



Jung Journal

Culture & Psyche

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujun20>

Jung on Transcendence

Jon Mills

To cite this article: Jon Mills (2023) Jung on Transcendence, Jung Journal, 17:3, 57-77, DOI: [10.1080/19342039.2023.2225749](https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2023.2225749)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2023.2225749>



Published online: 11 Aug 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Jung on Transcendence

JON MILLS 

I once had a patient who was run over as a pedestrian by a drunk driver. He was walking on a sidewalk when suddenly a car jumped the curb and mowed over the right side of his body. He was lucky to still be able to walk but he was functionally disabled and lived in chronic pain. Traumatized and depressed, ironically, he about drank himself to death to cope. One evening I received a call from the hospital saying my patient was in Emergency. When I saw him on the gurney he was almost in a coma. He drank a half-gallon of vodka hoping to die. Being 6 feet, 4 inches tall and weighing 260 pounds, he was, once again, lucky to be alive. When he got out of the Psychiatric Unit he started attending AA and support groups sponsored by clergy. He was then invited to attend a weekend retreat at a country property owned by a Christian organization that helped those recovering from addictions. He stayed in his room and cried all day, coming out only for meals. In a particularly vulnerable moment, he walked outside and started praying to God, asking for strength and to show him a sign. At the precise moment he thought this in his mind, a Canadian maple leaf fell from the sky and landed on his shoulder, resting there peacefully. Touched by the hand of God, he wept for joy.

We may refer to this as a synchronized event that was both numinous and transcendent, where meaning and emotion were married through the *mysterium tremendum*, that sense of awe and illumination that emerges from the dark ground of spirit, an ecstasy borne of suffering where the sick soul pines for relief from our being-toward-*pathos*.

Becoming Everything

In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung tells readers how in 1944 he broke his foot, then suffered a heart attack, followed by deliriums, visions, and a near-death experience (1961/1963, hereafter *MDR*).¹ Confined to his bed and on the verge of dying, unsure if he was in a dream or a state of euphoria, he described floating out in space. “Far below I saw the globe of the earth, bathed in a glorious blue light. I saw the deep blue sea and the continents” (289). Keep in mind this was in 1944, decades before humanity saw any pictures from space. “The famous so-called blue marble photo of the earth, when it was seen for the first time as a complete sphere, appeared in 1972 during the Apollo 17 mission. It is perhaps surprising to recall that it is only in the last [fifty] years that we have been able to see the earth as a whole” (Gaston

2013, 1). In what appears to be a life-review flashing before Jung's very eyes, everything "fell away" yet "something remained; it was as if I now carried along with me everything I had ever experienced or done," which left a "great fullness. There was no longer anything I wanted or desired. . . . I had everything that I was, and that was everything. . . . I would know what had been before me, why I had come into being, and where my life was flowing" (291), that is, until his doctor floated up from earth telling him he must return. Then the vision ceased.

Deflated and forlorn, having been robbed of his destiny, Jung fell into despair. Yet toward the evening he would fall asleep and wake

in an utterly transformed state. It was as if I were in an ecstasy. I felt as though I were floating in space, as though I were safe in the womb of the universe—in a tremendous void, but filled with the highest possible feeling of happiness. "This is eternal bliss," I thought. "This cannot be described; it is far too wonderful!" (293)

He continues:

These were ineffable states of joy. . . . All these experiences were glorious. Night after night I floated in a state of purest bliss, "thronged round with images of all creation." Gradually, the motifs mingled and paled. Usually the visions lasted for about an hour; then I would fall asleep again. . . . It is impossible to convey the beauty and intensity of emotion during those visions. They were the most tremendous things I have ever experienced. (294–295)

These autobiographical narratives are impregnated with the glory of transcendence, of emotional and aesthetic rapture, of spiritual union with the collective and the cosmic, a numinosity like no other. Jung was called back to finish his lifework, to complete his individuation, including his research in alchemy, the Self, and the *mysterium coniunctionis*. But in his reflections on these events he adds, "It was not a product of imagination. The visions and experiences were utterly real; there was nothing subjective about them; they all had a quality of absolute objectivity" (295).

Of course, the philosopher and classical psychoanalyst would be more dubious. From the soulless scientist to the Gnostic, how do we go about objectively affirming psychic experience, here as an ontological status of bliss pointing to the true nature of reality? Jung gives us a clue: it is about the *qualia* of lived experience. But Jung does not question whether these transcendental states could be due to his illness, deliriums, or wishful hallucinations mediated by unconscious fantasy, what Winnicott (1964/1992) infamously attributed to an underlying psychosis. And as Freud (1927) reminds us: "If one man has gained an unshakable conviction of the true reality of religious doctrines from a state of ecstasy which has deeply moved him, of what significance is that to others?" (28). But this seems to be precisely the point.

When we are "deeply moved," we christen this "state of ecstasy" with a reality of "absolute objectivity." For our purposes, we may bracket the metaphysical questions of whether they exist as mind-independent, extant occasions external to the psyche because what we are interested in here is the phenomenology of lived experience as *esse in anima*, being in soul. Here the qualitative felt variation of interiority as process is what constitutes the backdrop of my investigation into the transcendental—hence the transpersonal, what we confer, when experienced, with its own objectivity—that is, the affirmative presence of objects and events before

our consciousness. I believe this is, in part, what Jung was trying to convey, yet his confession does have supernatural overtones. But whether based in naturalized psychology or not, the presence of Being through appearance discloses a certainty pervading our psychic reality, regardless of our mediating unconscious dynamics.

On the Question of Transcendence

Many scholars have analyzed Jung's concept of the transcendent function (Mattoon 1993; Miller 2004), but relatively little has been written on Jung's notion of transcendence in general. Perhaps this is because Jung avoids definitions and offers implicit conceptual distinctions without conflating arbitrary meanings, so that no general concept of transcendence can be assumed. Yet perhaps a general meaning is implied: whatever discourse may be on "function," it stands in relation to, I suggest, a tacit connection to a presupposed transpersonal netherworld (see 1948, CW 9i, 211) mediated by the collective unconscious (see Mills 2019a), or what Jung refers to as the "objective psyche." This makes any grounding of transcendence an ontological activity with ordinal phenomenological properties, or what I have called "onto-phenomenology" (Mills 2021, 2022). What does appear in the literature tends to center around his engagement with transcendental philosophy (Brooks 2011), conceptions of theology inherited from Neoplatonism (Henderson 2014), medieval Scholasticism (White 2019), his own Christian upbringing (Jung 1961/1963), studies in alchemy (Marlan 2021), his psychologicalization of religion (Amundson 2019), its application to phenomenological psychology (Brooke 2015) and psychotherapy (Goodwyn 2016), and the pursuit of wholeness (Kelly 1993; McMillan, Main, and Henderson 2020), which is closely related to the quest for the numinous, hence highlighting Jung's indebtedness to Rudolf Otto (1917/1950).

When Jung introduces the nature of the "psychoid" construct, the *distinction* between transcendental and transcendent becomes difficult to maintain: the realm of ontology—the transcendent (Jung 1947, CW 8, ¶417), hence the archetypal collective—stands in relation to phenomenology—the transcendental, hence the lived experience. For Jung, the psychoid is like Kant's noumenal realm, the transcendent *Ding an sich*—an ontological untouchable; but he at times collapses the two categories and treats them as if they are the same. Convoluting matters even further, the nature of transcendence is to be found in the very process of individuation itself, itself amorphous and opaque, if not radically subjective, which is further closely tied to the psychological functions it serves, a process at work in both therapy and life.

Notwithstanding Jung's terminology when he differentially employs the terms *transcendence*, *transcendent*, and *transcendental*, it becomes important to tease out these distinctions in order to illuminate the varieties of transcendence in Jung's thought. A conventional reading of Jung is that he distinguishes between (a) an attitude or process he reserves for a psychological function and (b) a transcendental reality (e.g., the archetypal collective, *unus mundus*, God). Ann Ulanov (1996) articulates these relations between the psychological processes operative in psyche and the greater metaphysical reality. Although she differentiates the two realms, she also privileges a "functioning transcendent" that is operative in psychic

reality ultimately mediated by a divinity principle identified as the Transcendent. This is why she says it is “through the workings of the transcendent function that we receive evidence of the Transcendent in the metaphysical sense operating within us, much like the religious tradition describes the Spirit of God moving us to pray” (Ulanov 1996, 194). Steven Joseph (1997) equates this with “the Real, ineffable and vast beyond” (155), which Jung himself infers on many occasions emanates from God’s voice, will, grace, and the *imago Dei* (1937, CW 11, 488, 506; 1958, CW 10, 455; 1954, CW 18, 690). This is further echoed by Jeffrey Miller (2004): “The transcendent function clearly implicates matters of transcendence in a spiritual or divine sense” (115). This is a standard reading of the religious Jung in communion with the divine.

Because Jung patently wants to distance himself from metaphysics while making metaphysically (bracketed) divine assertions, it is no wonder we get confused around variegated meanings of transcendence. For example, Jung boldly admits “the unwarranted nature of all metaphysical assertions” and then asks us to “face the fact that there is no evidence whatsoever for the ability of the human mind to pull itself up by its own bootstraps, that is, to establish anything transcendental (*Transzendantes*)” (1937, CW 11, ¶764). Quite an odd statement given Jung posited a “suprasensual” (*übersinnliche*²) (1950, CW 9i, ¶207) collective psyche that housed archaic symbols (archetypes) and made the pursuit of the numinous a lifelong project (see Mills 2013, 2014). Here, Jung denies any metaphysical status to the transcendental but elsewhere equates it with “pure experience”—the “reality of the psychic” (*Realität des Psychischen*) (Jung 1935, CW 18, ¶1740), including “unconscious processes” (1912/1967, CW 5, 455). Jung further speaks of the “transcendence of life” (*Transzendenz des Lebens*) (1950, CW 9i, ¶208, 117) as “subjective transformation,” a “purely *psychic* reality” (119, 116), hence the domain of phenomenology. But he ultimately makes psyche an ontological process that conditions both the individual and the social collective:

Man’s unconscious ... contains all the patterns of life and behaviour inherited from his ancestors, so that every human child is possessed of a ready-made system of adapted psychic functioning prior to all consciousness ... If it were possible to personify the unconscious, we might think of it as a collective human being combining the characteristics of both sexes, transcending (*jenseits*) youth and age, birth and death, and, from having at its command a human experience of one or two million years, practically immortal. (1931, CW 8 ¶673)

More on these definitions in a moment, but it is important to note that Jung’s most consistent use of the term *transcendent* is when he refers to psychological functions.

Although Jung imports his own meaning into these terms, hence deviating from classical conceptions in philosophy and theology, and indeed wants to distance himself from any metaphysical discourse whatsoever (1975, *Letters II*, 381; 1948, CW 8, 55; 1937, CW 11, 6; Jung 1977, 419), he cannot elude the ontological parameters of transcendence despite largely relegating this concept to connote a process that bridges opposites. It does not help in elucidating such matters when he continually engages in the habit of using the same word to mean different things in different contexts. In what follows I hope to unpack and critique his various meanings in order to ameliorate some of this confusion.

A Note on Translation

Jung situates and interpolates the meaning of *transcendence* into a myriad of different phenomena he intended to examine psychologically, hence obscuring the term by its general usage in what it is supposed to signify contextually. At times he equates images and symbols as transcendental; at other times he associates transcendence with transitions, transformations, and unification principles. He also attributes the transcendent to divinity, the unconscious, and the Self. We may readily see how this can become murky depending upon what definitions we adopt. For example, symbolic images may be transcendental but not necessarily transcendent: symbols may facilitate psychological transformations, yet they are not the same thing as a transcendent reality. Still, at other times, and more consistently, Jung reifies archetypes and the collective unconscious, which are tantamount to the transcendent, if not relegated to the celestial heavens. Archetypes are both transcendent and transcendental by virtue of the fact that they are posited to condition conscious experience and stand in relation to archaic ontology as the reiteration and return of origins (Eliade 1949; Mills 2018).

Equally, when Jung refers to the terms *transcendent* and *function*, whether intended or not, he juxtaposes an ontological state or condition with an active teleological process encompassing an implied aim, what he refers to as “the transition from one condition to another” (1973, *Letters I*, 268). But a transition does not necessarily mean transcendence, nor does transformation, mediation, or unification. Furthermore, the transcendent function may be said to be operative in the pursuit of transcendence, but transcendence does not necessarily belong to the function itself. With these conundrums in mind, I will first set out to explore what Jung means by these notions and experiences of the transcendent and the transcendental.

It may be argued that I am making too much of such minutiae and I am quibbling over the need for more precision. Another valid criticism is that the Hull and Baynes translations into English are not exactly the same and not what Jung originally wrote in German, as collected in his *Gesammelte Werke*, as there are some messy discrepancies in English and German. For example, when Jung introduces the transcendent function in *Psychological Types* as a “complex function,” he goes on to say opposites are united in a living symbol. Just after that sentence he refers to the living symbol as “transcending time and dissolution” (1921/1971, CW 6, ¶828). In the Walter 1995 German edition, Jung says: “für eine lange Epoche nicht aufzulösenden” (¶833, 514–515), which is more accurately translated as “cannot be dissolved for a long epoch” or “not dissolvable for a long period.” Baynes takes poetic liberty to interject the term “transcending” when it does not appear in the original text.

In another passage on the characteristics of the collective unconscious, Jung writes it is “jenseits der geschlechtlichen Besonderheit, jenseits von Jugend und Alter, von Geburt und Tod,” which is translated as “beyond gender specificity, beyond youth and old age, beyond birth and death” (1931, CW 8, ¶673). Here the idea of transcendence is present, but he does not actually use the word. Elsewhere, Jung writes: “Der Übergeist wurde zum übernatürlichen” (1948, CW 9i, ¶390, 226–227), which is more precisely translated as “The Over-spirit (*Übergeist*) became the supernatural (*übernatürlichen*)” (211). Once again, a “transcendent spirit” is implied.

But in some passages in Jung, as just previously shown, his use of the word *transcendental* is clear and consistent. For example, Jung claims that “anything transcendental (*Transzendentes*) cannot by definition be firmly established” (1952, CW 8, ¶856). Elsewhere he says, “I do not for a moment deny that the deep emotion of a true prayer may reach transcendence (*Transzendenz*)” (1954, CW 18, ¶1536, 681). And when speaking of spirit and matter (Jung 1947, CW 8), “the ultimate nature of both is transcendental (*transcendental*), that is, irre-presentable” (¶420).

Psyche as Transcendental

The term *transcendence* has a convoluted semiotic past, particularly in philosophy and religion. As I have said, Jung applies the notion in a psychological sense rather than a logical or metaphysical one. And given that Jung did not formally define what he meant by these related terms, it is left to interpretation to discern if there are any commonalities in meaning. In order to avoid further misunderstanding, for my purposes it may be useful to offer an operational definition of the terms *transcendent*, *transcendence*, and *transcendental* so we may differentiate these discrete conditions and categories, although they remain ontically interrelated.

The term *transcendent* often relates to a state or condition of having achieved an elevated ontological status of value, in *potentia* or actuality. *Transcendence* is often thought of as a pursuit or process of achieving a transcendent state or reality, whereas *transcendental* often refers to the psychic structures that make transcendence and the transcendent possible, with the stipulation that the transcendent always retains its own unique ontological independence. As with the emotive properties of archetypes, it is often the quality of the lived experience that defines the phenomenology of transcendence.

The word “transcendence” has an encumbered history. Here I wish to confine its meaning to the psychological parameters that describe a qualitative state of rising above or surpassing certain felt limitations to reason and experience (Lat. *transcendere*: *trans*, over + *scandere*, to climb), what we may properly attribute to more exalted human emotions that find higher spiritual value, meaning, and purpose in the synthetic unifying functions of moral, aesthetic, and rational self-conscious life. Here transcendence may be defined as the possibility of thought achieving its unitive aim through these modal forms culminating in higher degrees of consciousness, usually accompanied by sublime valuation and intense emotional satisfaction. (Mills 2017, 167)

But transcendence hardly needs to be confined to an exclusive position of positive value: conflict and negativity is often the vehicle to transcendental realms, such as in the experience of the *mysterium tremendum* that sometimes accompanies numinosity.

Jung follows in the philosophical tradition of transcendental idealism generally introduced in the late modern period from Kant and extending into the German idealism movement exemplified by the transcendental systems of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and to some degree Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. *Transcendental idealism* is generally concerned with the ground, scope, and limits of consciousness and epistemology; however, unconscious processes largely condition how experience derives. Forms of unconsciousness are epitomized by the transcendental unity of apperception in Kant, the self-positing self in Fichte, intellectual

intuition in Schelling, unconscious Spirit in Hegel, and the primacy of the Will in Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. All of these systems of transcendental idealism articulate an archetypal knowing, a knowing that is self-constituting as it cognizes. In a more generic sense, these doctrines attempt to describe and elaborate on the unconscious structural conditions necessary for experience to arise, without which nothing would experientially exist. Here any view of reality is shaped by the operations of mind, so psyche is presupposed to exist as the apparatus that conditions the ground and proviso for experience to transpire rooted in an unconscious ontology. What this means is that the unconscious is *required* in order to give rise to reality, and the only access we have to information about the real is fashioned through the mediation of mind. These unconscious a priori stipulations by definition make the psyche a transcendental process.

The Transcendent Function

The first comprehensive examination of the construct appeared in the *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress for Analytical Psychology* (Mattoon 1993). This was followed a decade later by Jeffrey Miller's (2004) meticulous thematic analysis of Jung's original paper. Whereas the Congress focused on individual and collective aspects of the transcendent function, Miller argued it was a root metaphor for unconscious processes lying at the core of Jung's theories. I shall not reproduce those nuanced arguments here save to say that such critical reevaluations centered on the function as a (1) specific *action*, (2) an expression of a *relationship* or dependence between elements of different oppositional sets, (3) a *method*, and (4) a *process* or *effect* brought about by these aforementioned dynamics (Dehing 1993, 15). Miller (2004) is much more exegetical and focuses on three separate ideas operative in Jung's concept: (1) as *mediatory* phenomenon holding the tension of opposites; (2) as *transitional* space bridging oppositions; and (3) as *transformative*, hence, generative outcomes (80–82). We may also look at these distinct features as progressive stages in psychological work via sublation (*Aufhebung*).

Jung had written his classic paper during the same period he was researching and writing *Psychological Types* (circa 1913–1918). It is here where we see one of the first references to the transcendent function being discussed.

When there is full parity of the opposites, attested by the ego's absolute participation in both ... the tension of opposites produce a new, uniting function that transcends them. ... From the activity of the unconscious there now emerges a new content, constellated by thesis and antithesis in equal measure and standing in a *compensatory* relation to both. It thus forms the middle ground on which the opposites can be united. ... The ego, however, torn between thesis and antithesis, finds in the middle ground its own counterpart, its sole and unique means of expression, and it eagerly seizes on this in order to be delivered from its division. The energy created by the tension of opposites therefore flows into the mediatory product and protects it from conflict. (1921/1971, CW 6, 479)

Anyone familiar with Fichte's transcendental philosophy will immediately see the connection between his dialectic articulated in his *Wissenschaftslehre* (§§1–3) and Jung's evocation of the often conceptually bastardized triad, *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*, where opposites are united

through these three fundamental principles (*Grundsätze*), or transcendental acts of judgment—a dialectic often misattributed to Hegel. Jung’s transcendent function could have come straight out of Fichte’s *Science of Knowledge* (1794, see ¶3: I, 115).

Jung’s (1921) terse description of the transcendent function in *Psychological Types* continues:

Both the opposites are striving to get the new product on their side. . . . The appropriation or dissolution of the mediatory product by either side is successful only if the ego is not completely divided but inclines more to one side or the other. But if one side succeeds in winning over and dissolving the mediatory product, the ego goes along with it, whereupon an identification of the ego with the most favoured function ensues. . . . The mediatory product . . . becomes a new content that governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of opposites into a common channel . . . and its configuration by the opposites ensures its sovereign power over all the psychic functions. (1921/1971, CW 6, 479–480)

In other words, individuality (through the process of individuation) emerges from mediation between the opposites, not from identifying with just one pole. Here, when Jung introduces the transcendent function in an early publication as “a process in its totality” and as “a complex function made up of other functions,” where this “raw material” of “thesis” and “antithesis” are “united” in the opposites, he specifically tells us this activity is a “living symbol” (1921/1971, CW 6, 480). What is protean for the symbolic life is the ability to engage and tolerate mutually conflicting oppositions and attempt to unify them in some conscious attitude. But Jung takes this inference even further. While at the same time he denounces any “metaphysical quality” to the transcendent function, he adds a supplement to this proviso by stating that the “raw material itself” belonging to psyche is also “not to be dissolved for a long epoch” (*für eine lange Epoche nicht aufzulösenden*) or period of time (¶833; ¶828, 480 in the English edition). We may reasonably infer that this material persists and is a continuation of time, which signifies the archetypal domain of a transcendent reality.

Jung’s Original Paper

Jung’s 1916 paper “The Transcendent Function,” written after his break with Freud and during his so-called confrontation period,³ lay dormant for decades, buried in his files until students discovered the manuscript and distributed it for publication in 1957. In his 1958 revision and Prefatory Note published in the *Collected Works*, Jung believes it was the foundational precursor to his method of active imagination whose trajectory is oriented toward an integration of the personality as a whole. We now know this was conceived and executed during his visionary experiments and inner dialogues in *The Red Book*. But as early as 1917, with his publication of *On the Psychology of the Unconscious*, under Chapter VI, “The Synthetic or Constructive Method,” Jung tells us the transcendent function relies on an “imaginary” relation that “consists in a series of fantasy-occurrences which appear spontaneously in dreams and visions” (1917/1943, CW 7, 80). As I have elaborated elsewhere (Mills 2019b, 78–80), Jung’s seminal early work is closely related to the question and process of individuation and the psychological quest for holism. Such a quest focuses

on the dialectical tension of opposites, one-sidedness, compensation, and balance within Jung's conceptualization of the Self as a developmental pursuit of the numinous within a trajectory toward achieving a unifying, totalizing, or refined personality, namely, the synthesis of soul. We may immediately question whether this form of unification and holism is possible, but the notion of a psychic "function" that leads to the experiential lived reality of a phenomenal felt transcendence within the subject harbors qualitative psychological-spiritual value. For Jung, the transcendent function was posited as arising from the "union of conscious and unconscious contents" (1916/1958, CW 8, 69), and as an attempt to wrestle with the abyss of contradictions that lie within the psyche, specifically the "autonomous" nature of the unconscious that fuels and sustains these contradictions.

This early essay highlights Jung's insights that "the unconscious behaves in a compensatory or complementary manner towards the conscious" (1916/1958, CW 8, 69) and vice versa. What consciousness experiences is reflexively encountered in the unconscious where competing forces and fantasies are at play. When denials, defenses, and restrictions are imposed by thought, including practical or moral reason, this intensifies contradictory elements in both domains that seek a natural discharge. If a balance cannot be achieved, then this can lead to "one-sidedness," which is an over-compensation, but one that Jung says is "an unavoidable and necessary characteristic of the directed process" (71) that mediates contradictions. Jung believed that a synthetic method could be applied in thought (whether in self-analysis or clinical treatment), which facilitates the unconscious becoming more conscious of its internal contraries and overdetermined dynamics, and hence brings about a new inner "attitude." Because Jung saw the psyche as a "self-regulating system" (79), mutual compensatory functions serve to balance the complementarity and collaboration between conscious and unconscious factors. This tendency toward compensation acts as a regulating principle within the two psychic domains directed toward each other. By bringing together opposites and their mutual contradictions, this leads to a *third* function that may be comparable to a rudimentary dialectic or semiotic: unification leads to a higher movement in thought, understanding, and judgment.

Contradictions in the psyche lead to dialectical tensions that can potentially be brought into dialogue with one another through self-conscious reflection or therapy, which can "modify the conflicting standpoints" through comparison, exchange, and "to distinguish them clearly from one another" (1916/1958, CW 8, 89). The point for Jung is that no one can deny contradictions in the psyche, in the stratified levels and parallel processes of both conscious and unconscious life, nor deny the Other within us the right to exist. Elsewhere Jung states: "there are two distinct and mutually contradictory views eagerly advocated on either side" (1921/1961, CW 6 ¶822, 478). Sometimes opposites are simply held in tension with each other, or in suspension or abeyance, hence allowed a co-existence; or they are transformed through confrontation with each other, which allows for a creative movement out of their suspension that leads to a new inner process or situation where opposites are conjoined and integrated, what Jung equates with "wholeness and freedom" (1916/1958, CW 8, 90). Here we may observe a *simpatico* with Hegel.⁴

This early essay foretells Jung's more mature work on the conundrum and resolution of opposition exemplified in his preoccupation with the coincidence of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*) and their complexity (*complexio oppositorum*); hence giving rise to complementarity, tensions, conflicts, compensation, and their conjunction (*coniunctio oppositorum*); and therefore leading toward their union as balancing activities of the psyche teleologically oriented toward achieving a cultivated and integrated personality. Although we may question the possibility of a synthesis of internal opposition that leads to a greater principle of unity through the sublation of soul, Jung always maintained that the individuation process was a singular journey that was oriented toward greater self-awareness and actualization peculiar to each person, an idiosyncratic process of inner liberation and meaning, never a preordained destination. The only thing that is unavoidable, fated, or inescapable is our encounter with contradiction.

Like the intensities of archetypes, the transcendent function is highly associated with the presence and the transformation of affect, including guilt (Gildersleeve 2016), which produces its own qualities and ideals. As with the numinous (Merker 1996), the transcendent function can be considered a category of values. It is here where the *qualia* of the lived experience find *qualitative* value in emotional, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual transcendence constellated in consciousness *and* archetypal process.

Transcendence as Psychological Process

In a letter written to A. Zarine on May 3, 1939, nearly twenty years before his 1916 paper appears in print, Jung attempts to explain his concept:

[T]he transcendent function ... appears here in the form of an involuntary personal experience. But it can be used as a method too; that is, when the contrary will of the unconscious is sought for and recognized in dreams and other unconscious products. In this way the conscious personality is brought face to face with the counter-position of the unconscious. The resulting conflict—thanks precisely to the transcendent function—leads to a symbol uniting the opposed positions. The symbol cannot be consciously chosen or constructed; it is a sort of intuition or revelation. Hence the transcendent function is only usable in part as a method, the other part always remains an involuntary experience. (1973, *Letters I*, 268)

Note that Jung is specifically negating the notion that a symbol is *chosen*. Contrary to Andrew Samuels (1985) who claims that the transcendent function involves *choice* (59), Jung emphasizes unconscious autonomy, but perhaps an unconscious choice all the same. In this passage Jung is virtually explaining his process of active imagination while confronting the tension of opposites: as (1) *method*, we search for contraries in the form of unconscious will and recognize such counter-positions in our interiority, which results in (2) *conflict* or mutual oppositions within the conscious and unconscious mind. This then leads to a transition manifested as (3) *symbol* that performs the function of (4) *unifying* opposites. We may further break this down as a process where (a) discrete moments of confrontation with internal self-states lead to (b) micro-conflicts between each other that are alleviated by (c) an emerging uniting symbol that (d) blends the opposites into

a tertiary or mesostate as co-existence. Most importantly, for Jung, this is done through surrendering our conscious will to the spontaneous and involuntary forces bubbling within chthonic dynamic relations that end in ego-revelation as symbolic manifestation, hence the transmogrification and appearance of unconscious experience.

Jung continues to emphasize that what the term designates “is really the transition from one condition to another” (1973, *Letters I*, 268). But a mere transition does not mean that an autonomous and spontaneous symbolic production will appear. Transitions in general are transitory states and there is no guarantee that symbolic union or imagistic productions will materialize. What is required is a conscious suspension of will or intent in guiding the process. You must give yourself over to the forces of the depths and assume the phenomenological attitude of bracketing (*epoché*) or deferring a preferred course of action or outcome, which is left in abeyance. You must become a spectator to the interior images and dramas that occur as internal relations develop organically and personifications emerge in complexity and breadth, much like *interpassively* watching a movie unfold in narrative, content, character, and plot. In other words, through your internal engagement, you must wait for the unconscious residue to yield its own images or productions, which may further have desirous, affective, and cognitive overlays to the stream of fantasy relations acting autonomously on the psyche.

Jung further continues to underscore the primacy of allowing a drift of conscious experience as the suspension of deliberate will, intent, construction, or linguistic invention of thought. The fantasies of images and symbols are given over to the abyss that draws on content from its deep interior, whether this be from personal life experience or the spirit of the depths spewing forth from its archaic underground wellspring, hence archetypal expressions from the collective unconscious.

The transcendent function is not something one does oneself; it comes rather from experiencing the conflict of opposites. ... A semiotic representation cannot be transformed into a symbol, because a *semeion* is nothing more than a sign, and its meaning is perfectly well known, whereas a symbol is a psychic image expressing something unknown. In a certain sense the symbol has a life of its own which guides the subject and eases his task; but it cannot be invented or fabricated because the experience of it does not depend on our will. (1973, *Letters I*, 269)

Here, Jung differentiates a *sign*, which has a fixed meaning to a signified object,⁵ from a *symbol* as psychic image, that is, as an imago in the mind’s eye that expresses an unknown quality or value. Here Jung makes imagistic symbols a sort of quasi-agent with their own life: they guide the process and populate independently of our conscious intention or imposed social constructions. In other words, once you suspend control over the method of engagement with your interior, the symbol qua archetype spontaneously manifests and generates its own meaning, which consciousness must then decipher and accept as a production or corollary that guides the communicability between opposites. But unification does not necessarily mean reconciliation: this depends on the degree of opposition that exists between competing forces constituted through dialogue. Opposition may very well end in a stalemate or impasse where no resolution or unification is made possible. Tarrying in the negative is often part of the process until a symbol or complex system of images and interactions emerge from the interchange.

On Active Imagination and the Question of Therapeutic Action

Jung was gifted at visualization and in cultivating his visionary capacities (Stephens 2020). Visions of and dialogues with the dead, as introduced in the *Seven Sermons to the Dead* (*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*), which we now know was originally conceived during his *Red Book* period, serve as a prototype for engaging in active imagination. In various writings Jung intimates his experimentations with active imagination as a summoning of the interior by meditating on an image, mood, affect, or fantasy constellation by divesting the stream of consciousness of intentional productions, directions, and outcomes, and allowing the free imagination to drift into unconscious spacings, which may produce spontaneous images and visions, often in the form of personifications, that Jung would then enter into dialogue with (1936, CW 9i, 49; 1941, CW 9i, 190; Merkur and Mills 2017, 144–159).

As Jung conveys, this process is intimately connected to the transcendent function. Like his bliss visions reported in *MDR*, Jung refers to the transcendent function as “a natural process, a manifestation of the energy that springs from the tension of opposites,” which bears repeating “consists in a series of fantasy-occurrences which appear spontaneously in dreams and visions” (1917/1943, CW 7, ¶121, 80). To what degree was his heightened capacity for such unconscious productions facilitated by his propensity toward dissociation? Yet this surely contributed to his assertion that the dissociability of the psyche was a universal occurrence. To what degree was his facility to slip into active imagination influenced by psychotic proclivities, such as his self-disclosed split personality, what Winnicott attributed to childhood schizophrenia? Was active imagination an attempt at healing such a split, his divided self and contradictory psyche? To what degree was this practice motivated by unconscious guilt, the need to make reparation, or fulfill ideal desires?⁶

Recall that Jung believed such spontaneous unitive symbols communicated “something unknown,” a secret knowledge foreclosed from the ego of rational consciousness. These were more like “intuitions and revelations” of objective entities that persisted in spacetime immemorial. Here the Gnostic pole of Jung’s thinking peeks through. I speculate that in actively adopting these practices, Jung was really after spiritual knowledge. May I suggest that he actually harbored the expectation of receiving deific knowledge through the symbolic manifestations of divine hiddenness (*sensus divinitatis*), as was his own preoccupation with the philosopher’s stone (*lapis philosophorum*) and the *imitatio Christi*.⁷ Here we may infer that Jung engaged in (imaginal) internal conversation with Christ and God.

The assumption is that these productions are not merely the contents from the personal reservoir of experience, but rather this meditative method allows access to a transpersonal netherworld, that of collective humanity through visitations from archetypal figures and communicative symbols, hence access to the supernatural and beyond. At this point, I wish to bracket this assumption for my purposes and stay focused on the question of technique, that is, on the question of therapeutic action aimed at healing or psychological transcendence. In other words, what makes active imagination therapeutic?

I assume that the practice of active imagination has an epistemological entry into the unconscious or it would not excavate therapeutic effects. I further assume that active

imagination serves as a tool or *techne* to induce states of transcendence. I started experimenting with active imagination and directed guided imagery with patients whom I thought could profit from entering into dialogue with their inner self-states and split-off aspects of their personal histories. When the clinician asks the client to experiment with this technique, which is more easily facilitated when there is a positive transference that permeates the working alliance, I cannot help but realize that a certain degree of suggestibility is at play here. In fact, it was Davidson (1966) who emphasized how unconscious dramas played out in active imagination are modes of transference that extend to the analyst. Equally, when the transcendental suggestion is introduced, it must appear authentic and genuinely endorsed by the clinician coming from a place of professional authority for it to be credible, let alone effective. An analyst should never employ active imagination as some rote or gimmicky procedure to follow, but rather tailor it to the unique context of the patient's dynamics, that is, locating an access point the patient identifies with and finds useful.

I find some patients are not particularly good at visualization, especially if their cognitive styles or psychological types are not conducive to producing symbolic imagery. Instead, I have found that focusing on dialogue is more aligned with how thought and narrative operate pre-reflexively and in tandem with sentience, the felt-body, unconscious fantasy, and affective moods. Just as Plato reminds us that thinking is the silent dialogue the soul has with itself, conversing with personifications in the mind may directly relate to how the psyche consolidates its dissociated, split-off, or compartmentalized contents as well as self-states that have been sequestered to the underworld awaiting opportunities to resurface or to be engaged by more preconscious ego organizations. Here I wish to stress how these facets, namely, dialoguing with personifications, which I have experienced and observed, can remarkably provide nearly direct contact with the unconscious.

Let us posit a clinical assumption, which may or may not be true but powerful nonetheless: that whatever figures, objects, or images appear during visualization directives—such as What do you see in your mind?, What appears before you?, and similar questions posed to the patient—are really about their unconscious speaking to them about something psychologically significant and idiosyncratic about *their* psyche. Here I am not emphasizing the collective, but rather the irreducibility of the individual's unconscious subjectivity.

Case Illustration

My client was in her midthirties when she first came to see me and was on disability leave after being punched in the face at work. The assault excavated her complex traumatic past she had staved off for years, including being emotionally abused and abandoned psychologically by her parents after they divorced, being physically assaulted by her mother on a few occasions during childhood, and left with the loitering aftermath of feeling unloved and unlovable. I have seen her on and off for sixteen years.

Terri reported being primarily raised by a borderline mother who herself was abandoned by her parents at the age of two and sent to live with extended family, but was sent back home

for reportedly being “bad.” Born in a fundamentalist Christian environment, my patient’s mother came to hate her own mother but identified with her father’s rage. In a repetitive pattern, Terri was sent to live with her maternal grandparents after her parents separated when she was five. There she was taught to fear the “devil.” Despite her own mother’s rebellion against religion, Terri could not escape her harsh superego judgments and the instillation of rigid codes of conduct. Terri reported no clear early memories, only screen fragments and gaps with no lucid narratives. She had no memories of her parents being together. When she returned to her mother’s home, she was told that her father didn’t love her: “Because of you I am alone,” her mother repeated often. This damaged her spirit. Sadness lingered; she had no happy recollections from childhood.

Terri masturbated openly from the age of five and would often be told to go to her room or was reproached. She fears she was molested, but doesn’t know nor can she remember. She got into drugs, became promiscuous as a teenager, and had four abortions between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. This left a great deal of unconscious guilt and need for punishment, although she has compensated by going into a helping profession. She does not enjoy sex with her husband, and much of their domestic life revolves around the children so she can avoid it.

My patient believed in Satan and the spirit world, which scared her at night. She slept with a nightlight on and avoided opening closets or looking down hallways when going to the bathroom out of fear there would be an evil presence. Her teen abortions made her afraid she had offended God. When asked, “Who is the most evil in your family?” she replied, “My mother.” Suggesting more conventional psychoanalytic interpretations—such as the devil is a displacement as substitution for her mother, and that her mother is her internal devil, the internalized judge who had always rejected and blamed her through guilt inducement, accompanied by her own disowned aspects of shadow projections and deposits of early conditioning—did little to assuage her anxiety.

I then began transitioning the work by asking her to initiate dialogues with personifications she conjured up in her dreams, daydreams, memories, emotions, and fantasies, both by herself and when in session. Although she could produce images and visualizations, she was more facile in the use of inner dialogue with her immediate feelings and self-states. After teaching her via my examples to facilitate conversation by formulating open-ended, nonjudgmental questions, she began to carry on this work independently while alone.

Because I worked using the analytic couch with Terri in the early years when she was in prolonged treatment, I began introducing active imagination during her free associations after inviting her to return to the couch. As a side note, I find that active imaginary engagement with material when the patient does not have the distractions associated with facial recognition of the analyst to be most helpful, as we both can focus on the associations rather than on the social cues and unconscious obligations that inform the interpersonal encounter, which can encumber, if not interfere, with the process. In other words, I find the technical use of the couch to be more effective in employing active imagination.

My patient was generally a nervous and dysphoric person who worried and obsessed over little details with a free-floating sense of anxiety that manifested as somatic symptoms, such as

feeling a constant knot in her stomach (locus of abortions). Overtime, dialoguing with her inner self-states, physical feelings in her body, and with the “evil entity” in her house had gradually led to symptom improvement, less anxiety, and less bodily reactions in her “gut.” She had virtually stopped her evening rituals, such as keeping her bathroom light on at night, looking in the closets before bed, and praying to keep the “devil” away. She realized the more she talked to the images and affects in her mind the less she felt the need to avoid thinking about negative or frightening events, memories, or fantasies that generally made her anxious and unsafe.

As her inner dialoguing continued, she was able to carry this activity over into her dreamlife. For example, she reported the following dream after she had to confront an injustice she experienced at work that involved a child being placed in foster care due to parental abuse:

Patient: I was on this precipice, like the edge of a dam, but there was an abyss below. I didn't want to look. I had to hurry to get over the surface, but it was too skinny. Then three figures appear, blocking the way. They won't move. I am afraid of looking; I could lose my balance. Then I woke up.

Therapist: Who are the three figures?

Patient: I don't know, I can't see their face.

Therapist: What do you think they represent? [*silence ensues*] Ask them. What three things come to mind?

Patient: Anger, and my parents. Oh, they're obstacles to my safety. [*silence ensues*]

Therapist: Ask anger, “What do you want from me?”

Patient: *In an emotional voice she says*

Release.

Then begins to sob.

Regardless of the overdetermination of dreams, or whether you classify this technique as guided imagery or persuasion, Terri came to interpret this dream as a message from her unconscious that she should no longer run away from her rage, and that she needed to face her own demons that were preventing her from living her life. She was afraid of looking down into her own abyss because she neither wanted to see or know what was down there, nor be swept off into her own unconscious chasm.

After some months of initiating her own active imaginations when alone, Terri told me that her attempt to converse with personifications, images, or feelings allowed her sometimes to let them go, or to simply let them be, and this process let her feel less terrified and safer. In a particularly poignant and moving session, the patient started to free associate to recollections of her early childhood after having “deliberately pooped” on her parent's carpet. Her mother was so enraged that she put Terri in a car and drove out to a farm in the country and told her to “get out.” “If you want to act like a cow, then you can live like one,” she said, before driving off. As Terri revisited this event, she started to identify a “bad” feeling developing in the pit of her stomach. She recalled the chaotic household she grew up in marked by her mother “yelling all the time,” engendering fear that she was always on the verge of “going to get in trouble.”

Then an image of herself as a little girl entered her consciousness and she saw herself sitting in a room on the floor playing alone, but looking away. She called herself “little bad girl.” After some time of silence had passed, I said:

Therapist: Little bad girl wants you to play with her. Why don't you talk to her?

Patient: Oh.

After some time had passed, she says

You ask her a question.

Therapist: What would you like little one?

Patient: *In a languid voice she moans*

Love.

then starts crying

Therapist: Then find a way to show her love.

Patient: *In a regressive, almost baby voice, Terri then says*

You're not bad. You only feel that way because your mother put bad feelings in you. Let me give you a hug.

Then she starts to sob.

After sitting with her child self in her mind, holding her, rocking her in her arms, reassuring her that she was good and that she loved her, the bad feelings lifted and the knot in her stomach went away.

Months later, looking back at our work together, Terri said how this particular session had special significance for her because she felt she was able to heal a part of her wounded self. Admittedly, the active imagination captured here relies on the use of suggestibility by the analyst, but it is the qualitative factor of the lived experience that ultimately counts, as the *qualia* of transcendence have their transformative power in a numinous engagement with fantasy, image, and affect. This example of the transcendent function at play has both therapeutic benefits of healing as well as generating symbolic value by inducing emotional shifts in internal representations and fixated self-states that compensate for unconscious one-sidedness. By generating a third or tertiary movement in dialectical engagement with her damaged inner child, the patient was able to nurture herself in a maternal manner that her mother was unable to give, hence offering a compensatory self-relation of love and acceptance she found meaningful and gratifying. Although this pithy example does not do full justice to the technique or adequately explain therapeutic action, its applied form does engender value for some patients who benefit from this mode of engagement with their interior.

Coda

In exploring the notion of transcendence in Jung's writings, both theoretically and therapeutically, I discern three dominant modes of reference: (1) *ontological*, that which deals with the structure, forms, and mechanisms or process of individual and collective existence in contemplating the real; (2) *epistemological*, that which we are

reasonably aware of and know, as well as semiotic uncertainty, mystery, suspension of belief, and that which is unknown; and (3) *phenomenological*, that which appears and what we qualitatively perceive, feel, and experience. When transcendence involves contemplating or experiencing the numinous, I differentiate three additional subsets of lived experience: (a) *ethical*, (b) *aesthetic*, and (c) *spiritual*, each standing in ontic and epistemic relation to *feeling* and *desire*, the *qualia* of mind. This is a developmental achievement of refined dialectical movements, mediations, and integrations, such as the liberating process of individuation leaning toward wholeness as the organic reintegration, progression, and acclivity of psyche.

In conclusion, the process or pursuit of transcendence may serve as an axiological *ideal*, perhaps even a paradigmatic exemplar or symbol of highest value where opposition is bridged, subsumed, and transformed in actuality. At the very least, when the transcendent function is successful, it may serve as a quasi-psychological solution to the mutually conflicting existence of opposites seeking dominance, neutralization, or reprieve. But I also distinguish a transference to Jungian theory that transcendence emotionally represents to the desirous experiential subject. Ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions to transcendence seduce us into adopting an ideal transference to the concept itself: when we broach an ideal state of affairs, if not a divine ontology, transcendence transcends itself. Our idealized transference to the transcendent function as a process for achieving transcendence, not to mention the ideal objects and/or results that lie behind the purpose or function in itself, is in the service of attaining a state of ideality. The Good, True, and Beautiful become the ideal objects that stand before our being in relation to *lack*, whereby the process of pursuing the idealized objects of ideality, even in fantasy, confers a certain qualitative relation on what transcendence signifies, or we would never have the need to desire it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. Paul Attinello who provided me passages in German from Jung's *Gesammelte Werke* so I could compare the German and English translations.

ENDNOTES

1. Jung (1961/1963) writes: "The images were so tremendous that I found myself concluded that I was close to death. My nurse afterward told me, 'It was as if you were surrounded by a bright glow.' That was a phenomenon she had sometimes observed in the dying, she added" (289).
2. *Übersinnliche* may also be translated as supersensory, supernatural, or paranormal.
3. Recall, for Jung, he was horribly ostracized from the psychoanalytic community, vilified and slandered by Freud's inner circle, and suffered a series of sustained rumors that he was schizophrenic, which was later infamously reinforced by Winnicott (1964/1992) in his review of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (see also Saban 2016, for a review). Given that Jung was concerned at times that he might be going mad, what he candidly confessed in his interview to Eliade (Jung 1952, 232–234), and what Leavy (1964, 571) diagnosed as "prepsychotic" following his break with Freud after the Munich Congress of 1913, we must not underestimate the toll of his suffering. Jung (1961/1963, 162) reports his excommunication cost him friends, acquaintances, students, and patients whom he had lost as a result. I argue that after his rejection from Freud and his followers, due to his own childhood traumas—particularly his reported sexual abuse by a clergyman (McGuire 1974, 95); his

tendency toward childhood solitude, if not schizoid withdrawal (1961/1963, *MDR* 42); social isolation (18); retreat into fantasy (Jaffé 1979, 14–18); and tenuous attachment to his parents, which are more than suggestive in *MDR*—Jung may be said to have undergone a psychotic depression. This speculation is further evinced by his psychological attraction to enter into the profession of psychiatry specializing in psychosis, his interest in the occult and the alchemical *Sol niger*, the spontaneous visions he reported and spoke of among intimates, and the private recordings of his active imagination experiments revealed generations later in *The Red Book*. Such revelations also included pedophilic and necrophilous ritual, which is likely due to the traumatic aftereffects of his childhood sexual abuse (see also Burston 2021, 57–59). Interestingly enough, Jung further attributes the process of the transcendent function to be operative in the initial stages of schizophrenia (see 1917/1943, CW 7, 80).

4. Both Jung and Hegel have their own unique theory of dialectics: one psychological, the other ontological. Whereas Jung focuses on the tension of opposites, compensatory one-sidedness, and achieving balance within the psyche, Hegel (1807) traces the ontological structure and developmental process of Spirit (*Geist*) on its ascendance toward actualizing a grand synthesis of soul, nature, and consciousness, having its culmination in the social-ethical life of humanity. Both Jung and Hegel posit an Objective Psyche or Spirit, each emanating from an unconscious ground or origin: for Jung, a collective unconscious; for Hegel (1812/1831, 1817/1827/1830), an eternal Logos (Λόγος), the logic of the interior as pure thought thinking about itself and its operations as a process of becoming through negation. Jung's dialectic has no determinate agenda, whereas Hegel's is oriented toward a path of sublation (*Aufhebung*) as higher phases of spirit negate, subsume, and interiorize, yet surpass or transcend, their previous shapes in cultivating forms of unification in the psychological life of individuals and social collectives (see also Mills 2002, for a discussion). Yet each dialectic has a teleological function and can be characterized through the labor of forging a self-articulated complex totality or holism as a dynamic process of becoming. Both systems also allow for regression, psychopathology, and failed attempts at achieving individuation and wholeness.
5. Note that the poststructuralist position would not claim that a sign has a fixed meaning; rather a semiotic may contain an infinite deferral of signifiers in a chain of meaning relations to the point that the origin of signification and meaning are occluded if not wholly unknown and fluid. Furthermore, a symbol is a higher manifestation of semiotic relations that blend the imaginary, hence the sensuous world of perception and concept formation, within the image or symbol itself (see Mills 2010, for a review).
6. In discussing the imitation of Christ, Jung takes it “as the duty to realize one's deepest conviction with the same courage and the same self-sacrifice shown by Jesus” (1929, CW 13, ¶81, 53).
7. Recall Jung's space dream where he was brought back to earth and to consciousness from his ecstasy only to feel he was robbed of acquiring divine knowledge and “not to be allowed to enter the temple, to join the people in whose company I belonged” (1961/1963, *MDR*, p. 292).

NOTE

References to *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* are cited in the text as CW, volume number, and paragraph or page number. *The Collected Works* are published in English by Routledge (UK) and Princeton University Press (USA).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amundson, Garth. 2019. “Jung's *Answer to Job*: Toward a ‘sensible’ Mysticism.” In *Jung and Philosophy*, edited by Jon Mills, 155–185. London: Routledge.
- Brooke, Roger. 2015. *Jung and Phenomenology: Classic Edition*. London: Routledge.

- Brooks, Robin McCoy. 2011. "Un-thought out Metaphysics in Analytical Psychology: A Critique of Jung's Epistemological Basis for Psychic Reality." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 56, no. 4: 492–513.
- Burston, Daniel. 2021. *Anti-Semitism and Analytical Psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Davidson, Dorothy. 1966. "Transference as a Form of Active Imagination." In *Technique in Jungian Analysis*, edited by Michael Fordham, Rosemary Gordon, Judith Hubback, and Kenneth Lambert, 188–199. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Dehing, Jef. 1993. "The Transcendent Function: A Critical Re-Evaluation." In *The Transcendent Function: Individual and Collective Aspects*, edited by Mary Ann Mattoon, 15–30. Switzerland: Daimon Verlag.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1949. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fichte, Johann G. (1794). *The Science of Knowledge*. Translated and edited by Peter Heath and John Lachs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1927. *The Future of an Illusion. Standard Edition*, Vol. 21, 3–56. London: Hogarth Press.
- Gaston, Sean. 2013. *The Concept of World from Kant to Derrida*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gildersleeve, Matthew. 2016. "Jung's Transcendent Function as Nietzsche's Will to Power and Eternal Recurrence of the Same." *Agathos* 7, no. 1: 48–71.
- Goodwyn, Erik. 2016. *Healing Symbols in Psychotherapy*. London: Routledge.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1807). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . 1812/1831. *Science of Logic*. Translated by A. V. Miller. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969.
- . 1817/1827/1830. *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, Vol. 1. *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 1991.
- Henderson, David. 2014. *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.
- Jaffé, Aniela, ed. 1979. *C.G. Jung: Word and Image*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Joseph, Steven M. 1997. "Presence and Absence through the Mirror of Transference: A Model of the Transcendent Function." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 42, no. 1: 139–156.
- Jung, C. G. 1912/1967. *Symbols of Transformation*. CW 5.
- . 1916/1958. "The Transcendent Function." *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8, 1969.
- . 1917/1943. "The Synthetic or Constructive Method." In *On the Psychology of the Unconscious. Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*. CW 7.
- . 1921/1971. *Psychological Types*. CW 6.
- . 1929. "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower.'" *Alchemical Studies*. CW 13.
- . 1931. "Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology." *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8.
- . 1935. "Foreword to von Koenig-Fachsenfeld: 'Wandlungen des Traumproblems von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart.'" *The Symbolic Life*. CW 18.
- . 1936. "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. CW 9i.
- . 1937. *Psychology and Religion: West and East*. CW 11.
- . 1941. "The Psychological Aspects of the Kore." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. CW 9i.
- . 1947. "On the Nature of the Psyche." *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8.
- . 1948. "On Psychic Energy." *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8.
- . 1948. "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. CW 9i.
- . 1950. "Concerning Rebirth." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. CW 9i.

- . 1952. “Eliade’s Interview for ‘Combat.’” In *C. G. Jung Speaking: Encounters and Interviews*, edited by William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull, 225–234. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- . 1952. *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle. The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8.
- . 1954. “Letter to Père Lachat.” *The Symbolic Life*. CW 18.
- . 1958. “A Psychological View of Conscience.” *Civilization in Transition*. CW 10.
- . 1961/1963. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Vintage.
- . 1973. *C. G. Jung Letters, Vol. I: 1906–1950*. Edited by Gerhard Adler and Aniele Jaffé. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1975. *C. G. Jung Letters, Vol. II: 1951–1961*. Edited by Gerhard Adler and Aniele Jaffé. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 1977. *C. G. Jung Speaking: Encounters and Interviews*. Edited by William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kelly, Sean. 1993. *Individuation and the Absolute*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Leavy, Stanley A. 1964. “A Footnote to Jung’s ‘Memories.’” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 33, no. 4: 567–574.
- Marlan, Stanton. 2021. *C. G. Jung and the Alchemical Imagination*. London: Routledge.
- Mattoon, Mary Ann, ed. 1993. *The Transcendent Function: Individual and Collective Aspects*. Switzerland: Daimon Verlag.
- McGuire, William, ed. 1974. *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*. Translated by Ralph Manheim & R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McMillan, Christian, Roderick Main, and David Henderson, eds. 2020. *Holism: Possibilities and Problems*. London: Routledge.
- Merkur, Dan. 1996. “The Numinous as a Category of Values.” In *The Sacred and Its Scholars*, edited by Thomas A. Idinopulos and Edward A. Yunan, 104–123. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Merkur, Dan, and Jon Mills. 2017. *Jung’s Ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, Jeffrey C. 2004. *The Transcendent Function*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Mills, Jon. 2002. *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel’s Anticipation of Psychoanalysis*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- . 2010. *Origins: On the Genesis of Psychic Reality*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- . 2013. “Jung’s Metaphysics.” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 5, no. 1: 19–43.
- . 2014. “Jung as Philosopher: Archetypes, the Psychoid Factor, and the Question of the Supernatural.” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 6, no. 3: 227–242.
- . 2017. *Inventing God: Psychology of Belief and the Rise of Secular Spirituality*. London: Routledge.
- . 2018. “The Essence of Archetypes.” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 10, no. 3: 199–220.
- . 2019a. “The Myth of the Collective Unconscious.” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 55, no. 1: 40–53.
- . 2019b. “Psyche as Inner Contradiction.” *Continental Thought & Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 2, no. 4: 71–82.
- . 2021. “Archetypal Metaphysics and the Psyworld.” *International Journal of Jungian Studies* 13, no. 2: 130–149. [10.1163/19409060-bja10007](https://doi.org/10.1163/19409060-bja10007).
- . 2022. “Archetype, Psyche, World: From Experience to Cosmopsychism.” *International Journal of Jungian Studies*, 15, no. 1: 1–20. Online first: doi:[10.1163/19409060-bja10024](https://doi.org/10.1163/19409060-bja10024).
- Otto, Rudolf. 1917/1950. *The Idea of the Holy*, 2nd Ed. London: Oxford University Press.
- Saban, Mark. 2016. “Jung, Winnicott and the Divided Psyche.” *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 61, no. 3: 329–349.
- Samuels, Andrew. 1985. *Jung and the Post-Jungians*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Stephens, Stephani L. 2020. *C. G. Jung and the Dead*. London: Routledge.
- Ulanov, Ann. 1996. *The Functioning Transcendent*. Wilmette, IL: Chiron.
- White, John. 2019. “Jung, the Numinous, and the Philosophers: On Immanence and Transcendence in Religious Experience.” In *Jung and Philosophy*, edited by Jon Mills, 186–203. London: Routledge.
- Winnicott, Donald W. 1964/1992. Review of Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. In *Carl Gustav Jung: Critical Assessments*. London: Routledge.

JON MILLS, PsyD, PhD, ABPP, is a Canadian philosopher, psychoanalyst, and clinical psychologist. He is honorary professor in the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Essex, UK, on the faculty in the Postgraduate Programs in Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy at the Gordon F. Derner School of Psychology, Adelphi University, US, and a supervising analyst at the New School for Existential Psychoanalysis, US. Recipient of numerous awards for his scholarship, including five Gradiva Awards, he is the author or editor of over thirty books in psychoanalysis, philosophy, psychology, and cultural studies, including most recently *Archetypal Ontology: New Directions in Analytical Psychology* (Routledge, 2023). In 2015 he was given the Otto Weininger Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement by the Canadian Psychological Association. *Correspondence:* psychologist@sympatico.ca.

ORCID

Jon Mills  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3673-0884>

ABSTRACT

Throughout this essay the author analyzes the concept of transcendence in Jung's theoretical corpus with a focus on its philosophical parameters and therapeutic efficacy in promoting a category of value. Although Jung did not precisely define the terms *transcendence*, *transcendent*, and *transcendental*, it is necessary to tease out these features in order to illuminate the varieties of transcendence in Jung's thought. Distinctions are made between the ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological dimensions of transcendence, including the structure, method, form, and process of mediating, transitioning, and transforming inner experience. Jung's notion of the dialectic operative within the transcendent function is specifically critiqued. Here the author explores the possibility of a synthesis of internal opposition that leads to a greater principle of unity through the sublation of psyche. He further examines the transcendent function in the process of active imagination by drawing on patient material derived through associations in the analysis of the transference.

KEY WORDS

active imagination, *coincidentia oppositorum*, dialectics, numinous, *qualia*, synchronicity, therapeutic action, transcendent function, transcendental, transference