

# Carl Gustav Jung, founding father of psychology

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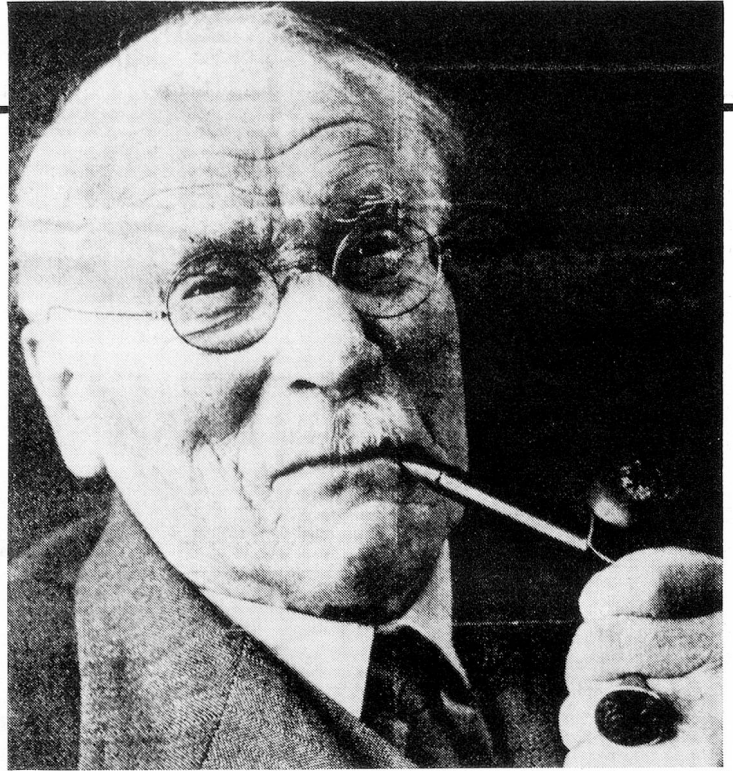
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# Carl Gustav Jung, founding father of psychology



AS ONE of the founding fathers of modern psychology Jung is undoubtedly the most prominent one of worldwide acclaim to the present day. His collected work in 20 volumes was reprinted in London in 1981 by Routledge and Kegan Paul, 20 years after his death.

He was a most controversial scientist, first on account of his association with Sigmund Freud and his school of psychoanalysis, then even more through breaking away from Freud and founding his own school of analytical psychology. His research into the field of religion mobilised the theologians, Protestants and Catholics alike.

His "ecumenical approach" to the world religions was difficult to digest, and to the end of his life he suffered under the misunderstanding to which he and his work was exposed. In a correspondence with the prioress of a Carmelite convent in England he mentioned this and expressed his appreciation that Father Victor White, a Dominican theologian of Oxford, did not fully disapprove of his work.

The Dominican, being shown this letter, was amused and remarked: "If only he knew half the trouble I have had and am having

for approving most of it, even if I don't agree with some of his views! And his work wouldn't have much future if everybody did."

This was two years before he died, and shows how hotly his work was still discussed as well as how dangerous it was for a theologian to be involved with him. It will still be some time until his prophetic message is fully

**By Fr Paul Bossard**

digested and accepted.

Born on July 26, 1875 in Kesswil on the Swiss side of the lake of Constance Jung was the son of a clergyman and philologist. He went to school in Basle and studied medicine at the university. His interest was in psychology - what went on in the human mind. To understand that was his obsession which never left him until he died in Küsnacht (Zch) on June 6, 1961.

After his studies in Paris he met Sigmund Freud (1907) and was enthusiastic about his new approach to mental illness. Though it caused him great difficulties and endangered his

career, he became one of the foremost disciples of Freud for nearly six years until it became clear to him that his perspective was far too narrow to provide an appropriate understanding of how the human mind really worked, why it became ill and how mental illness could be cured.

That a worldwide phenomenon like religion was simply a neurosis or a mental illness to be

where, he found the same pattern.

What Freud called "libido" and defined as psychic energy of the sexual drive was only one manifestation, an important one, in the entire interplay and intensity of the psychic process. The conscious interacts with the unconscious and vice versa, the extrovert tendencies with the introvert, the will to live with the will to die.

The unconscious was made up not only of individual memories of the past but included an entire structure inherited over generations. In the dreams of many people, patients and non-patients alike, who underwent analysis he discovered an ever recurring pattern of symbols. He found this pattern in magic rituals, in religious ceremonies all over the world, in the great mythologies of the different cultures, in gnostic and alchemistic visions and in the sacred scriptures of ancient wisdom in China, India and the Middle East, in Egypt, Greece, Europe and America.

He discovered the important role that religion has played and still plays in human life, growth and health and how its aberrations and its neglect caused illness, mental unrest and break-

cured, and that the sexual drive, a simple biological fact, was the source of mental and psychic energy did not make sense and contradicted the evidence Jung had collected in his medical and psychological practice.

He was greatly disturbed that Freud could not see this and parted from him in 1913, but he always kept his high regard for his old master, though he disagreed with many of his conclusions.

Jung travelled widely. He carried out field studies in North and East Africa, in Mexico and among the Indians of Arizona, just to find out how the mind of simple people worked. Every-

downs and great catastrophies like the Nazi neurosis of "blood and race" in the second world war.

Jung's scientific study of the human mind and the analysis of religion worried the churches and the theologians who feared that he would analyse religion and Christian faith out of existence. He did the opposite, and was convinced that he rendered a great service to the churches in making their teaching intelligible and by showing in a scientific way the truth of their great concern.

He showed that the "image of God" was of tantamount importance and was a very alive and active energy, shaping the lives of people.

Neglected or repressed it will exercise a very negative effect on the consciousness of the individual and of society, cultivate selfishness and egoistic desires and unleash brutal force, violence, anarchy and war.

He pointed out in scientific terms, based on careful observation, that the absence of religion was the main root of psychic illness. It is true that he never said which religion, but he could not say it as a scientist.

In a letter to a friend in 1944, he wrote: "... I pursue science, not apologetics or philosophy. I have neither the competence nor the inclination to found a religion ... My writings speak for them-

selves and show that I keep well below the heights of each and every religious system for I allow myself to go only so far as observable psychological data permit me ...

"Only facts concern me. Scientifically-minded people of today are saying, 'Let us get the facts, for about these we can all be agreed; opinions, which become inflated into absolute truths, are sources of unending strife' ...

"It passes unnoticed that I am collecting a corpus of material for tomorrow which will be sorely needed if Europeans of the future are to be convinced of anything at all ...

"Has it not been noticed that I do not write for church circles but for those who stand outside? I associate myself, on purpose and of free will, with those who are outside the church ...

"I know little about church teaching, but this little is enough to make that teaching unforgettable to me and I know so much of Protestantism that I could never abandon it ..."

In May 1952 Father Victor White published a book in London, "God and the Unconscious" (Harvill Press). He was delighted to write the foreword and wrote:

"It is now many years since I expressed a desire for co-operation with the theologian but I little

knew – or even dreamt – how or to what extent my wish was to be fulfilled.

"This book, to which I have the honour of writing an introduction, is the third major publication on the theological side which has been written in a spirit of collaboration and mutual effort."

A deep friendship between the two developed, and Jung was deeply concerned when he was informed of a serious accident the priest suffered which finally led to his death in 1960.

Meanwhile, the Carmelite nun mentioned above kept up the lively correspondence that had passed between them. In one of his letters, Jung wrote in 1960: "I had nursed the apparently vain hope that Father Victor would carry on the opus magnum. But it is a curious fact that most of the intelligent men I became acquainted with and who began to develop an uncommon understanding, had come to an unexpected, early end.

"It looks as if only those who are relatively close to death are serious or mature enough to grasp some of the essentials in our psychology, as a man who wants to get over an obstacle grasps a handy ladder. Well, it is a sad truth that we know very little about the most important aspects of life."

I was rather thrilled when I

came to the following passage in one of his letters to the same nun:

"It is indeed most remarkable that you should mention St Niklaus at all, since I happened to be quite busy with his visions these last days. He is most remarkable, even unique in respect of his inner life, and I must say I have received an unusual amount of insight through his visions ..."

As a matter of fact I feel much inner relatedness to our national saint in spite of the temporal distance of 500 years lying between.

In a way, I can't deny that I am continuing the path of his visions. It seems that he is still leading his host as it was predicted to him by one of the three who visited him in his vision.

It certainly is remarkable how some of our greatest compatriots – as Brother Klaus, Carl Jung, Jean Gebser and others – begin to join hands and, independent of creed, bring light into our troubled times and lead to a more hopeful future.

They are not "magicians", however.

They simply point the way, and to go will be our task. There is no need to despair about the future nor to complain too much about our troubled times, which may be only an excuse to sit down and do nothing.

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