

versity of Kentucky Press, 1954), and W. K. Wimsatt and C. Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).

5. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 122.

6. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 224-225.

7. Jacques Lacan, "Le symbolique, l'imaginaire et le réel" (Paper delivered at the Conference of the French Society of Psychoanalysis, July 1953).

8. See Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, trans. and notes by Anthony Wilden (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968); *Écrit*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

9. Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1973).

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Gay Science," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. W. Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 97.

11. See Paul Kugler, *The Alchemy of Discourse: An Archetypal Approach to Language* (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1982).

12. See Paul De Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Jacques Derrida, *De La Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967); Paul Kugler, "Jacques Lacan and the Birth of the Post-Modern Self-Reflexive Subject," in *The Book of the Self: Person, Pretext, and Process*, ed. P. Young-Eisen-drath and J. Hall (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

Jung and the Postmodern Condition

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Jung and the *postmodern* condition? This seems at first glance a most unlikely and unpromising topic—especially if one focuses, as I propose to do, on his conception of images. For when it comes to his treatment of images, Jung appears to be altogether *premodern*. This is above all evident in his frequent recourse to medieval and Greek terminology. In several places, he speaks of image or fantasy as *esse in anima* or being-in-the-soul. In a letter of January 1929, he writes: "I am indeed convinced that creative imagination is the only primordial phenomenon accessible to us, the real Ground of the psyche, the only immediate reality. Therefore I speak of *esse in anima*, the only form of being we can experience directly."¹

When Jung says in *Psychological Types* that "between *intellectus* and *res* there is still *anima*, and this *esse in anima* makes the whole ontological argument superfluous" (*CW* 6: par. 66, p. 45), he invokes not only medieval nomenclature but a privileged form of medieval reasoning as well: as in the case of God, the existence of the soul (and thus of the images that proceed from soul) is contained in its very essence, its being. As if to clinch this point by a still further reversion, this time to the pre-premodern Greek world, Jung asserts in a letter of December 1949, that "I firmly believe . . . that psyche is an *ousia* [substance, essence]."² Since it is a root premise of Jung's that "psyche is image" (*CW* 13: par. 75, p. 50)—soul is not only expressed in images but *exists* in them—it follows ineluctably that images are also substances: psychic substances, possessing a "psychic reality" whose recognition, adds Jung, is "the most important achievement of modern psychology" (*CW* 8: par. 683, p. 354). From this last statement it would seem that "modern psychology" is limited to rediscovering what the Greek and medieval thinkers already knew and had better described.

There are other ways as well in which Jung presents himself as premodern—quite apart from his constant recourse to the "archaic" factor in human beings, their phylogenetic heritage. His railing against language, for example, would seem to dissociate him from the extreme

sensitivity to the “linguisticity” that Gadamer, along with the French structuralists, has argued is indispensable to grasping what is distinctively human. “Our civilization,” proclaims Jung, “is largely founded on a superstitious belief in words. . . . Words can take the place of men and things” (*CW* 18: par. 1428, p. 625). And of images: vis-à-vis images “the mere use of words is futile” (*CW* 18: par. 590, p. 257). To this we are inclined to respond: Yes, but. . . . And before we have answered, Jung will have intervened to add a crucial qualification: it is not a matter of separating off *all* words from images but precisely those that he calls “nebulous power-words.” What kind of words are these? They are *metaphysical* words, as Jung goes on to specify: “I quite deliberately bring everything that purports to be metaphysical into the daylight of psychological understanding, and do my best to prevent people from believing in nebulous power-words” (*CW* 13: par. 73, p. 49).

With this last pronouncement, we are suddenly in a quite different language game. If Jung’s suspicion of language vis-à-vis images is a suspicion of specifically metaphysical language, he is in league with Heidegger and Derrida in their assiduous efforts to deconstruct metaphysics—and this means the language of metaphysics—from the ground up. This is a very characteristic postmodern enterprise, and it goes hand in hand with a turn to phenomenology as the most meaningful alternative to metaphysics. Just as Heidegger and Derrida take inspiration from phenomenology in their common critique of metaphysics, so Jung is able to write that “Psychology cannot establish any metaphysical ‘truths,’ nor does it try to. It is concerned solely with the phenomenology of the psyche” (*CW* 18: par. 742, p. 309).³

Jung also concurs with the postmodernist philosophers’ rejection of the totalizing tendency of metaphysics, especially insofar as this tendency is applied to the psyche: “the phenomenology of the psyche is so colorful, so variegated in form and meaning, that we cannot possibly reflect all its riches in *one* mirror. Nor in our description of it can we embrace the whole, but [we] must be content to shed light only on single parts of the total phenomenon” (*CW* 15: “Psychology and Literature,” Introduction, p. 85).

Still more important for our purposes, this recourse to the polyformity of phenomenology in flight from the monism of metaphysics—a move that Jung shares with such other twentieth-century thinkers as Husserl, Cassirer, and Wittgenstein (all of whom also describe their philosophical work as “phenomenological”)—has direct implications for understanding images. Jung remarks in a letter of September 1935 that “body is as metaphysical as spirit” and that “psychic experience is the only immediate experience.”⁴ If so, then the only ad-

equat approach to images—which provide the primary content of “psychic experience”—will be phenomenology, which is designed precisely to describe “immediate experience” in detail. Indeed, Jung goes so far as to say that, strictly speaking, there can be “only phenomenology” in psychology today (*CW* 18: par. 1738, p. 774). This is to say that there can be only a phenomenology of images in a genuinely psychological investigation. And this is just what we should expect to be the case if psyche is in fact image.

Why then, you will ask, does Jung persist in employing the heavily metaphysical language of “*ousia*” and “*esse in anima*” in designating images if he is so much in step with phenomenological thinkers of this century? Is he being deliberately perverse? I do not think so. Like Heidegger (who continued to use such terms as “Being” and “essence”), Jung is making an adroit maneuver that, in focusing our attention on conspicuously premodern language, forces us to draw a crucial distinction between modern and postmodern conceptions of the image. In the explicitly *modern*, post-Cartesian view, the image is a mere “copy of an impression,” as Hume put it, or in Jung’s own phrase, “the psychic reflection of an external object” (*CW* 6: par. 743, p. 442). It is just this reductive approach that prevailed in Western philosophy and psychology from the seventeenth until the late nineteenth centuries—and that cannot possibly do justice to Jung’s axiom that “the psyche consists essentially of images” (*CW* 8: par. 618, p. 325). Not only does the modernist conception make the image utterly subordinate to that of which it is an image—whether a sensory impression or an external object that gives rise to this impression—but it also converts the truly psychic image into a sign instead of acknowledging its symbolic status. To return to a premodern conception of images as essences, beings, or substances is thus to be reminded of the autonomy of the psyche that such images display in their symbolic power—just as this same autonomy is underlined in Jung’s apparently equally regressive attempt to link image and instinct. Both moves, one expressly philosophical and the other inherently biological, serve the same basic purpose of contesting the modernist interpretation of images as bare copies or signs of that which they represent in and to the mind—a mind that is without soul, since it has become the mere container of icons deriving from external sense experience.

But if we are to grasp Jung’s final dismissal of modernism in this manner, what of *postmodernism*? It is one thing to suggest that earlier, premodern (as well as archaic) thought is more appreciative of the density and richness of imagistic life—its “polyformity” as I have called it—but it is another matter to bring this appreciation into line with contemporary, postmodern thinking. We have already discovered one

way in which Jung manages nonetheless to accomplish such an alignment with postmodernism. This is through his spontaneous recourse to the phenomenology of the image. Another aspect of this phenomenological turn lies in his insistence that we must proceed in psychology from the outside in—and not from the inside out, as the Romantic poets and philosophers, rebelling against the Cartesians and empiricists, tried to do. He writes in 1921 that in psychology it is best “to proceed from outside inwards, from the known to the unknown, from the body to the psyche. . . . [T]here are any number of paths leading from outside inwards, from the physical to the psychic, and it is necessary that research should follow this direction until the elementary psychic facts are established with sufficient certainty” (CW 6: par. 917, p. 525). We are reminded here of Husserl’s shibboleth for the phenomenological method: “To the Things Themselves!”—not to mention Heidegger’s claim that human beings possess an essential being “outside” themselves.⁵ And we are put in mind as well of Lévi-Strauss’s idea that the elementary structures of kinship exist outside—independently of voluntary actions of—the members of a given social grouping: their objectivity is as “impersonal” (in Jung’s term) as primordial images themselves. The structures of structuralism and the images of analytical psychology alike precede and prestructure the human persons who exist in their ambience and by their means. The “outside” of such structures and such images is a very different outside from that which figures into the early modern notion of sensory experience and its imitation in iconic signs. It belongs to a world or cosmos that is the source of symbols, just as it is the origin of the psyche itself—indeed, of the “objective psyche” as Jung came to call it.

To think in this postmodernist direction is not to eliminate the significance of the humanistic subject and its nucleus, the ego. Jung even declares that “the [objective] psyche is the greatest of all cosmic wonders and *sine qua non* of the world as an object” (CW 8: par. 357, p. 169), and that “the psyche is the world’s pivot: not only is it the one great condition for the existence of a world at all, it is also an intervention in the existing natural order, and no one can say with certainty where this intervention will finally end” (CW 8: par. 423, p. 217). To say this is not to return to a Romantic inflation of self; it is to remain resolutely postmodernist—but now with a final twist. The twist, familiar to Jungians, is that the objective psyche is at the same time a collective psyche, at once prepersonal and pluripersonal (or more exactly, omnipersonal). What is perhaps less familiar is that the operative premise of structural linguistics—a premise to which not only Lévi-Strauss but Jakobson, Barthes, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida also subscribe—is equally collective in character. In Saussure’s inaugural think-

ing on this matter, formulated in the very years in which Jung was first thinking his own way to analytical psychology, the “speaking mass” (*la masse parlante*) is determinative for language (*la langue*) in its essential form. Language is no more a matter of an individual speech act (*la parole*) than primordial images are affairs of the isolated ego. Each proceeds from a level of the psyche that is profoundly impersonal: “collective” in Jung’s preferred term, “institutionalized” in Saussure’s answering notion. In this way, image and word come together in the end after all—despite Jung’s sometimes heroic efforts to hold them apart. But they come together at a level of human being that has been given full recognition only in postmodernist thought. Jung and Saussure are not alone in their insistence on the collective basis of image and word that earlier modernists failed to acknowledge. They are joined by thinkers as diverse as Lévy-Bruhl and Chomsky, both of whom also assert the transpersonal foundation of imagination and language, whether in the guise of collective representations or universally shared rules of generative grammar. What matters, however, is not the history of the trend, or who in particular belongs to it. What matters is the vision it embodies. This is a vision that gives back to images, as it gives back to words, a grounding in the spontaneous action of the psyche, which *is* image as it *is* word, and, in being both at once, transcends the egological confines—in sign and copy—of the modernist conception of the human self, a conception that renders the self incapable of the symbolic activity of the psyche in its cosmic and collective dimensions.

Notes

1. Jung to Kurt Plachte, January 10, 1929, C. G. Jung, *Letters, Vol. 1: 1906-1950*, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 60.
2. Jung to Father Victor White, December 31, 1949, *ibid.*, p. 540.
3. Cf. also CW 18: par. 1738, p. 774; and CW 15: “Psychology and Literature,” Introduction, p. 85.