oedipal interpretation of Schreber's delusions, Jung felt he had failed adequately to engage with Schreber's enormous symbolic creativity (Jung 1960). A reductive approach to Goethe's *Faust* would yield similar results, but the point of reading *Faust* is not to learn how 'Goethe deals with these human banalities', but 'how he redeems his soul from bondage to them' (Jung 1960: 180).[29] In place of Freud's 'retrospective understanding', Jung was seeking a 'prospective understanding', through the application of what he called his 'constructive method' (Jung 1960: 181). Applied to *Faust*, this would demonstrate how Faust redeems himself as an individual. In this way, we will have '*understood ourselves* with the help of *Faust*' (Jung 1960: 181; my emphasis). In the *Red Book* Jung is clearly attempting to redeem himself by means of his creative and symbolic capacity. In his opinion, subjective creation is a means of redemption, and he quotes Nietzsche as his authority for saying that 'Creation – that is the great redemption from suffering; that is the ease of living' (Jung 1960: 186).

Interestingly, by inviting us to discover the meaning of *Faust* through evaluating our subjective reactions to it, Jung is anticipating psychoanalytic ideas about the positive value of the counter transference by several decades. He is also indicating his belief that 'subjective creation' – as in the *Red Book* – might offer a path towards redemption. As he sees it, the psyche is the point of intersection between two points of view. On the one hand, it contains the remnants and traces of previous human development, pointing towards universal principles of human psychology. On the other hand, it can outline what is to come, in so far as the psyche creates its own future. Applied to psychiatric work, the crucial question is what goal is the patient trying to reach through the creation of what may appear to be a psychotic system? Two things stand out: the patient is aiming at something, and he devotes all his willpower to the completion of his system (Jung 1960: 186). Instead of offering reductive interpretations, Jung's concern was to understand the patient's fantasy system in terms of its typical components, as he had done with the Miller fantasies. What we know in the present state of our knowledge, says Jung, is that pathological and mythological formations are unconscious creations and that myths furnish useful material for comparative study of delusional systems (Jung 1960). Then, in a most significant passage, he writes:

> Closer study of Schreber's or any similar case will show that these patients are consumed by a desire to create a new world system, or what we call a Weltanschauung, often of the most bizarre kind. Their aim is obviously to create a system that will enable them to assimilate unknown psychic phenomena and so adapt themselves to their own world.
>
> (Jung 1960: 188)

When we consider the contents of the *Red Book* we can see that Jung was himself in search of a new *Weltanschauung*; one that would honour the mythological outpourings of the unconscious, but in a scientifically acceptable way. The dilemma of modern men and women, Jung felt, was that, although our psyche is invincibly mythological/religious, we can no longer fall back uncritically on the great religious traditions of the past. Instead, we have to find new

ways of relating to the myth-making potential of the unconscious, or risk living a dangerously unbalanced life of hyper-consciousness, which invites a compensatory incursion by unconscious forces. As the twentieth century wore on, Jung saw the vast collective madnesses enacted by the communist and fascist states as evidence of the correctness of this view. Jung was not sanguine about psychosis; he knew how destructive mental illness can be. But he also believed that a patient's intense preoccupation with his apparently bizarre system of thought could be seen as the first stage in the normal creative process in an introverted personality. Introverts, like Jung, look for the solution to the world's problems within themselves. Through introspection they can assimilate precious unconscious contents; but they have then to bring the fruit of their introspection into relation with outer reality. Creative breakthroughs in scientific thought have occasionally been heralded by dreams, but the dilemma of the psychiatric patient is that he:

> remains stuck in this [introverted] stage and substitutes his subjective formulation for the real world – which is precisely why he remains ill. He cannot free himself from his subjectivism and therefore does not establish any connection with objective thinking and with human society.
>
> (Jung 1960: 189)

Listening to these words in July 1914, the members of the Psycho-Medical Society of London could have had no idea that Dr Jung, so poised, professional and eloquent by day, was, by night, immersed in the most extraordinary conversations with the inhabitants of his inner world. As we know, it was not until 1930 that Jung felt able to abandon work on his *Red Book*. He did this when his researches into alchemy finally provided, to his satisfaction, external confirmation that his inner formulations were not simply the messianic or artistic creations of a mad professor, but that he had accurately intuited the archetypal structures of the unconscious mind. He quotes Feuerbach: 'understanding is real and effective only when it is in accord with that of other reasonable beings. Then it becomes objective and connects with life' (Jung 1960: 189). For Jung, the alchemists were the other reasonable beings who provided the connection between his labours in the *Red Book* and the external world.

Jung's divine madness

Virginia Woolf once wrote, 'Madness is terrific I can assure you, and not to be sniffed at; and in its lava I still find most of the things I write about' (Dunn 2000: 251). Carl Jung and Daniel Paul Schreber both recorded their experiences of divine madness, but only Schreber insisted on publishing his work – believing it to be literally true. Jung was more circumspect, being

more aware of the symbolic and psychological factors at work in his creation. Because of this, he was able to develop valuable insights into the archetypal dimension of the psyche. Depth psychology as a whole, though, continues to suffer from the rift between Jung and Freud. As Donald Winnicott wrote:

> Freud's flight to sanity could be something we psychoanalysts are trying to recover from, just as Jungians are trying to recover from Jung's 'divided self,' and from the way he . . . dealt with it.
>
> (Winnicott 1989: 483)

It is one of history's more poignant ironies that the one person who might have been able to bridge the gulf between Jung and Freud, at a theoretical, if not at a personal level – the person who made original contributions to both Jung's and Freud's theoretical understandings, but has only recently been recognised as the brilliantly original mind she undoubtedly was – was Sabina Spielrein (Cifali 2001).

In Winnicott's (1989) mature judgment, Jung was a case of childhood schizophrenia who managed to heal himself. This was an astonishing achievement. But, even those like Judge Schreber, whose madness remains unhealed, can also be inspired. In his book *My Own Private Germany, Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity*, Eric Santner (1996) summarises the work of scholars who have charted profound connections between Schreber's writings and the social and political fantasies undergirding Naziism. And Santner argues that, although Schreber was blind to the political significance of his ideas, he was right to believe in their importance, because they represented a form of insight into the profound malfunctions that underlay the politico theological structure of the Nazi state.

If Schreber achieved this, then his madness was indeed divine. Sadly, just as utterances of the Delphic Oracle and the priestesses of Dodona were difficult to understand, so the tragedy of Schreber's *Memoirs* is that no one was able to comprehend the warning they contained. Jung's achievement, on the other hand – and this was his life's work – was to transmute the divine madness of the *Red Book* into coherent psychological and psychotherapeutic perspectives which continue to offer profound insight into the common wellsprings of psychosis, creativity and spiritual experience.

Notes

1 Jung (2009: 8f.).
2 In Jung's terminology the shadow represents those aspects of the self that have not yet been brought into the light of consciousness or are actively occluded by that light.
3 An example of Jung's crusading attitude in defence of psychoanalysis, in a letter to Freud: 'I was amazed by your news. The adventure with "Schottländer" is marvellous; of course the slimy bastard was lying. I hope you roasted, flayed, and

impaled the fellow with such genial ferocity that he got a lasting taste for once of the effectiveness of psycho-analysis. I subscribe to your final judgment with all my heart. Such is the nature of these beasts. Since I could read the filth in him from his face I would have gone for his throat. I hope to God you told him all the truths so plainly that even his hen's brain could absorb them. Now we shall see what his next coup will be. Had I been in your shoes I would have softened up his guttersnipe complex with a sound Swiss thrashing' (Freud and Jung 1974: 325).

4 The recovery of the Holy Grail, traditionally understood to have been the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper, was the goal of the Grail knights' quest of medieval legend. In Jung's more developed psychological thinking the Holy Grail stands for the (unachievable) goal of individuation: the complete realisation of all the conscious and unconscious aspects of our being.

5 Jung was well aware that repressed contents can behave in extremely dynamic ways. What he is beginning to suspect here, though, is that there might be a genuinely transpersonal presence in his psyche. In this dream, the white bird appears to be the harbinger of Jung's soul (Jung 2009: 264).

6 Jung's fear was that his immensely strong intellectual defences might be masking an underlying psychosis, which could erupt and overwhelm him.

7 Alchemists are popularly thought of as primitive chemists, who tried to turn base matter into gold. Studying their texts, though, Jung realised that their chemistry, in which the elements are personified, was actually a wonderfully rich, pre-psychological, description of unconscious processes projected into matter. In Jung's view, though, and as the more enlightened alchemists themselves realised, the true purpose of their experiments was not the creation of precious metal but personal transformation. Discovering their works convinced Jung that his was not an isolated venture, but part of a centuries-long tradition of understanding and research.

8 Isaiah 53: 1-4; Isaiah 9: 6; John 1: 14 and Isaiah 35: 1–8.

9 He was born on 26 July 1875.

10 Jung resigned as President of the International Psychoanalytic Association on 20 April 1914 and from his post as Privatdocent in the medical faculty of Zürich University on 30 April of the same year (Freud and Jung 1974: 358 and n.2). The *Jahrbuch*, to which Jung refers in this letter, was the *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*: the official journal of the psychoanalytic movement between 1909 and 1914.

11 On Jung's use of the word 'soul': Jung tells us that while recording these fantasies he heard a woman's voice (in his mind) saying, 'It is art.' He took such exception to this that, when the comment came again, he said, 'No, it is not art! On the contrary, it is nature.' Intrigued by the fact that a woman should interfere with him from within, he decided that she must be the soul, in a primitive sense. From these early experiences he derived the idea that the soul or anima, the counter-sexual principle in men, plays an archetypal role in male psychology; just as the animus plays a corresponding role in the psychology of women (Jung 1963: 178f.).

12 Jung once defined dreams as 'a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious' (Jung 1969a: 263). In his opinion, dreams tend to compensate for the one-sidedness of our conscious perceptions and can be interpreted both from a causal and a purposive point of view. From the latter perspective, dreams may be said to determine us because they can point to an altered psychological situation, which has yet to impinge on our conscious understanding (Jung 1969a: 246). According to Jung, Freud's approach to dreams was partial, because he restricted himself to a causal, reductive point of view (Samuels, Shorter and Plaut 1986).

13 Richard Noll insightfully comments about this tendency in Jung: 'By reframing his experience as a way of suffering for the good of humanity rather than just over, "the debris of my former relationships," indeed by seeing the universal in the particular, Jung healed himself' (Noll 1994: 207).

14 If there is an historical parallel, I am reminded of Teresa of Avila and her Carmelite sisters. In the sixteenth century, while her compatriots the *conquistadores* were seeking to subjugate the populations of Central and South America in their lust for gold, Teresa and her companions chose to face the dangers of their interior castles, seeking an inner spiritual treasure rather than an earthly one. But, poor as they were and few in number, Teresa's sisters at least had each other for support. Jung's *Red Book* appears to chart a very solitary journey.

15 Even in 1928, when he was completing the *Red Book*, Jung could write: 'By temperament I despise the "personal", any kind of "togetherness", but it is so strong a force, this whole crushing unspiritual weight of the earth, that I fear it. It can rouse my body to revolt against the spirit, so that before reaching the zenith of my flight I fall lamed to earth' (Jung 1973: 49).

16 Siegfried or Sigurd, was the legendary dragon-slaying hero of the *Nibelungenlied*.

17 That is for gold: the alchemical quest!

18 The primary documents are reprinted in Carotenuto (1984) and in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 46(1). I am grateful to Mrs Hester Solomon for drawing my attention to the themes of Wagner's opera and Jung's relationship with Sabina Spielrein.

19 Cf. Jung (2009: 231, 245 and 244, n.137).

20 At the end of *Liber Primus*, Jung writes, 'The symbol of the crystal signifies the unalterable law of events that comes of itself. In this seed you grasp what is to come' (Jung 2009: 254). See also Jung (2009: 239).

21 These thoughts that are outside ourselves are reminiscent of Bion's 'wild thoughts', such as dream-thoughts, or intrauterine thoughts, where there is no possibility of being able to trace immediately any kind of ownership or even any sort of way of being aware of the genealogy of that particular thought (Bion 1997: 27).

22 This lion-headed god encircled by a snake was a Mithraic deity, called Aion, or the eternal being (Jung 1990: 98). He is pictured in the frontispiece of Jung's book *Aion* (Jung 1968). Mrs Hester Solomon comments, 'Jung was born on 26th July so, astrologically, it makes him a Leo, or lion and indeed he was "lion headed", physically and psychologically. Aion is an apt self-image' (private communication).

23 As described above, the conflict between love and power was evident in Jung's turmoil over the sacrifice of Siegfried.

24 *The Imitation of Christ* was an extremely popular work of Christian devotion, usually attributed to Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471).

25 Cf. Jung (2009: 295).

26 'The conjecture that I have succumbed to a personal complex does indeed spring to mind when one knows that I am a clergyman's son. However, I had a good relationship with my father, so no "father complex" of the ordinary sort. True, I didn't like theology because it set my father problems which *he* couldn't solve and which *I* felt unjustified. On the other hand, I grant you my personal mother complex' (Jung 1976: 65).

27 First read to the Neurology and Psychological Medicine Section of the British Medical Association, at the British Medical Association's Annual Meeting held in Aberdeen, in July 1914.

28 A lecture delivered to the Psycho-Medical Society, London, in July 1914.