

The Great War of the Soul: Divine and Human Madness in Carl Gustav Jung's Liber Novus

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It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death. Perhaps – perhaps. (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.)

On 17 October 1913, the German Imperial Navy's L 2 Zeppelin airship crashed near Berlin, killing all its twenty-eight passengers. Just a few weeks earlier, on September 9, its predecessor, the L 1, had crashed as well. Clearly this was a very bad month for the German military. On that particular day in mid-October, the 37-year old Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung was riding a train from Zürich to Schaffhausen, to pick up his family from a vacation with his mother-in-law, who happened to be celebrating her seventy-fifth birthday. On entering a long mountain tunnel, Jung was unexpectedly overcome by a vision or hallucination that he later claimed lasted at least an hour, perhaps two.¹ He saw how a disastrous yellow flood, emerging from France and Germany, overwhelmed and destroyed all the lower countries between the North Sea and the Alps: "I saw the tremendous yellow waves, the floating remains of the works of culture and the death of uncounted thousands. Then the sea changed into blood."² Only Switzerland was spared, because the mountains rose up to protect it from the waves, and Jung seemed to be sitting high up on the mountain while watching the disaster all

¹ "Two hours" according to Jung, Carl Gustav (2009): *Das Rote Buch*. Ostfildern, p. 230r / Jung, Carl Gustav (2009): *The Red Book*. New York/London, 231l [NB: I will be referring to Jung's *Liber Novus* in the German edition (abbreviated as LNG) and the English one (abbreviated as LNE), while indicating the page number as well as the column (left/right)], but "about one hour" according to Jung, Carl Gustav (1971): *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*. Ostfildern, 196; idem in interview with Mircea Eliade conducted in 1952: Jung, Carl Gustav (1987): *Eliade's Interview for "Combat"*, pp. 232–233.

² "Ich sah die gewaltigen gelben Wogen, die schwimmenden Trümmer der Kulturwerke und den Tod von ungezählten Tausenden. Dann verwandelte sich das Meer in Blut" (Jung: *Erinnerungen*, p. 196). Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the German are by the present author. As for *Liber Novus*, the translation by Mark Kyburz, John Peck and Sonu Shamdasani is generally reliable but not impeccable; I therefore use it as my basis but consider myself at liberty to diverge from it. Note that the "works of culture" and the "blood" are not mentioned for the original vision in LNG, p. 230/LNE, p. 231, which speaks of "yellow waves"; but Jung adds that he "also saw a sea of blood" in some unspecified later vision.

around him.³ Two weeks later (at least according to *Liber Novus*, but Jung would later tell Eliade that it was three months later, and in the same tunnel to Schaffhausen),⁴ the vision returned even more strongly. Jung now also heard an inner voice commenting upon the vision: “Look at it, it is completely real, and it will come to pass. You cannot doubt this.”⁵

Of course, in the autumn of 1913 one hardly needed powers of precognition to see the risk of a major European conflict – reading the newspapers would have been more than sufficient. Nevertheless, Jung would later insist that the thought of war never occurred to him:

The next winter, somebody asked me how I thought about the near future of world events. I said that I thought nothing, but saw streams of blood. I could not get the vision out of my head.

I asked myself whether the visions pointed to a revolution, but could not really imagine such a thing. So I drew the conclusion that they had to do with myself, and assumed that I was threatened by a psychosis. The thought of war did not occur to me.⁶

In an interview with Mircea Eliade conducted in 1952, Jung reportedly said that “As a psychiatrist I became worried, wondering if I was not on the way to ‘doing a schizophrenia,’ as we said in the language of those days.”⁷ The intensity of the visions must have been frightening and disturbing indeed, but it is hard to believe that Jung never considered the most plausible and economic explanation: that their content reflected his understandable fears and worries, at the time, about the political situation in Europe. By dismissing that option with hindsight, he seems to be clearing the way for his preferred explanation: the visions were caused neither by worries nor by psychosis, but should be seen as a real clairvoyant prophecy of things to come.

Jung’s Midlife Crisis

At the time of his “tunnel vision,” Jung was certainly under extraordinary pressure. Hostilities might not yet have erupted in the outside world, but Jung’s personal and professional life did look like a war zone. While his wife Emma was pregnant with their fifth child, Jung had gotten involved in an intense intellectual, emotional, and eventually sexual relation with his assistant Toni Wolff, resulting in a highly public triangle that was painful and stressful for all three persons involved but would continue until the end of their lives. As regards his profes-

³ According to Jung: Eliade’s Interview, p. 232.

⁴ Jung: Eliade’s Interview, p. 233.

⁵ “Sieh es an, es ist ganz wirklich, und es wird so sein. Du kannst nicht daran zweifeln” (LNG, p. 230r/LNE, p. 231 l; cf. Jung: Erinnerungen, p. 196).

⁶ Jung: Erinnerungen, p. 196.

⁷ Jung: Eliade’s Interview, p.233; cf. LNG, p. 230 r / LNE, p. 231 (“Und ich dachte, dass mein Geist krank geworden sei”).

sional life, Jung's intense collaboration and friendship with Sigmund Freud had come to an end in January, leaving him profoundly disoriented and insecure about his own future and the continuation of his life's work. The break had a strong impact on the international organizations and networks of psychoanalysis in which Freud and Jung were leading figures. Just one month prior to Jung's vision of blood over Europe, their two enormous egos had clashed publicly at a conference in Munich. The description by Jung's biographer Deirdre Bair catches the situation: "Eighty-seven members and guests gathered to watch each man – Freud the patriarch and founder, Jung as president – seated at a separate table surrounded by his supporters and facing the other with his minions clustered behind and around."⁸ The conflict had far-reaching implications, not just for the two protagonists themselves but for the entire emerging field of psychoanalysis. Jung had begun calling his own approach "analytical psychology," to distinguish it from the "purely sexual standpoint" of Freud and his supporters, which he argued should be expanded and reinterpreted in terms of a broader "energetic viewpoint."⁹ As a result, the international psychoanalytic scene was breaking apart into warring factions.

For a man who self-identified as an "introvert" (and had coined that very term) these domestic and professional battles must have been difficult to handle. Jung was a large man with boundless energy, an extremely dominating personality, and a hunger for public recognition: psychologically, he seems to have been incapable of remaining a simple participant or observer in any of his social networks, and just had to be at the very center of any activity or at the top of any hierarchy. Having married a very wealthy woman, he found himself the head and patriarch of a large family living in a big house near the lake, while moving in the best circles of polite Zürich society. He was an uncontested leader in a rapidly growing international community of psychiatrists and psychologists, as well as a popular lecturer at the University, and on top of all that he was much in demand for private therapy sessions. In short, Jung was not just extremely busy at all times, but he was never alone. He was always surrounded by people who were clamouring for his attention at all times. Much as he may have liked all this recognition and the power it gave him, he must also have felt the weight of his responsibilities crushing him down.

What happened to Jung in the autumn of 1913 might be described as a severe burnout combined with a classic midlife crisis and serious symptoms of depression. As formulated in the archaic Nietzschean language of his *Liber Novus*, on which more below:

At that time, in the fortieth year of my life, I had achieved everything that I have ever wished for myself. I have achieved fame, power, wealth, knowledge, and every human

⁸ Bair, Deirdre (2003): Jung. A Biography. Boston/New York/London, p. 240.

⁹ Bair: Jung, p. 239.

happiness. Then my desire for the increase of these trappings ceased, the desire receded in me, and I was overcome with dread.¹⁰

In response to this crisis, Jung embarked on a period of intense introspection that would last for years. Most importantly, he began to experience intense spiritual visitations or hallucinatory fantasies that would become the basis for what is known today as his *Liber Novus* or, more popularly, *The Red Book*.

The Story of Liber Novus

For our present purposes we do not need to go into the complicated process of writing, re-writing, editing, illustrating, and amplifying through which this work achieved over a period of several decades its final (although still unfinished) form. What it comes down to is that from November 1913 to June 1916, Jung filled five notebooks with meticulous descriptions of his vivid inner experiences. They are known as his *Black Books*. In 1914 he started using these materials as the basis for a large and carefully edited book of visions and reflections, faithfully copying his experiential accounts and adding commentaries. He finally wrote it all down in beautiful quasi-medieval calligraphy on parchment, with remarkable coloured illustrations done by himself, in a large volume bound in red leather.

The *Red Book* did not get published during Jung's lifetime, because he considered it too personal and intimate and feared it would destroy his scientific credibility. He was convinced that nobody would understand it. Even after Jung's death in 1961 it remained inaccessible for decades, thus acquiring near-mythical status as the Jung family's mysterious "holy grail" – the esoteric secret at the heart of his oeuvre that should not be disclosed to the public at large. Certainly this extreme reticence had much to do with fear of ridicule. Among the very few people whom Jung trusted enough to let them read his *Liber Novus* was his American translator R.F.C. Hull, and even this close friend seems to have concluded (just two weeks after his death!) that "Jung was a walking asylum in himself, as well as its head physician," and described *Liber Novus* as "the most convincing proof that Jung's whole system is based on psychotic fantasies [...] and therefore the work of a lunatic."¹¹

Liber Novus was finally published in 2009, in an excellent facsimile edition with carefully annotated transcripts, translations and an authoritative introduction by the leading specialist of Jung, Sonu Shamdasani. It is now available in

¹⁰ "Ich hatte damals in meinem vierzigsten Lebensjahre alles erreicht, was ich mir je gewünscht habe. Ich habe Ruhm, Macht, Reichtum, Wissen und jedes menschliche Glück erreicht. Da hörte mein Begehren nach Vermehrung dieser Güter auf, das Begehren trat in mir zurück, und das Grauen kam über mich" (LNG, p. 231 r / LNE, pp. 231 r–232 l).

¹¹ Bair, pp. 292–293. Unfortunately Bair's source reference in this case is not clear. It would be important to read Hull's remarks in context, but so far I have not been able to gain access to the original document.

several languages, including English, French, and even Japanese. In Shamdasani's reconstruction, based upon all the available manuscripts, *Liber Novus* consists of three parts: *Liber Primus*, *Liber Secundus*, and a third part titled *Prüfungen* (translated as *Scrutinies* in the official translation, but as *Trials* by me). So what is this work all about?

Jung before "Jung"

Whatever Hull may have thought, *Liber Novus* is not the work of a lunatic. It is a unique and profound work that would require meticulous commentary from multiple disciplinary perspectives to be fully understood.¹² But most surprising, and most relevant for us here, is that it hardly comes across as a book written by Jung the psychologist as we know him! Very significantly, the *Red Book* does not contain any of the characteristic perspectives and concepts that would become the hallmark of Jungian or Analytical Psychology. The very word "unconscious" appears in the *Black Books* just one single time, and is never used at all in the commentaries and reflections on his visions that take up large parts of the *Red Book*. Concepts that are central to later Jungian psychology, such as the "anima," "archetypes," the "shadow," or the "collective unconscious," are *completely* absent. Nevertheless, judging from the secondary literature on *Liber Novus*, many commentators seem convinced that they have in fact encountered these familiar concepts in many places throughout the book. For instance, when Jung describes his visionary encounters with a female figure identified as Salome, it seems natural for Jungian readers to conclude that he is therefore meeting a representation of his anima. In fact, there is nothing in the text to confirm such an interpreta-

¹² Because *Liber Novus* was published only as recently as 2009, the critical literature is still in its beginning stage. Indispensable is Shamdasani, Sonu (2009): *Liber Novus: The "Red Book" of C.G. Jung*, in: C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*, pp. 193–221. A book-length monograph was published by Drob, Sanford L. (2012): *Reading the Red Book. An Interpretive Guide to C.G. Jung's Liber Novus*. New Orleans. For the main collections of articles on *Liber Novus*, see *Cahiers Jungiens de Psychanalyse* 134 (2011), special issue "Le Livre Rouge de Jung" (contributions by Robert S. Henderson, Leslie de Galbert, Dominique Guilbault, Laurent Meyer, Christian Gaillard, Nathan Schwartz-Salant, Christine Maillard, and Bertrand Éveno); *Recherches Germaniques* (2011), Hors série no. 8, "Art, sciences et psychologie: Autour du Livre Rouge de Carl Gustav Jung (1914–1930) / Kunst, Wissenschaften und Psychologie: Über das Rote Buch von C.G. Jung (1914–1930)" (contributions by Christiane Maillard, Karl Baier, Joseph Cambray, Christian Gaillard, Véronique Liard, Gerhard Schmitt, and Paul Bishop); Reijmerink, Johan (ed.) (2013): *Over C.G. Jung en "Das Rote Buch,"* in: *Jaarboek van de C.G. Jung Vereniging Nederland/Interdisciplinaire Vereniging voor Analytische Psychologie*, no. 29. Deventer (contributions by Tjeu van den Berk, Punita Miranda, Pety de Vries, Joop van Birgelen, Inger van Lamoen-Dommisse, Lolke Peppinkhuizen, and Paul Revis); Kirsch, Thomas – George Hogenson (eds.) (2014): *The Red Book: Reflections on C.G. Jung's Liber Novus*. London/New York (contributions by Thomas Kirsch, Ulrich Hoerni, Paul Bishop, Joseph Cambray, Bou-Yong Rhi, Susan Thackrey, Christine Maillard, George Hogenson, and John Beebe).

tion: all that it tells us is that Jung meets a mysterious young woman named Salome. The anima is there only if one wishes to see it.

A crucial requirement for understanding *Liber Novus* on its own terms, and in its own historical context, may therefore be formulated as follows: *interpreters should try to bracket everything they have ever learned about Jung and his psychological theories*. The book must be approached as a unique literary product of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectual culture, and we will fail to understand its meaning or uncover its secrets unless we place it in its proper historical context. This means that we must resist the temptation of projecting Jung's later theories back onto it.¹³ It is clear that Jung himself, at a later period, came to see *Liber Novus* as direct evidence for the truth of his own psychological theories; but actually it is nothing of the sort. The book is undoubtedly crucial to our understanding of how Jung developed his mature psychology, but to conclude that it therefore proves the truth of that psychology is an evident *non sequitur*. Jung's well-known theories provide us simply with one possible vantage point for interpreting his text, and not necessarily the most convincing one. If we privilege his own favourite theories over any other possible perspectives, we do so at the risk of decontextualizing and misunderstanding the *Red Book*.

A Classic outside the Canon

If *Liber Novus* is not a work of Jungian psychology, then what is it? Its very genre is difficult to determine. While the *Red Book* carries much interest for psychologists, it is not a psychological treatise. Although full of references to philosophy, it is not a work of philosophical analysis either. It is a book of stories and visionary narratives written in a self-consciously literary style, but is clearly not intended as a work of literature or creative fiction. It is an illuminated manuscript filled with beautiful illustrations, but it is not a work of art.¹⁴ So what is it? As suggested in an excellent analysis by the Austrian scholar Karl Baier, the title *Liber*

¹³ For good examples of a historical/contextual approach as advocated here, see Maillard, Christine (2011): *Le Livre Rouge de Carl Gustav Jung, document autobiographique, document culturel*, in: *Recherches Germaniques, hors série no. 8* (2011), pp. 1–12; idem (2011): *Le Livre Rouge de Carl Gustav Jung dans le contexte de la crise de la connaissance et des valeurs des années 1910–1930*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 153–168; idem (2011): “La voie de l’avenir.” *Du discours prophétique dans le Livre Rouge de Jung*, in: *Cahiers Jungiens de Psychanalyse* 134, pp. 119–131.

¹⁴ On this point, see Shamdasani's Introduction, in: LNE, p. 199: while writing in *Black Book 2*, Jung heard a female voice (later attributed by him to a Dutch patient, identified by Shamdasani as Maria Moltzer, who had wanted to convince a psychiatrist colleague, Franz Riklin according to Shamdasani, that Jung was a misunderstood artist) telling him “That is art”, but he responded emphatically that it was not, and later heard the voice agreeing “No it is not”. According to the unpublished *Protocols of Aniela Jaffé's* interviews with Jung for *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung insisted that the unconscious was a manifestation of Nature, not Art.

Novus (“new book”) is remarkably to the point: this work simply has no clear historical precedent and must be regarded as one of a kind.¹⁵ That being said, Baier interprets it very convincingly as

[a] transgressive continuation of the genre of the Christian Book of Visions [...] that, furthermore, takes up elements from other genres of traditional Christian literature and renews the meditative reading and writing culture of Antiquity and the Middle Ages.¹⁶

This means that *Liber Novus* must be seen primarily as a religious work.¹⁷ More specifically, I would argue, it can be described as a highly original account of a Mystery Initiation inspired directly by models from Late Antiquity. It shows how the candidate goes through a series of intense and often frightening ordeals, tests, and temptations that are part of a salvational quest for spiritual understanding and enlightenment.

Quite apart from its personal significance for Jung, or its role in the development of Jungian psychology, the *Red Book* should be recognized as a text of central importance for studying the crisis and transformation of religious consciousness in Europe, and more specifically the German-speaking world, during the decades before and after 1900.¹⁸ Crucial in that respect was the struggle with religious and ethical nihilism in the wake of Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God, and the decline of confidence in science and rationality before and (most decisively) since the eruption of the Great War. In the shortest possible terms, Jung’s analysis of the situation could be summarized as follows. “Nietzsche’s prophetic insights have revealed the truth about religion, but the knowledge that God is dead is unbearable for the human mind, and finally drove its prophet to insanity. European consciousness is now threatened by the same fate. If science and rationality will not be able to fill the void that Christianity has left by providing a solid and reliable basis for knowledge and communal values, then European consciousness will be left helpless against the destructive forces of chaos and the irrational.” In other words, while Jung was editing his *Red Book*

¹⁵ “Offenbar liegt hier wirklich ein *Liber Novus* vor, ein Werk, das es in dieser Art noch nicht gegeben hat”. Baier, Karl (2011): *Das Rote Buch im Kontext Europäischer Spiritualitätsgeschichte*, in: *Recherches Germaniques*, hors série no. 8 (2011), pp. 13–40, here p. 13.

¹⁶ “[...] transgressive Fortsetzung der Gattung des christlichen Visionsbuch [...], die zusätzlich Charakteristika anderer Gattungen traditioneller christlicher Literatur aufnimmt und die meditative Lese- und Schreibkultur der Antike und des Mittelalters erneuert” (Baier: *Das Rote Buch*, p. 39).

¹⁷ Contra Bishop, Paul (2011): *Sinn, Unsinn, Widersinn, Wahnsinn, Übersinn: Selbst- und Gottesvorstellungen im Roten Buch von C.G. Jung*, in: *Recherches Germaniques*, hors série no. 8 (2011), pp. 135–151, here p. 139. Bishop’s statement that *Liber Novus* is not a religious work rests on the crypto-theological assumption that “religion” implies belief in a transcendent God, so that (in his words) “a God of immanence [...] a God of life-philosophy, the God of the Self” (“ein Gott der Immanenz [...] ein lebensphilosophischer Gott, der Gott des Selbst”) cannot be considered truly religious. From a perspective of Religionwissenschaft such assumptions are unwarranted.

¹⁸ See Maillard: *Le Livre Rouge*.

during the first years of World War I, it seemed to him that both religion *and* reason were in the midst of a process of disintegration that was leading inevitably towards madness and irrationality. This, he feared, was what the future held in store for European consciousness, unless a solution could be found. In a real sense, then, Jung saw himself as a psychiatrist analyzing the pathology of the European mind; but in doing so, he was also the patient suffering from that pathology.

Before embarking on a succinct analysis from the perspective of Jung's concern with madness, I want to emphasize that nothing about *Liber Novus* is easy. We are dealing with a large multi-layered composition that is extremely complicated in terms of formal structure and textual organization, not to mention its extraordinarily strange and frequently obscure contents. But it is not just hard to read from a technical point of view. Much more importantly, seen from an intellectual, literary, and religious perspective it is a profound work that requires deep reading and re-reading to do it justice. I personally consider it superior to anything else that Jung ever wrote. *Liber Novus* has all the qualities of a literary, intellectual, or religious "classic," and requires the kind of deep and extensive commentary and analysis that one typically reserves for classics. In this short chapter, we will not be able to do more than scratch the surface.

Liber Primus

At the beginning of *Liber Primus*, Jung describes how all his comfortable assumptions and scientific convictions about reality were shattered by a powerful realization that welled up irresistibly and with great emotional force from the depths of his being. Essentially, this "Spirit of the Depth" (*Geist der Tiefe*) was telling him that he had fallen under the spell of the "Spirit of this Time" (*Geist dieser Zeit*) and, as a result, had lost his soul:

At the time, I was still wholly under the spell of the Spirit of this Time and thought differently about the human soul. I thought and spoke much about the soul, I knew many learned words about her, I have judged her and made an object of science out of her. It did not occur to me that my soul cannot be the object of my judgment and knowledge: much more is my judgment and knowledge the object of my soul. Therefore the Spirit of the Depth forced me to speak to my soul, to call upon her as a living and self-existing being. I had to become aware that I had lost my soul.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Ich war damals noch ganz befangen im Geiste dieser Zeit und dachte anders von der menschlichen Seele. Ich dachte und sprach viel von der Seele, ich wusste viele gelehrte Worte über sie, ich habe sie beurteilt und einen Gegenstand der Wissenschaft aus ihr gemacht. Ich bedachte nicht, dass meine Seele nicht der Gegenstand meines Urteilens und Wissens sein kann: vielmehr ist mein Urteilen und Wissen ein Gegenstand meiner Seele. Darum zwang mich der Geist der Tiefe, zu meiner Seele zu reden, sie anzurufen als ein lebendiges und in sich selber bestehendes Wesen. Ich musste inne werden, dass ich meine Seele verloren hatte" (LNG, p. 2321 / LNE. p. 2321-r).

So Jung begins to call out to his soul, asking her to come back: “My soul, where are you? Do you hear me? I speak, I call you – are you there? I have returned, I am back [...]”²⁰ He does so because the *Geist der Tiefe* compels him, but with much hesitation and inner debate: the *Geist dieser Zeit* in him resists, and keeps telling him that such practices are humiliating, stupid, credulous, and superstitious. “Every step closer to my soul excited the scornful laughter of my devils, those cowardly slanderers and poison-mixers.”²¹ While Jung continues his practice of praying to his soul, the *Geist der Tiefe* tells him to write down all the dreams he can remember. Jung obeys, until finally, after six days of silence, he is told what to do: “Look into your depth, pray to your depth, wake up the dead.”²² Jung then spends several weeks in the barren “desert” of his own self, where he realizes that in his pursuit of worldly fame and scientific recognition he has been neglecting his own self. As a result, the place of his soul is now barren, dry, and without life.

It is only after these spiritual preparations that the initiatory journey begins in earnest, on the night of December 12, 1913: “Then the Spirit of the Depth opened my eyes and I beheld the inner things, the world of my soul, multiform and ever-changing.”²³ He finds himself in an underground cave that is filled with the sound of screeching voices, wades through the water to touch a red glowing stone in the wall, sees a bloody man’s head and a black scarab floating in the water, a reddish sun shining deep down below, snakes crawling all along the walls, and finally the eruption of a stream of thick red blood.²⁴ Similar to his vision of the flood over Europe, this scary experience of underground darkness, snakes, blood, and violence causes Jung to question his own sanity. His commentary is of crucial importance:

You will consider yourself mad, and in a certain sense you will indeed be mad. To the extent that the Christianity of this time lacks madness, it lacks divine life. Take note of what the Ancients taught us in images: madness is divine. [...] It is unquestionable: if you enter into the world of the soul, you are like a madman, and a doctor would consider you sick. What I am saying here can be considered sick [...].²⁵

²⁰ “Meine Seele, wo bist du? Hörst du mich? Ich spreche, ich rufe dich – bist du da? Ich bin wiedergekehrt, ich bin wieder da [...]” (LNG, p. 2321 / LNE, p. 2321).

²¹ “Jeder Schritt näher zu meiner Seele erregte das Hohngelächter meiner Teufel, jener feigen Ohrenbläser und Giftmischer” (LNG, p. 234 r / LNE, p. 234 r).

²² “Schau in deine Tiefe, bete zu deiner Tiefe, wecke die Toten auf” (LNG, p. 235 r / LNE, p. 3).

²³ “Da öffnete der Geist der Tiefe meine Augen, und ich erblickte die inneren Dinge, die Welt meiner Seele, die vielgestaltige und wandelbare” (LNG, p. 237 r / LNE, p. 237 r).

²⁴ LNG, p. 237 r / LNE, p. 237 r. Cf. Jung: *Erinnerungen*, p. 200.

²⁵ “Du wirst dich für wahnsinnig halten und auch in gewissem Sinne wahnsinnig sein. In dem Maße, als das Christentum dieser Zeit des Wahnsinns entbehrt, entbehrt es des göttlichen Lebens. Merket, was die Alten im Bilde uns lehrten: Der Wahnsinn ist göttlich. [...] Es ist unzweifelhaft: Wenn du in die Welt der Seele eintrittst, so bist du wie wahnsinnig, und ein Arzt würde dich für krank halten. Das, was ich hier sage, kann für krankhaft gelten” (LNG, p. 2381 / LNE, p. 2381).

At this point, some commentary is needed. As noted by Shamdasani,²⁶ Jung is referring here to a tradition that leads from Plato's *Phaedrus* to Renaissance humanists such as Marsilio Ficino²⁷ and Erasmus, and is picked up by Schelling and finally Nietzsche. In Plato's classic formulation, Socrates states that the true philosopher goes beyond reason to perceive the truth directly, in a divinely inspired state of *mania*, divine madness, that is bound to be misunderstood by the common people: "Standing aside from the busy doings of mankind, and drawing nigh to the divine, [the lover of wisdom] is rebuked by the multitude as being deranged, for they do not realize that he is full of God [ἐνθουσιάζων]."²⁸ In other words, the *Geist der Tiefe* in Jung's *Liber Novus* stands for the spirit of *mania*, divine madness; and as such, it can only be an object of ridicule and rejection from the perspective of the *Geist dieser Zeit*, which stands for reason.

But that is not all. Jung's reflections on divine madness should also be seen in another and much less familiar context, that of German Romantic Mesmerism.²⁹ Jung was exposed to this tradition at an early age, as he recounts in his "semi-autobiography:"³⁰

Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* was just what I wanted, and soon I also discovered Carl Du Prel, who had applied these ideas philosophically and psychologically. I dug up Eschenmayer, Passavant, Justinus Kerner and Görres and read seven volumes of Swedenborg.³¹

The German 'pneumatological' tradition that flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century was based upon the concept of a fundamental duality between, on the one hand, normal daytime consciousness (ruled by reason and science) and, on the other hand, the mysterious *Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*: the hidden 'nocturnal' realm of the occult, dreams, symbols, visions, and the spirits of the dead. One could gain access to this world not just by normal dreaming, but also by specific techniques for trance induction or alterations of consciousness that had been developed by practitioners of Animal Magnetism or Mesmerism, based upon the work of Franz Anton Mesmer. These techniques result-

²⁶ Footnote 90 to Shamdasani's edition, with special emphasis on Erasmus and Schelling.

²⁷ For the lineage of "divine madness" from Plato's *Phaedrus* to Ficino, see Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2010): *The Platonic Frenzies in Marsilio Ficino*, in: Dijkstra, Jitse – Justin Kroesen – Yme Kuiper (eds.): *Myths, Martyrs and Modernity. Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer*. Leiden/Boston, pp. 553–567.

²⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus* 249 d.

²⁹ Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2012): *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge, pp. 260–266, 283–289.

³⁰ Although marketed as Jung's autobiography, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken* is a heavily manipulated product of his secretary Aniela Jaffé. See Shamdasani, Sonu (1995): *Memories, Dreams, Omissions*, in: *Spring: Journal of Archetype and Culture* 57, pp. 115–137; and idem (2005): *Jung Stripped Bare by his Biographers, Even*. London, pp. 22–38.

³¹ "Kants Träume eines Geistersehers kam mir wie gerufen, und bald entdeckte ich auch Karl Duprel, der diese Ideen philosophisch und psychologisch ausgewertet hatte. Ich grub Eschenmayer, Passavant, Justinus Kerner und Görres aus und las sieben Bände von Swedenborg" (Jung: *Erinnerungen*, p. 120).

ed in a mental state known as ‘artificial somnambulism’ and would become the common foundation both of popular Spiritualist practice and early academic psychiatry. As shown by Henri Ellenberger in his classic study, the German Romantic notion of a *Nachtseite der Natur* is at the very origin of the ‘discovery of the unconscious’ during the nineteenth century;³² and hence there is nothing surprising about the fact that Jung’s early researches in psychology and psychiatry were focused on somnambulant trance, spiritualist séances, and occult phenomena.

The important point for our concerns is that, from an early age on, Jung was used to distinguishing between “two ways of thinking” (the title of the opening chapter of his *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* [1912], the book that would cause his break with Freud). One way of thinking was proper to the world of daytime rationality, while the other belonged to the *Nachtseite* – the mysterious world of the soul. In *Liber Novus*, the logic of this duality is taken to its ultimate conclusions. From the reasonable and socially responsible perspective of daytime consciousness, the world of the soul does indeed look like the realm of madness. It is a world of unpredictable chaos instead of order; a world of shadows and darkness instead of light; of mysterious symbolic imagery instead of clear verbal logic; in short, a world of unreason instead of reason. From a rationalist perspective, diving into this world meant indulging one’s private fantasies instead of accepting one’s social responsibilities in the world of consensus reality.

Jung’s response to such critiques is essentially the same as Socrates’ in Plato’s *Phaedrus*: he is perfectly aware of the fact that the contents of *Liber Novus* are bound to be seen as madness by regular scientists and physicians, but he insists on distinguishing between actual insanity and *divine* madness. Jung’s crucial discovery was that – contrary to what he used to believe before his breakdown – one simply cannot understand the reality of the soul from the perspective of daytime rationality: these two modes of thinking are using different kinds of language that are mutually exclusive or incommensurable. To actually understand the world of the soul on its own terms, he concluded, one needs to jump right into it and accept it on its own terms. On a personal level, given his fragile state of consciousness at the time, this required great courage, as Jung notes in many places of the *Red Book*:

But who could resist the fear, when the divine trance and madness comes over him? [...] When the Spirit of the Depth seizes you, you will feel the horror and will cry out in pain. The Spirit of the Depth is pregnant with iron, fire, and murder. You are right to fear the Spirit of the Depth, for he is full of dread.³³

³² Ellenberger, Henri F. (1970): *The Discovery of the Unconscious. The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. N.p..

³³ “Wer aber könnte, wenn der göttliche Rausch und Wahnsinn ihn ankommt, der Angst widerstehen? [...] Wenn euch der Geist der Tiefe fasst, so werdet ihr die Grausamkeit fühlen und aufschreien vor Qual. Der Geist der Tiefe geht schwanger mit Eisen, Feuer und Mord. Mit Recht fürchtet ihr den Geist der Tiefe, denn er ist voll Grauen” (LN, p. 238).

This brings us back to the point in *Liber Primus* where we left off. After much resistance against the apparently demonic beings that now assail him from all sides in the world of his soul, Jung finally surrenders. He then finds himself all alone, walking along a path in the desert, where the horror confronts him directly.

As predicted by the first vision, the assassin stepped forward from the depth and confronted me, just as in the destiny of the nations of this time a nameless one stepped forward and raised the murder weapon against the monarch.³⁴

Obviously, these lines refer to the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Serajevo on 28 June 1914, which led to World War I. It is important to emphasize that while the original visions recorded in the *Black Books* occurred between November 1913 and April 1914, this passage about the assassin in the desert appears in the “second layer” of commentaries on those visions, written after the summer of 1914. They therefore reflect a level of secondary interpretation and conscious literary redaction by Jung.³⁵ In the present chapter I am interpreting *Liber Novus* as a self-contained literary work; but eventually, the original visionary sequence should be analyzed apart from its later redaction.³⁶

In this “first layer” of original visions, six days after the beginning of his visionary journey (December 18, 2013), it is now Jung himself who appears to be the murderer. In a horrific dream, he finds himself walking through a mountain region together with an unidentified companion, when they hear the horn of Siegfried, “our mortal enemy” (“unser Todfeind”). Soon after, the great hero himself arrives on a carriage made of bones, and they treacherously shoot him in the back. On the level of personal biography, it seems that due to this experience of having “killed the hero,” there was a moment when Jung in fact contemplated suicide: “I felt certain that I must kill myself, if I could not solve the riddle of the murder of the hero.”³⁷ Jung finds that there is nothing honourable or heroic about this act, and can only compare himself to Judas and his betrayal of Jesus.

Eventually, the solution to the riddle of the *Heldenmord* appears to be that the old God must be sacrificed in order for the new one to be born. As it turns out, this theme of bloody sacrificial murder as a condition for renewal and rebirth is one of the most central threads throughout the *Red Book* as a whole. *Liber Novus* can be read as a sequel to Nietzsche’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and tries to find an answer to the crisis of European consciousness caused by the death of God. As already indicated above, Jung believed that the Western traditions of religion and

³⁴ “Wie es mir das erste Gesicht vorausgesagt hatte, trat der Meuchelmord aus der Tiefe hervor und kam an mich, so wie im Schicksal der Völker dieser Zeit ein Namenloser hervortrat und die Mordwaffe gegen den Fürsten erhob” (LNG, p. 2411 / LNE, p. 2411).

³⁵ See Shamdasani, Sonu (2009): Editorial Note, in: Jung: The Red Book, pp. 225–226.

³⁶ In this regard, the forthcoming publication of the Black Books will be essential (see <http://philemonfoundation.org/current-projects/black-books/>).

³⁷ “[...] ich fühlte es als sicher, dass ich mich selber töten müsse, wenn ich das Rätsel des Heldenmords nicht lösen könnte” (LN, p. 241).

reason had lost their ability to provide a foundation for reliable knowledge and ethical values. As science and rationality were powerless to fill the void that was left by the death of God, no protection remained against the forces of chaos and madness. When the Great War erupted in August 1914, for Jung it confirmed the truth of his analysis: his visions of blood and violence had been prophecies of the approaching apocalypse. Not he himself, but the collective consciousness of Europe was going mad. *Liber Novus* as a whole can be read as his attempt to perceive a deeper meaning in the disaster of the Great War: in a deeply anguished attempt to find some kind of meaning in the spectacle of massive slaughter and bloodshed, he interpreted it as a sacrificial event that must herald the birth of a new God who would take the place of the old. Only through the cleansing operated by such a deeply traumatic process of death and rebirth could the foundations be created for a new religion of the future and a new system of individual and communal values.

Throughout the *Red Book*, one can see, to an embarrassing extent, how Jung is being thrown back and forth between fantasies of supreme grandiosity in which he imagines himself to be the elected prophet of the new religion and the savior of European consciousness, no less, and a whole series of deeply painful experiences that are clearly meant to teach him the lesson of humility. In Jung's personal therapeutic process, an important role is played by his visionary encounters with an old man named Elias and his blind daughter Salome, who clearly resonates with the biblical figure and symbol of perverse eroticism that fascinated so many writers and artists around 1900.³⁸ Jung's prophetic and messianic fantasies find a spectacular culmination in the final chapter of *Liber Primus*, where he finds himself transformed into a mixture of Christ and the mystery sun god Mithras, the so-called *Deus Leontocephalus*, pictured with the head of a lion and surrounded by a snake.³⁹ This impressive passage builds upon apocalyptic images derived from the violent Peasant rebellions known as the *Bundschuh* movement (1493–1517) which Jung, of course, came to see as foreshadowing the carnage of the Great War. Intriguingly, the culminating experience of Mithraic crucifixion occurred precisely on Christmas day, 25 December 1913:

A wreath of fire shines around the stone. I am seized with fear. What do I see – the coarse *Bundschuh*? The foot of a giant that crushes an entire city? I see the cross, the descent from the cross, the mourning – how agonizing is this sight! I do not want this anymore – I see the divine child, in its right hand the white serpent, in its left hand the black serpent – I see the green mountain, on it the cross of Christ, and streams of blood flow down from the summit of the mountain – I cannot stand it anymore, it is unbearable – I see the cross, and Christ on it in his final hour and torment – the black serpent is coiled around

³⁸ See e.g. Dijkstra, Bram (1986): *Idols of Perversity. Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. Oxford, chapter XI.

³⁹ See the fundamental analysis (now spectacularly confirmed by *Liber Novus*, which was not yet accessible to him at the time) in Noll, Richard (1992): Jung the Leontocephalus, in: *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture* 53, pp. 12–60.

the foot of the cross – it has wound itself around my feet – I am held fast and spread my arms wide. Salome approaches. The serpent has wound itself around my whole body, and my face is that of a lion.⁴⁰

Salome – now clearly in the role of Mary Magdalene – tells him “You are Christ” (“Du bist Christus”), covers his feet with her hair, and is mysteriously cured of her blindness. Jung is released from the cross and bows down before Elias, who tells him “Your work is fulfilled here. Other things will come.”⁴¹ In his commentary, Jung finally addresses his contemporaries, telling them essentially that they have brought the Great War upon themselves by refusing to take responsibility for their own inner darkness: “You are Christians and followers of heroes, and you are waiting for saviours who should take the agony on themselves for your sakes, thus sparing you Golgotha. Thereby you create a mountain of Calvary that covers all of Europe”.⁴² The bloodshed is necessary, for there is no other way towards salvation: “May the horror become so great that humanity’s gaze can turn inward [...] I saw it, I know that this is the way”.⁴³ With this anguished gaze towards the future, *Liber Primus* ends on a high pitch of emotional drama, like the first act of a Wagner opera.

Liber Secundus

The structure of *Liber Secundus* is extremely complicated, but can be understood most easily as consisting of ten visionary episodes (referred to as “adventures” in Jung’s original handwritten draft of summer 1914–1915) with extensive commentaries.

- (1) The Red One.
- (2) The Castle in the Forest.
- (3) One of the Lowly.

⁴⁰ “Ein Feuerkranz umstrahlt den Stein. Mich packt die Angst, was sehe ich: den groben Bundschuh? Den Fuß eines Gewaltigen, der eine ganze Stadt zertritt? Ich sehe das Kreuz, die Kreuzabnahme, die Beklagung – wie qualvoll ist dieses Schauen! Ich will nicht mehr – ich sehe das göttliche Kind, in der rechten Hand die weiße Schlange und in der linken Hand die schwarze Schlange – ich sehe den grünen Berg, darauf das Kreuz Christi, und Ströme von Blut fließen vom Gipfel des Berges – ich kann nicht mehr, es ist unerträglich – ich sehe das Kreuz und daran Christum in seiner letzten Stunde und Qual – um den Fuß des Kreuzes windet sich die schwarze Schlange – um meine Füße hat sie sich geschlungen – ich bin gebannt und breite meine Arme aus. Salome naht sich. Die Schlange hat meinen ganzen Körper umwunden, und mein Antlitz ist das eines Löwen” (LNG, p. 2521 / LNE, p. 2521–r).

⁴¹ “Dein Werk ist hier erfüllt. Es werden andere Dinge kommen” (LNG, p. 252 r / LNE, p. 252 r).

⁴² “Ihr seid Christen und Heldennachläufer und wartet auf Erlöser, die die Qual für euch auf sich nehmen sollen und euch wohl Golgotha ersparen sollen. Damit richtet ihr euch einen Calvarienberg auf, der ganz Europa bedeckt” (LNG, p. 2541 / LNE, p. 2541).

⁴³ “Der Schrecken möge so groß werden, dass sich das Auge der Menschen nach innen wenden kann [...] Ich sah es, ich weiß, dass dies der Weg ist” (LNG, p. 254 r / LNE, p. 254 r).

- (4) The Anchorite.
- (5) Death.
- (6) The Remains of Earlier Temples.
- (7) The Great Encounter.⁴⁴
First Day – Second Day – The Incantations – Third Day: The Opening of the Egg – Hell.
- (8) The Sacrificial Murder.
- (9) Divine Folly.
First Night – Second Night – Third Night – Fourth Night – The Three Prophecies – The Gift of Magic – The Way of the Cross
- (10) The Sorcerer

After the high drama at the end of *Liber Primus*, with its impressive climax of Jung's crucifixion as the Mithraic Leontocephalus followed by the prophecy of great sacrificial suffering in store for Europe, *Liber Secundus* opens (like the second act of a great opera), on a completely different and much lighter tone. Jung notes that "The door of the Mysterium has closed behind me,"⁴⁵ and this is reflected by the literary style: the heavy "mystery language" modeled after Nietzsche's Zarathustra is abandoned for a while, and *Liber Secundus* begins with simple descriptive prose that even leaves some room for humour. Moreover, from the world of late antiquity we have now moved to an environment that suggests medieval or early modern Europe.

The first three scenes are relatively short and will be discussed here just very briefly. Adventure 1 describes Jung's meeting with a "Red Knight" who turns out to be the devil. Somewhat reminiscent of Faust's relation to Mephistopheles (Goethe's drama is an important literary model for *Liber Novus*), they converse on a level of equality. At one point, the Knight's clothes take on the color of flesh, and Jung's green garments begin to sprout leaves – a first stage, as will be seen, of his eventual transformation into a pagan vegetation god. Adventure 2 is a Romantic fairy tale, describing how Jung meets an old scholar who lives alone with his beautiful young daughter in an ancient castle deep in the woods. Most importantly, this story contains a lesson of intellectual humility: Jung's rational mind has a hard time accepting the sentimentality and predictable stereotypes that structure the story in which he finds himself, but he finally learns to give in and just go along with it. The message: "Only what is human and what you taunt as banal and hackneyed contains the wisdom that you seek."⁴⁶ In Adventure 3, Jung meets a very ordinary man on the road, who tells him about his very ordinary life and dies a very ordinary death. Again, the basic theme seems to be

⁴⁴ In this case I take the title from Jung's "Corrected Draft" of 1915 and mid-1920s (see LNE, p. 277 n. 97).

⁴⁵ "Die Türe des Mysteriums ist hinter mir geschlossen" (LNG, p. 2591 / LNE, p. 2591).

⁴⁶ "Nur was menschlich ist und was du als banal und abgedroschen beschimpfst, das enthält die Weisheit, die du suchst" (LNG, p. 2631 / LNE, p. 262 r).

humility: Jung may just have been crucified as a Mithraic saviour to save the soul of Europe, but should not forget that it is all about humble human beings who have no conscious understanding of such high and subtle matters.

In Adventure 4 we are back in late antiquity or the early middle ages. Jung meets a desert anchorite, Ammonius, and discusses biblical exegesis with him. Afterwards the monk leads him to an Egyptian grave, where Jung falls asleep. From here on, the narrative begins to return to the central theme of ancient “pagan” solar worship and its relation to Christ as a “dying and rising god:” Jung dreams about Helios on his solar carriage and finds himself praying to the god (“Give us your light, you fire-curled, entwined, crucified and resurrected one, your light, your light!”⁴⁷). Having woken up, he finds himself praying again, much to his own surprise and puzzlement, this time to a scarab and a stone: “Dear scarab, my father, I honor you, blessed be your work – in eternity – amen” and “O mother stone, I love you, I lie snuggled up against your warm body, your belated child. Blessed be you, ancient mother. Yours is my heart and all glory and power – Amen.”⁴⁸ Jung meets Ammonius again, who does not seem too worried about these pagan prayers; but when Jung suggests that the monk should perhaps leave his isolation and “get nearer to human beings,” he appears to hit a raw nerve:

Suddenly he looks at me as if in doubt and suspicion. “But”, he continues, “I love the desert, do you understand? This yellow desert, glowing with sunlight. Here one sees the face of the sun every day, here one is alone, here one sees glorious Helios – no, that is pagan – what’s wrong with me? I’m confused – your are Satan – I recognize you – get away from me, adversary!”

He jumps up in fury and wants to attack me. But I am far away in the twentieth century.⁴⁹

From here on, we see how the lessons of humility begin to give way again to grandiose feelings about Jung’s supreme calling on behalf of the European soul. In his conversations with Ammonius he moves quickly from the inferior role of pupil to the superior one of teacher, and this trend continues during the rest of the book.

In Adventure 5, Jung has moved from the southern desert dominated by fire (which, in the broader context of *Liber Novus*, clearly means “life” to him) to the

⁴⁷ “Schenke uns dein Licht, Feuerlockiger, Umschlungener, Gekreuzigter und Aufgestandener, dein Licht, dein Licht!” (LNG, p. 270 r / LNE, p. 270 r).

⁴⁸ “Lieber Scarabaeus, mein Vater, ich verehere dich, gesegnet sei deine Arbeit – in Ewigkeit – Amen”; “O Mutter Stein, ich liebe dich, an deinen warmen Körper geschmiegt liege ich, dein spätes Kind. Gesegnet seiest du, uralte Mutter. Dein ist mein Herz und alle Herrlichkeit und Kraft. Amen” (LNG, p. 271 l-r / LNE, p. 271 l).

⁴⁹ “Er sieht mich plötzlich wie zweifelnd und misstrauisch an. ‘Aber’, fährt er fort, ‘ich liebe die Wüste, verstehst du? Diese gelbe, sonnenglühende Wüste. Hier siehst du alltäglich das Antlitz der Sonne, hier bist du allein, hier siehst du den glorreichen Helios – nein das ist heidnisch – was ist mir? Ich bin verwirrt – du bist Satanas – ich erkenne dich – weiche von mir, Widersacher!’ Er springt wie rasend auf und will sich auf mich stürzen. Ich aber bin weit weg im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert” (LNG, p. 272 r / LNE, p. 272 r).

northern sphere dominated by water. He finds himself in “a northern land” looking over an endless sea under a grey sky that stretches out into infinity. There “on the last dune” stands a man in a black mantle, who clearly symbolizes death. Together, they watch a silent army of dead souls (men, women, and children, surrounded by animals and insects) floating above the water until they are swallowed up in a sea of fire and blood. In his commentary, Jung again interprets this as a prophecy of the coming war, and realizes that there is nothing beautiful, splendid, or heroic about death and destruction. The horror of annihilation is without any redeeming glory or grandiosity: applying this to himself, he feels how death “does not confront me like a strong enemy, manly and dangerous, but I perish on a dung heap, while peaceful chickens cackle around me, amazedly and mindlessly laying their eggs.”⁵⁰

In Adventure 6, Jung meets two companions on the road: an old monk and a tall thin man in red. They turn out to be no one else than Ammonius and “the Red One,” whose lives have changed dramatically as a result of their conversations with Jung. As for Jung himself, he finds himself transformed into a “green man,” a laughing vegetation god covered in leaves who likes to enjoy the good life, flourishing like a young green tree upon the ruins of his previous ideals (“the ruins of earlier temples”). It is clear that Jung has now taken leave of his previous religious and scientific beliefs, and is groping his way towards a somehow “pagan” new narrative that should be capable of providing a fresh foundation for reliable knowledge and enduring values – not just for himself but for Europe as a whole. On his quest to find it, he now turns toward the East.

This brings us to the pivotal Adventure 7, “The Great Encounter.” While traveling Eastward, Jung meets the giant hero or god Izdubar (Gilgamesh), who is on his way towards the West. This supreme representative of ancient “Eastern” mythology is eager to learn about the truths of “Western” science, but when Jung explains those truths to him, he sinks down in weakness and despair. Science, as it turns out, is quite literally poison for him. The two “ways of knowing” or “two sorts of truth” are mutually exclusive, as Jung writes: “Our truth is that which flows to us from the knowledge of external things. The truth of your priests is that which flows to them from the inner things.”⁵¹ Vanquished by Western science, Izdubar falls unconscious and seems to be dying, but Jung finds a way to save him. Fascinatingly, the saving trick is to declare the god a fantasy:

Thus my god found salvation. He was saved because the very thing happened to him that one would think should be wholly lethal, that is to say, that one declares him a figment of the imagination. How often already has one believed to put an end to the gods in this

⁵⁰ “[...] tritt mir nicht gegenüber wie ein starker Feind, männlich und gefährlich, sondern ich verende auf einem Misthaufen, während friedliche Hühner mich umgackern und erstaunt und verständnislos Eier legen” (LNG, p. 275 l / LNE, p. 275 l).

⁵¹ “Unsere Wahrheit ist die, die uns aus der Kenntnis der äußeren Dinge zuströmt. Die Wahrheit eurer Priester ist die, die ihnen aus den inneren Dingen zuströmt” (LNG, p. 278 r / LNE, p. 278 r).

manner. Clearly that was a great mistake, for that is precisely how the god is saved. [...] This tangible and visible world is the one reality, but fantasy is the other reality.⁵²

As a true and powerful reality that belongs to the sphere of fantasy or imagination (the world of “inner things” associated with the East) Izdubar is now reduced to a small egg. Jung puts him in his pocket and brings him back to the West, while taking care to steer clear of the sinister “City of the Enlightened” and its dangerous poisons.⁵³ Having brought the egg safely home, Jung embarks on a three-day period of “incubation.” Clearly modeled after the Christmas story, it is accompanied by a series of verse incantations “in the ancient manner.”⁵⁴ On the third day, the egg opens, and the god is reborn in all his former splendour. Taking no further heed of his “mother” (Jung), he immediately takes off: “Cruel and ungrateful, the sun-bird spread its wings and flew up into infinite space. I was left with the broken shells and the miserable casing of his beginning, and the emptiness of the depths opened beneath me.”⁵⁵

Indeed, Jung soon discovers the price for what he has done: by giving birth to a god, one simultaneously gives birth to his dark counterpart and has to confront one’s own inner demons. Along Nietzschean lines (“one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star”⁵⁶), Jung notes that in giving birth to what is “eternally full” he has necessarily given birth to what is “eternally empty” at the same time; and along the lines of Goethe’s *Faust*, his god of life may have been reborn and flown up towards the light, but Jung’s own soul has now been “sold to the devil.” This realization comes in a horrific scene of direct confrontation with demonic evil. His soul, in the shape of a young girl with red-golden hair, appears to be locked in a deadly embrace with three

⁵² “So fand mein Gott Rettung. Die Rettung geschah dadurch, dass ihm eben das geschah, was man für das unbedingt Tödliche halten müsste, nämlich, dass man ihn für ein Gespinst der Einbildung erklärt. Wie viele Male schon glaubte man, dass die Götter auf diese Weise zu ihrem Ende gebracht seien. Das war offenbar eine große Täuschung: denn dadurch wird der Gott ja eben gerettet. [...] Diese tast- und sichtbare Welt ist das eine Wirkliche, aber die Phantasie das andere Wirkliche” (LNG, pp. 282–283 / LNG, p. 283 l).

⁵³ “... that’s where the Enlightened live. Can’t you smell them? They are actually dangerous, for they cook the strongest poisons, from which even I must take care to protect myself. Those people are totally paralyzed, wrapped in a brown poisonous vapor, surrounded by noisy cackle-machines, and can only move themselves by artificial means” (“[...] dort wohnen ja die Aufgeklärten. Riechst du sie nicht? Die sind eigentlich gefährlich, denn sie kochen die allerstärksten Gifte, vor denen ich mich sogar hüten muss. Die Leute dort sind total gelähmt, in einen braunen Giftdampf gehüllt, von lärmenden Schnattermaschinen umgeben, und können sich nur noch mit künstlichen Mitteln fortbewegen”).

⁵⁴ LNG, pp. 283 r–284 r / LNE, pp. 284 l–285 r.

⁵⁵ “Grausam und undankbar breitete der Sonnenvogel seine Schwingen und flog empor zum unermesslichen Raume. Zerbrochene Schalen, das jämmerliche Gehäuse seines Anfangs blieben mir, und die Leere der Tiefe öffnete sich unter mir” (LNG, p. 286 l / LNE, p. 287 l).

⁵⁶ “[...] man muß noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können” (Nietzsche, Also Sprach Zarathustra: see LNG, p. 288 n. 142 / LNE, p. 289 n. 144).

demons.⁵⁷ But worse than that, the will to do evil resides in himself, as it does in every other human being:

I recognize the fearful devilishness of human nature. I cover my eyes before it. I stretch out my hand to fend it off, if anyone wants to approach me, for fear that my shadow could fall on him, or his shadow could fall on me, for I also see the devilish in him, the harmless companion of his shadow.

Let no one touch me. Murder and crime are hovering around you and me. You smile innocently, my friend? Don't you see that a small quiver of your eye betrays the horror whose unsuspecting messenger you are? Your bloodthirsty tiger growls softly, your poisonous serpent hisses secretly, while you, conscious only of your goodness, offer me your human hand in greeting.⁵⁸

More than anything else, Jung resist the vision of Adventure 8, "The Sacrificial Murder", which brings the same message to a climax: "[...] this was the vision that I did not want to see, the horror that I did not want to live."⁵⁹ In a horrible death valley where everything smells of perversity, crime and cowardice, he encounters broken fragments of childrens' toys and finally finds the blood-covered body of a small girl. A veiled woman is standing next to her. Jung does not want to look, but she reminds him that such things happen on earth every day. Jung has to take the liver (the seat of the soul) out of the girl's body and perform the "holy act" of eating it, thereby atoning the crimes of humanity through an act of self-humiliation in which he acknowledges that he, too, carries the will towards murder and evil in himself. Struggling against revulsion, Jung finally obeys. Then the figure takes off her veil: she is Jung's soul, in the form of the beautiful girl with ginger hair.

Finally, we come to Adventure 9: *Die göttliche Narrheit*. This second reference to "divine madness" in *Liber Novus* is very different from the former one. Jung finds himself in a room where he can choose between two doors, and decides to open the one on the right. It leads him to the reading room of a large library. He approaches the librarian and asks him for a copy of Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. But the librarian appears to be a hard-nosed sceptic who fails to understand why a scientist such as Jung would be interested in such a naive text of simple Christian piety. They discuss Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, and

⁵⁷ See the nightmarish "Hell" scene on LNG, pp. 287 r-288 l / LNE, p. 288 r.

⁵⁸ "Ich erkenne das furchtbar Teufliche menschlicher Natur. Ich bedecke davor meine Augen. Ich strecke meine Hand abwehrend aus, wenn jemand sich mir nahen will, aus Furcht, es könnte mein Schatten auf ihn fallen, oder sein Schatten falle auf mich, denn ich sehe auch das Teufliche in ihm, dem harmlosen Gefährten seines Schattens. Niemand berühre mich, Mord und Schandtät lauern um dich und mich. Du lächelst unschuldig, mein Freund? Siehst du nicht, dass ein leises Zucken deines Auges das Furchtbare verrät, dessen ahnungsloser Bote du bist? Dein blutlehzender Tiger knurrt leise, deine Giftschlange zischt heimlich, während du, nur deiner Güte bewusst, deine menschliche Hand mir zum Grusse bietest" (LNG, p. 288 r / LNE, p. 289 r).

⁵⁹ "Dies aber war das Gesicht, das ich nicht sehen wollte, das Schrecknis, das ich nicht leben wollte" (LNG, p. 289 l / LNE, p. 290 l).

Jung defends the legitimacy of a simple pious attitude next to a scientific one: "What I cannot put together in thought I may still be able to live in succession."⁶⁰ At this initial stage, then, the simple decision to relinquish critical judgment and surrender to God's will, in a "leap of faith," is clearly marked as "madness" from the perspective of rational science.

The next night, Jung takes the door on the left, which brings him to a kitchen where a fat woman is busy cooking. Clearly she represents the "simple of heart:" whatever Nietzsche or the rational scientists might have to say about it, the piety of Thomas à Kempis just happens to have much to offer her in her life ("it has often comforted me in difficult hours and it always provides good counsel"⁶¹). But at this point something unexpected happens: all of a sudden, an army of dead souls invades the kitchen. They say that in their lives they have neglected something important, and are now on their way to Jerusalem, hoping to find rest. They have hardly left when another group, of people headed by the librarian, enters the kitchen looking for Jung: he finds himself arrested by the police and brought to the madhouse!

But having arrived there, the boundaries between sanity and madness appear to be fluid and ambiguous indeed. In a quite amusing episode, a fat little doctor diagnoses Jung as suffering from "religious paranoia" ("You see, my dear, the imitation of Christ nowadays leads to the madhouse"⁶²); but very soon after, it becomes difficult to tell who is mad and who is not. After all, every single person in the madhouse appears to be equally convinced that he himself is rational and sane, and is ready to declare the others insane if they refuse to share his point of view. Even the mad Nietzsche himself makes a personal appearance, and when Jung exclaims that what he says is "pure mythology," Nietzsche's response is predictable: "You are crazy, that's why you understand nothing of it. You belong in the madhouse. My God, why does my family always shut me up with crazy people? After all, I'm supposed to save the world, I am the Savior!"⁶³ But not only does madness depend on one's point of view, the madhouse as a whole turns out to be a "ship of fools" that is riding the waves of a bottomless sea. In the context of Jung's narrative, the ship clearly stands for the precarious vessel of rational consciousness that builds an orderly and self-contained world for itself, on its own conditions, but forgets that it is actually floating on a sea of irrational chaos in which it might be submerged at any moment. In several long passages typical

⁶⁰ "Was ich nicht zusammendenken kann, lässt sich nacheinander wohl leben" (LNG, p. 292 r / LNE, p. 293 r).

⁶¹ "[...] es hat mich schon oft in schweren Stunden getröstet, und man kann sich immer einen Rat darin holen" (LNG, p. 293 l / LNE, p. 294 l).

⁶² "Sie sehen, mein Lieber, die Nachfolge Christi führt heutzutage ins Irrenhaus" (LNG, p. 294 l / LNE, p. 295 l).

⁶³ "Du bist verrückt und verstehst darum nichts davon. Du gehörst ins Irrenhaus. Mein Gott, warum sperrt mich meine Familie immer mit Verrückten zusammen? Ich sollte ja die Welt erlösen, ich bin ja der Erlöser" (LNG, p. 297 r / LNE, p. 298 r).

of early twentieth-century *Lebensphilosophie*, Jung's soul explains to him that this deeper chaos is Life itself:

Madness is a special form of Spirit and clings to all teachings and philosophies, but even more to daily life, for life itself is full of craziness and quite irrational in essence. Man strives towards Reason only in order to make rules for himself. Life itself has no rules. That is its mystery and its unknown law. What you call knowledge is an attempt to impose something comprehensible on life.⁶⁴

It is therefore clear that Life does not care about reason or sanity. Reason is not a solid and secure foundation that provides us with a "fixed point" from which we can evaluate or understand reality; in fact, it is little more than a feeble and arbitrary attempt to impose some semblance of order on chaos. Moreover – and this is crucial for what is to follow – this unfathomable chaos that is *Life* itself appears to be filled, paradoxical as it might seem, with the masses of the restless *Dead*. Some commentators of *Liber Novus* seem to assume that with his repeated references to the Dead, Jung meant the souls of soldiers killed in the Great War, but this is a far too restrictive interpretation. What he really means is "the masses of the dead of human history, the ghostly procession of the past, which is an ocean compared to the drops of your own lifespan."⁶⁵ These armies of the Dead represent "everything that time has left unresolved"⁶⁶ but is longing to find rest. They will not leave us in peace until they have found fulfilment.

That the universal reality of Life is filled with the armies of the restless Dead fits perfectly in the context of German Romantic Mesmerism that, as I have argued above, is crucial to understanding Jung's perspective. Our conventional social world is the world of the living, where the dead have no place. However, if we are physically alive in this world but have lost touch with our soul, we are spiritually dead ourselves. This is certainly how Jung understood his favourite hero, Goethe's Faust: "Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen – dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist tot!" ("The World of Spirits is not closed – it's your Sense that is shut, your heart is dead!"). By re-establishing the lost contact with our soul, we wake up to the forgotten reality of a larger, universal Life that is not limited to the four-dimensional domain of the senses and the short span of our individual

⁶⁴ "Der Wahnsinn ist eine besondere Form des Geistes und haftet allen Lehren und Philosophien an, noch mehr aber dem alltäglichen Leben, denn das Leben selbst ist voll Tollheit und ganz wesentlich unvernünftig. Der Mensch strebt nur deshalb nach Vernunft, damit er sich Regeln machen kann. Das Leben selbst hat keine Regel. Das ist sein Geheimnis und sein unbekanntes Gesetz. Was du Erkenntnis nennst, ist ein Versuch, dem Leben etwas Verstehbares aufzudringen" (LNG, p. 2971 / LNE, p. 2971).

⁶⁵ "[...] die Massen der Toten der menschlichen Geschichte, die Geisterzüge der Vergangenheit, die ein Meer ist gegenüber dem Tropfen deiner eigenen Lebensdauer" (LNG, p. 2951 / LNE, p. 2961).

⁶⁶ "das Ungelöste aller Zeiten" (LNG, p. 2951 / LNE, p. 2961).

mortal existence but encompasses both this life and the life beyond.⁶⁷ Through dreams, states of mesmeric trance, and other alterations of consciousness, *including* those that are categorized as madness, our soul gains access to this dimension that is its natural habitat: the immortal world of spirits, the *Geisterwelt*, or world of the Dead.⁶⁸

The dead souls that appear to Jung in the kitchen while on their way to Jerusalem are the souls of all Christians, throughout the ages, who have neglected something essential while they were living in the body. Christian morality has caused them to suppress their “animal side”: “Whoever does not live his animal must treat his brother like an animal.”⁶⁹ In an important way, then, the return of the dead is quite literally a “return of the repressed:” a re-surfacing of Christianity’s dark and demonic side, that has long been neglected and ignored but now demands to be taken seriously.

Jung finally wakes up in the kitchen, with Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi* still lying next to him, and the cook tells him that he has been asleep for more than an hour. Apparently the whole madhouse sequence has been a dream. After a short [sequence](#) in which Jung seems to take on the role of Parsival,⁷⁰ a decisive point of transformation appears to have been reached: “The Depth is silent. [...] Amen, it is done. What was unreal is real, what was real is unreal.”⁷¹ Presumably, the “nocturnal” side of the soul has now become Jung’s true reality, while the “daytime” world of science and rationality has become unreal. But this reversal is deeply painful to Jung (“[...] I may not, I do not want to, I cannot”⁷²): the true reality of the soul is not some comforting world of spiritual consolation but, on the contrary, appears to be a world of chaos, madness, darkness, and demonic evil. In a quite literal sense, Jung has embraced madness, sold his soul, and lost his innocence: “I have been baptized with impure water for rebirth. A flame from the fire of hell awaited me above the baptismal basin.”⁷³ The rebirth of Iz-

⁶⁷ On this concept of “Life,” juxtaposed against mere “Reality,” see Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (1995): *A Woman Alone: The Beatification of Friederike Hauffe née Wanner (1801–1829)*, in Korte, Anne-Marie (ed.): *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration*. Leiden/Boston/Köln 1995, pp. 235–241.

⁶⁸ Modern scholars, especially in the history of philosophy and psychology, tend to misinterpret Enlightenment and Romantic references to a *Geisterwelt* as referring merely to the world of the mind or “mental world” (see e.g. Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2012): *Essay Review: Imagining the Unconscious*, in *Intellectual History Review* 22:4, pp. 537–542, esp. pp. 539–540). Through such simple mistranslations, an entire intellectual tradition grounded in Mesmerist and Somnambulist concepts vanishes from sight as if it never existed.

⁶⁹ “Wer immer sein Tier nicht lebt, muss seinen Bruder wie ein Tier behandeln” (LNG, p. 295 r / LNE, p. 296 r).

⁷⁰ LNG, pp. 301 r–302 l / LNE, pp. 302 r–303 l.

⁷¹ “Die Tiefe schweigt. [...] Amen, es ist vollendet. Wirklich ist, was unwirklich war, unwirklich, was wirklich war” (LNG, p. 303 r / LNE, p. 304 r).

⁷² “Ich aber mag nicht, ich will nicht, ich kann nicht” (LNG, p. 303 r / LNE, p. 304 r).

⁷³ “Ich bin getauft mit unreinem Wasser zur Wiedergeburt. Eine Flamme vom Feuer der Hölle wartete meiner über dem Becken der Taufe” (LNG, p. 303 r / LNE, p. 304 r).

dubar has led to the simultaneous birth of an entity that Jung refers to as “The Son of the Earth.”

Jung’s soul dives for him into the depth of the chaos of life and asks him whether he will accept what she will offer him from down below. She comes back with three prophetic gifts, and Jung accepts them:

From the dark flood that the Son of the Earth had brought, my soul gave me ancient things that point towards the future. She gave me three things: the misery of War, the darkness of Sorcery, the gift of Religion.

If you are clever, you will understand that these three things belong together. These three mean the unleashing of chaos and its powers, but these three are also the binding of chaos. War is obvious and everybody sees it. Sorcery is dark and no one sees it. The Religion is still to come, but it will become evident.⁷⁴

The three final sections of *Liber Secundus* are devoted to the three “gifts.” The Gift of Magic or Sorcery⁷⁵ takes the shape of a black rod in the form of a serpent – a magical wand, also reminiscent of the staff of Moses according to the Exodus story. But accepting this gift requires the sacrifice of solace (“Trost”): the recipient of this gift has to give up the warmth of human comfort and accept a life of solitude and loneliness. Jung reluctantly accepts this sacrifice. The gift of War is connected, in Jung’s narrative, to “the Way of the Cross,” discussed with reference to both Christ and Nietzsche. This, of course, suggests a continuation of the “crucifixion” theme, again with Jung in the role of the sacrificed Saviour.

The third gift, finally, coincides with Adventure 10, *Der Zauberer*. After a long search, Jung finds the small house of Philemon and his wife Baucis. These figures have their origin in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and played a small but crucial role in the final act of Goethe’s *Faust II*.⁷⁶ Jung’s narrative takes for granted that Philemon is in fact a magician, but his magical books are lying forgotten in a cupboard and he himself comes across as a simple and somewhat feeble-minded old man. Jung has come to learn magic from him, but discovers that it is not what he expected. Apparently, magic is not about power but about understanding; and perhaps it is ultimately about love.⁷⁷ As for this first element (magic as un-

⁷⁴ “Aus dem flutenden Dunkeln, das der Sohn der Erde herangeführt hatte, gab mir die Seele alte Dinge, die das Zukünftige deuten. Drei Dinge gab sie: den Jammer des Krieges, die Finsternis der Zauberei, das Geschenk der Religion. Wenn du klug bist, dann verstehst du, dass diese drei Dinge zusammengehören. Diese drei bedeuten die Entfesselung des Chaos und seine Kräfte, ebenso sind die drei auch die Bindung des Chaos. Der Krieg ist offenbar und jedermann sieht ihn. Die Zauberei ist dunkel und niemand sieht sie. Die Religion ist noch nicht, wird aber offenbar werden” (LNG, p. 3051 / LNE, p. 3061).

⁷⁵ Jung’s terminology is not consistent. The “first gift” is sometimes referred to as Zauberei (“sorcery”) sometimes as Magie, but also as Aberglaube. The “third gift” is that of Religion, but here Jung seems to think rather of the ancient understanding of mageia as a “pagan” religion grounded in mystery initiations; nevertheless, it is discussed in “Adventure 10” (see text, below) under the heading *Der Zauberer* rather than (as one might have expected) *Der Magier*.

⁷⁶ See succinct discussion by Shamdasani in LNG, p. 310 n. 260 / LNE, p. 312 n. 264.

⁷⁷ LNG, p. 3141 / LNE, p. 3151-r.

derstanding), Jung is greatly puzzled by his conversation with Philemon, whose wisdom escapes his comprehension – clearly, what he has to offer is precisely what Jung is missing. This seems to be confirmed by the remainder of the (very complicated) narrative in this section, where we see him engaged in embarrassingly manipulative and egoistic behaviour until he finally seems to think of himself as a combination of Goethe’s Faust towards the end of *Faust II* and Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*: “I have set my foot on new land. [...] I am the master of my own self. I admire my mastery. I am strong and beautiful and rich. [...] I serve nobody and nobody profits from me. I serve myself and profit from myself. Therefore I have what I need.”⁷⁸ This extreme narcissism seems to make him all the more incapable of dealing with the second element of magic mentioned above, that of love. When Salome (no longer the demonic temptress, and no longer blind) offers Jung her selfless love, he proves incapable and unwilling to accept it and responds with fear and harsh rejection. In general, all Jung’s negative character traits (egoism, authoritarianism, cruelty, narcissism, competitiveness, and so on) are on open display throughout this long section, until he himself has no choice but to draw the inescapable conclusion: “my I, you are a barbarian.”⁷⁹ Again, Jung has reached rock bottom.

Trials

The final book of *Liber Novus* begins with a truly extraordinary avalanche of verbal abuse directed by Jung against himself. This is just a small sample:

[...] you are laughably sensitive, self-righteous, unruly, suspicious, pessimistic, cowardly, dishonest with yourself, venomous, vengeful; about your childish pride, your craving for power, your desire for esteem, your laughable ambition, your thirst for fame one can hardly speak without feeling sick to the stomach. Your playacting and pomposity become you badly and you misuse them to the best of your ability.⁸⁰

The passage is dated April 19, 1914. It bears noting here that Jung handed in his resignation as President of the International Psychoanalytic Association the very next day, April 20, and stopped his lectures at the University of Zürich only ten

⁷⁸ “Ich habe meinen Fuß auf neues Land gesetzt. [...] Ich bin der Herr meiner selbst. Ich bewundere meine Herrlichkeit. Ich bin stark und schön und reich. ... Ich diene niemand und niemand bedient sich meiner. Ich diene mir selber und bediene mich selbst. Darum habe ich, wessen ich bedarf” (LNG, p. 3201 / LNE, p. 321 r).

⁷⁹ “Mein Ich, du bist ein Barbar” (LNG, p. 328 r / LNE, p. 330 r).

⁸⁰ “[...] du bist lächerlich empfindlich, rechthaberisch, widerspenstig, misstrauisch, pessimistisch, feig, unehrlich mit dir selber, giftig, rachsüchtig; über deinen kindischen Stolz, deine Machtgier, dein Geltenwollen, deinen lächerlichen Ehrgeiz, deine Ruhmsucht kann man kaum reden, ohne dass es einem übel wird. Vollends die Schauspielerlei und Wichtigtuerei steht dir übel an und du missbrauchst sie nach Kräften” (LNG, p. 3311 / LNE, p. 3331).

days later.⁸¹ It seems reasonable to assume that these feelings of intense self-loathing had to do with those decisions. The following series of visions, as originally written down in Jung's *Black Books*, are generally marked by feelings of deep sadness, frustration, loneliness, and depression. Jung feels he is left utterly alone with his own self, which should *not* be confused with his soul: the latter, in the form of a white bird, has now moved high upwards in the heavenly spheres and seems to have left him behind on earth. By the end of May, the fear of madness returns once again, and Jung feels as though oppressed by the weight of the countless dead. But then, on June 24, just four days before the murder of Serajevo, all the visions and voices cease. From the beginning of *Liber Primus* we know that, around this time in late June or early July 1914, Jung had a twice repeated dream: "I was in a foreign land, and suddenly, overnight and right in the middle of summer, a terrible cold had descended from space. All seas and rivers were locked in ice, every green living thing had frozen."⁸² In the second of these dreams he hurried home, and "There stood a leaf-bearing but fruitless tree, whose leaves had turned into sweet grapes full of healing juice through the working of the frost. I picked the grapes and gave them to a great waiting throng of people."⁸³ As far as I can tell, there is no way to determine whether these visions occurred before or just after the Serajevo attack.

The Great War erupted on August 1, 1914, and now becomes the context from which Jung begins to interpret his previous visions: "My eyes were opened about much that I had experienced before."⁸⁴ For a whole year, Jung seems to have experienced no visions or voices at all. It is only in September 1915 that, all of a sudden, the voice of Philemon returns, and Jung finds himself compelled to re-evaluate his earlier experiences. Again we arrive at the essential understanding of "divine madness" interpreted as a state of mind that is proper to the *Nachtseite der Natur* and reverses our common understandings of reason and insanity:

I do not want to believe it, I do not need to believe it, and really could not believe it. How can one believe such things? My mind had to be totally confused to believe such things. Aren't they inherently improbable in the extreme? Not just improbable but also impossible for our understanding? Only a sick brain could produce such deceptions. I am like those sick persons who have been overcome by delusion and sensory deceptions. But I must say that it is the god who makes us sick. It is in sickness that I experience the god.

⁸¹ Bair: Jung, p. 726 n. 6.

⁸² "Ich war in einem fremden Lande, und plötzlich, über Nacht und zwar in der Mitte des Sommers, war eine unbegreifliche und ungeheure Kälte aus dem Weltraum hereingebrochen, alle Seen und Flüsse waren zu Eis erstarrt, alles lebendig Grüne war erfroren" (LNG, p. 2311 / LNE, p. 2311).

⁸³ "Da stand ein blättertragender, aber fruchtloser Baum, dessen Blätter sich durch die Einwirkung des Forstes in süße Weinbeeren voll heilenden Saftes verwandelt hatten. Ich pflückte die Trauben und schenkte sie einer großen, harrenden Menge" (LNG, p. 2311 / LNE, p. 2311).

⁸⁴ "Da gingen mir die Augen auf über vieles, was ich zuvor erlebt habe" (LNG, p. 334r / LNE, p. 336r).

A living god is sickness to our understanding. He intoxicates the soul. He fills us with reeling chaos. How many will God break?⁸⁵

On December 2, 1915, the Dead reappear. Their leader is the ghost of a woman Jung used to know when she was alive and whom he used to associate with “the mystery of Egypt.” The scenes that follow breathe an atmosphere of black Romantic perversion, decadence, and horror. While the Great War is raging in the outer world, the dead appear to be lusting for blood and corpses and are asking Jung to give it to them: “Yes, drink blood [...], suck it up, get your fill from the carcass, there are juices inside, disgusting but nourishing. You must suck, not understand!”⁸⁶ Jung is horrified and filled with revulsion; but amazingly, he gives in to their requests and even offers the Dead his own “heart’s blood.” While reading these passages, one almost feels like the spectator of a horror movie, watching helplessly how the hero is walking open-eyed into a trap, for the situation is clear: having relinquished the last shreds of Christian morality, Jung seems to have abandoned himself to an army of bloodthirsty demons. They mercilessly expose the hypocrisy behind his protestations of love for humanity, make fun of all his feelings, and simply order him to obey:

[...] to Hell with your longings and feelings! [...] God’s will is stronger than yours, you slave, you vessel. You have fallen into the hands of one who is greater. He knows no pity. Your Christian shreds have fallen, the veils that blinded your eyes. [...] I laugh at your outrage. The God knows only power and creation. He commands and you obey.⁸⁷

Jung finally offers himself up as a sacrifice, again identifying explicitly with Christ: “My blood, the juice of my life, may it be your food and your drink. [...] Take, eat, this is my body that lives for you. Take, drink, this is my blood, whose desire flows for you.”⁸⁸ In a horrifying reversal of the Christian Eucharist, Jung is about to seal a blood pact with the devil! Having reached this point in the narra-

⁸⁵ “Ich will es nicht glauben, ich brauche es nicht zu glauben und könnte es auch gar nicht glauben. Wie könnte man derartiges glauben? Mein Geist müsste gänzlich verwirrt sein, um solche Dinge zu glauben. Sie sind doch ihrem ganzen Wesen nach über die Maßen unwahrscheinlich. Nicht nur unwahrscheinlich, sondern für unsern Verstand auch unmöglich. Nur ein krankes Gehirn vermag solche Täuschungen hervorzubringen. Ich gleiche jenen Kranken, die vom Wahn und von Sinnestäuschungen befallen sind. Ich muss aber sagen, dass der Gott uns krank macht. In der Krankheit erfahre ich den Gott. Ein lebendiger Gott ist unserer Vernunft Krankheit. Er füllt die Seele mit Rausch. Er füllt uns mit schwankendem Chaos. Wie viele wird Gott brechen?” (LNG, p. 336 r / LNE, p. 338 r).

⁸⁶ “Ja, Blut trinken, aussaugen, dich am Aase füllen, es sind Säfte darin, zwar eklig, aber nahrhaft. Nicht verstehen, sondern saugen sollst du!” (LNG, p. 337 r / LNE, p. 339 r).

⁸⁷ “Zur Hölle mit deinen Sehnsüchten und Gefühlen! [...] Gottes Wille [ist] stärker als du, du Knecht, du Gefäß. Du bist in die Hände des Größeren gefallen. Er kennt kein Erbarmen. Eure christliche Hüllen sind gefallen, die Schleier, die eure Augen blind machten. [...] Ich lache deiner Empörung. Der Gott kennt nur Macht und Schöpfung. Er befiehlt und du tust” (LNG, pp. 338 r–339 l / LNE, p. 341 l–r).

⁸⁸ “Mein Blut, der Saft meines Lebens, sei eure Speise und euer Trank. ... Nehmet, esset, dies ist mein Leib, der für euch lebt. Nehmet, trinket, dies ist mein Blut, dessen Begierde für euch fließt” (LNG, pp. 339 r–340 l / LNE, p. 342 l).

tive, most readers will be left gasping in bewilderment and confusion. How can Jung be so blind? Is this supposed to be the outcome of his anguished search for his soul? Or is he just taking the death of God to its ultimate nihilist conclusion, embracing the bitter truth that God's empty place can only be filled by demons? This does indeed seem to be Jung's conclusion; but in a last desperate attempt to find rescue, he once again prays to his soul, which is now floating high up in the heavens. After all, it is she who has led him to this point, ever since the moment he called upon her to come back to him. Why has she led him to seal a pact with the demons?

Why did you elect me to be the one who should drink the cess that poured out of Christendom back to humanity? [...] What gives you the right to do such a foul deed to me? Let the cup of disgusting filth pass me by. But if this not be your will, then rise upwards above the fiery heaven and lodge your charges and topple the throne of God, the Dreadful, proclaim the right of Man before the gods too, and take revenge on them for the infamous deed of humanity – for only gods are capable of driving the human worm to commit this colossal act of atrocity.⁸⁹

It is at this moment of ultimate despair and confusion that, all of a sudden, Philemon comes to the rescue. "He stepped next to me, invisibly, and I felt the presence of the Good and the Beautiful."⁹⁰ He explains to Jung that the so-called gods are in fact really demons. They want us to sacrifice ourselves so that they can keep on living, for all they are interested in is power and domination over humanity. Human beings must not listen to them but take their lives in their own hands: "May man rule in the world of men. May his laws apply. But deal with the souls, demons and gods according to their fashion."⁹¹ Once again Jung is severely reprimanded for his egotism, his *Besserwisserei*, and most of all, his messiah-complex: "Whence do you take the right to have opinions about others and exert power over them? You have neglected yourself, your garden is full of weeds, and you want to teach your neighbor about order and point out his shortcomings to him. [...] You don't need to play God."⁹² Most important of all,

⁸⁹ "Warum ersahest du mich als den, der die Jauche, die vom Christentum abfloss, der Menschheit zurücktrinken soll? [...] Woher nimmst du das Recht zu solcher Schandtat an mir? Lass den Becher des abscheulichen Unflates an mir vorübergehen. So es aber deine Wille nicht ist, so steige über die Feuerhimmel empor und erhebe deine Anklage und stürze den Sitz Gottes, des Fürchtbaren, verkünde das Recht des Menschen auch vor den Göttern und räche an ihnen die Schandtat der Menschheit, denn nur Götter vermochten es, den Menschenwurm zu der Gigantengräuelat anzustacheln" (LNG, p. 3401-r / LNE, p. 342 r).

⁹⁰ "Er trat neben mich, unsichtbar, und ich fühlte die Gegenwart des Guten und Schönen" (LNG, p. 340 r / LNE, p. 342 r).

⁹¹ "In der Menschenwelt herrsche der Mensch. Seine Gesetze mögen gelten. Die Seelen, Dämonen und Götter aber behandle nach ihrer Weise" (LNG, pp. 340 r-3411 / LNE, p. 343 l).

⁹² "Woher nimmst du das Recht, am Andern zu meinen oder zu tun? Du hast dich selber vernachlässigt, dein Garten steht voll Unkraut und du willst deinen Nachbar über Ordnung belehren und ihm Mängel nachweisen. [...] Du brauchst nicht Gott zu spielen" (LNG, p. 3411 / LNE, p. 3431-r).

Jung now learns from Philemon that his own soul, too, belongs to the race of the gods and therefore cannot be fully trusted:

You should know that the demons would like to stir you up to do their work, which isn't yours. And you, fool, believe that it is you and that it is your work. Why? Because you are not able to distinguish yourself from your soul. But your *are* distinct from her, and you should not go a-whoring with other souls, as if you were a soul yourself. No, you are a weak human being who needs all his power for his own fulfilment.⁹³

We should remember here how severely Jung had been heaping abuse on himself at the beginning of *Trials*, telling his own "self" that it should not imagine being identical with his soul: "Fill your cup with the bitter drink of inferiority," he told his self, "for you are not your soul. Your soul is with the fiery god [...]"⁹⁴ But Philemon now tells him that his own soul is not to be trusted either. She is a god, and he is just a man. Jung is therefore left with his own deeply flawed personality and can no longer take the high ground by pointing towards his soul as his "true," "higher," or "better" self. He is just who he is: an ignorant "barbarian" in need of redemption. But no such redemption or absolution is to be expected from the gods, who are treacherous and follow their own agendas. Human beings are all on their own and will have to handle their own business as well as they can.

Essentially this is the final message, not only of *Trials*, but of *Liber Novus* as a whole: human beings must finally learn to grow up and stop being the slaves of the gods. They must take responsibility for their own world and their own lives. In the final parts of the book we therefore see how Jung stops believing blindly in anything his soul is telling him, and begins to take control on his own terms. When he calls his soul to account, she first responds like a spoiled and jealous lover who wants everything for herself and expects to be courted. Jung, for his part, seems torn between love for her beauty and fury about what she has been doing to him:

You have dragged me through a Hell of insanity, you tormented me almost to death – and here I am longing for your thanks. [...] Speak, you concubine of Heaven, you divine monster! Have I not fished you from the swamp? [...] Will you get serious? Will you come to your senses? Learn humility, or perhaps even some other human virtue, you soul-less soul-being? Yes – you have no soul, because you are the thing itself, you fiend. So you would like a human soul? Should I perhaps become your earthly soul, so that you

⁹³ "Wisse, dass die Dämonen dich aufpeitschen möchten zu ihrem Werk, das nicht das Deine ist. Und du Narr glaubst, das seiest du selbst und das sei dein Werk. Warum? Weil du dich von deiner Seele nicht unterscheiden kannst. Du bist aber von ihr verschieden, du hast nicht mit andern Seelen Hurerei zu treiben, wie wenn du selber eine Seele wärest, sondern du bist ein ohnmächtiger Mensch, der all seine Kraft nötig hat zur eigenen Vollendung" (LNG, p. 341 l / LNE, p. 343 r).

⁹⁴ "Fülle deinen Becher mit dem bitteren Trank der Unterlegenheit, denn du bist nicht deine Seele. Deine Seele ist bei dem feurigen Gotte [...]" (LNG, p. 332 r / LNE, p. 334 r).

get soul? You see, I have been your apprentice. I have learned how one behaves as a soul: perfectly ambiguous, mysteriously untruthful and hypocritical.⁹⁵

Shocked and hurt by Jung's outburst, his soul now pleads for compassion and mercy. Philemon intervenes to say what Jung cannot (speaking "in his name"), blessing her in formulas derived from the "Hail Mary" prayer. After he has finished, the soul looks "saddened and pleased" and is about to leave, but Jung does not trust it: he feels that she is trying to hide something from him. She has something that belongs to him, but does not want to give it back. His soul denies it and tries all kinds of tricks and excuses to escape from his question, but finally has to give in. She does indeed try to keep something from him:

"You torment me awfully," she wailed, "leave me just this one thing. You human beings still have enough of it. I cannot be without this one thing, this incomparable thing, for whose sake even the gods envy men."

"I will not be unjust," I replied. "But give me what belongs to me, and then beg me for what you need of it. What is it? Speak!"

"Alas, that I cannot keep it and conceal it! It is love, warm human love, blood, warm red blood, the sacred source of life, the unification of everything that is divided and full of longing."⁹⁶

How we should interpret this final message about love remains a matter for debate: after all, Jung could not accept the offer of love when Salome freely gave it to him, but now he wrenches it back from his own soul by sheer force. As far as we can tell from the text, Jung remains utterly incapable of either giving or receiving. Be that as it may, he seems to have won this battle, and now he and his soul embark on a new kind of collaboration on Jung's conditions (although still with quite some reluctance and hesitation on the part of his soul, and quite some suspicion on his own part). His soul wants to bring Jung face to face with "the lord of this world" (identified as "Abraxas" in *The Black Book*), but he hesitates.

⁹⁵ "Du schlepptest mich durch eine Wahnsinnshölle, du quältest mich schier zu Tode – und ich lechze nach deinem Dank. [...] Rede, du Himmelskebbe, du göttliches Scheusal! Habe ich dich nicht aus dem Sumpfe gefischt? ... Solltest du ernsthaft werden? Solltest du dich besinnen? Bescheidenheit lernen oder gar sonst nocht eine menschliche Tugend, du see-lenloses Seelenwesen? Ja – du hast keine Seele, weil du sie selber bist, du Unhold. Du möchtest wohl eine Menschenseele? Soll ich vielleicht deine Erdenseele werden, damit du Seele bekommst? Du siehst, ich bin bei dir in die Schule gegangen. Ich habe gelernt, wie man sich als Seele benimmt, musterhaft zweideutig, geheimnisvoll lügnerisch und gleißnerisch" (LNG, p. 341 r / LNE, p. 344 l).

⁹⁶ "Du quälst mich abscheulich", jammerte sie, "lasse mir doch das Eine. Ihr Menschen habt ja noch genug davon. Ich kann nicht sein ohne dieses Eine, Unvergleichliche, um dessen-willen selbst die Götter die Menschen beneiden". / "Ich werde nicht ungerecht sein", erwiderte ich. "Aber gib mir, was mir zugehört, und wessen du davon bedarfst, darum bettle! Was ist es? Sprich!" / "Ach, dass ich es nicht halten und nicht verbergen kann! Es ist Liebe, warme menschliche Liebe, Blut, das warme rote Blut, der heilige Lebensquell, die Einigung alles Getrennten und Sehnsüchtigen" (LNG, p. 342 r / LNE, p. 344 r).

Instead, on January 29, 1916, the dead return. Presumably, this is the date that Jung referred to in the famous chapter of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* where he describes the strange events that led him to write his *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* (the “Seven Sermons to the Dead”) – the only part of the *Red Book* that got published during his lifetime. The Dead arrive and tell him “We have come back from Jerusalem, where we did not find what we sought. We want you to let us in. You have what we desire. Not your blood, but your light. That is it.”⁹⁷ In the original published version of the “Seven Sermons,” the instructor was identified as the gnostic Basilides, but this now turns out to be a pseudonym for Philemon. The *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* were published first in a private edition of 1916, then as an appendix to *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* in 1961, and have been the subject of several detailed analyses.⁹⁸ These earlier interpretations must obviously be revised and updated from the perspective of its contextualization in *Liber Novus*, but for our present purposes in this article we can leave that task aside. The sermons are primarily a debate between Philemon and the Dead, with Jung in the role of spectator, and in this regard they do stand somewhat on their own.

Jung’s personal lessons keep continuing after the *Septem Sermones*, with an increasing emphasis on the importance of love (still understood by him in a rather instrumental fashion⁹⁹). The dominant theme, however, is that human beings must take responsibility for their own lives. *Liber Novus* ends with a quietly mysterious scene in which Christ (in the shape of “a blue shadow”¹⁰⁰) comes to visit Philemon in his garden and is told that the world has changed. Christ seems a bit insecure: “Is this garden not mine? Doesn’t the world of the heavens and the spirits belong to me?”¹⁰¹ However, he is told respectfully that such is no longer the case: “You are here in the world of men, o Lord. Men have changed. They are no longer the slaves and no longer the deceivers of the gods and no longer mourners in your name, but they grant hospitality to the gods.”¹⁰²

⁹⁷ “Wir kommen zurück von Jerusalem, wo wir nicht fanden, was wir suchten. Wir begehren bei dir Einlass. Du hast, wonach uns verlangt. Nicht dein Blut, dein Licht. Das ist es” (LNG, p. 3441 / LNE, p. 346 r).

⁹⁸ See e.g. Hoeller, Stephan A. (1982): *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead*. Madras/London; and especially Maillard, Christine (1993): *Les Sept Sermons aux Morts de Carl Gustav Jung*. Nancy. For a more complete list, see LNG, p. 344 n. 81 / LNE, p. 346 n. 81.

⁹⁹ See e.g. LNG, p. 3531-r / LNE, pp. 355 r–356 l, where Jung seems to understand love as an almost technical requirement for attaining the true goal of individual self-realization.

¹⁰⁰ The shadow is identified as Christ in *Black Book 6* (see LNG, p. 356 n. 152 / LNE, p. 359 n. 153), not in *Liber Novus*, but this identification is confirmed by many details of the discussion between him and Philemon.

¹⁰¹ “Ist dieser Garten nicht mein Eigentum? Ist nicht die Welt der Himmel und der Geister mein eigen? (LNG, p. 356 r / LNE, p. 359 r).

¹⁰² “Du bist, o Herr, hier in der Welt der Menschen. Die Menschen sind gewandelt. Sie sind nicht mehr die Sklaven und nicht mehr die Betrüger der Götter und nicht mehr Trauernde in deinem Namen, sondern sie gewähren den Göttern gastfreundschaft” (LNG, p. 356 r / LNE, p. 359 r).

Formally the *Red Book* is an unfinished manuscript, but it finds a natural and convincing conclusion here. The Great War of the Soul and Jung's perilous descent into the depths of "divine madness" had almost ended in disaster, with victory for the demons of bloodlust and power. If those demons do not get him in the end, however, that is certainly not to his own credit. In the terms of his own narrative, Jung is saved only through the intervention of his mysterious teacher Philemon, who represents a level of wisdom and understanding that is clearly superior to his own.¹⁰³ Jung himself still has a long way to go.

Concluding Remarks: Entheogenic Religion

What is it, really, that we are reading in *Liber Novus*? On the strictly biographical level of personal psychology, it is clearly the account of a process of self-therapy. On a broader intellectual and cultural level, it documents Jung's struggle to think through and understand the crisis of European consciousness through the prism of his deeply personal experiences, and shows his attempt to find a way through chaos and madness towards some new kind of order and sanity for the future. On yet another level, I would argue that *Liber Novus* is a crucial foundational document for the twentieth-century re-emergence and reconceptualization (on foundations that were created during the nineteenth century) of a specific type of religion.

What kind of religion? In another context, I have recently argued that we need a new terminology to discuss and compare religious practices – from antiquity to the present, and in different cultures of the world – that are grounded in the systematic cultivation of unusual states of consciousness, typically interpreted by practitioners as states of being "filled," "possessed," or "inspired" by some kind of divine entity, presence, or force. With reference to the Greek ἐνθεος, I proposed to refer to this category as *Entheogenic Religion*.¹⁰⁴ The extraordinarily rich vocabulary for such unusual states of consciousness, or states of trance, in classical antiquity suggests that entheogenic religion in this sense was widespread in

¹⁰³ However, see LNG, p. 352 r / LNE, p. 355 l-r for an apparently even higher power, that of the "divine mother" above the gods.

¹⁰⁴ Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2011): Ayahuasca Groups and Networks in the Netherlands: A Challenge to the Study of Contemporary Religion, in: Labate, Beatriz Caiuby – Henrik Jungaberle (eds.): *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca*. Zürich/Berlin, pp. 92–98; idem (2013), *Entheogenic Esotericism*. In Aspren, Egil – Kennet Granholm (eds.): *Contemporary Esotericism*. Sheffield / Bristol, pp. 392–395. The term "Entheogenic Religion" is intended as an alternative to the over-used and problematic Eliadean category of "Shamanism". For a convincing deconstruction of that concept as applied to Greek Antiquity, see Bremmer, Jan N. (1983): *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, Princeton, pp. 24–53; idem (2002): *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife: The 1995 Read-Tuckwell Lectures at the University of Bristol*, London: pp. 27–40.

the Hellenistic world.¹⁰⁵ However, religious practices grounded in alterations of consciousness¹⁰⁶ were generally discredited by normative Christianity and came to be perceived negatively as superstitious pursuits associated with “paganism” and “magic.” With reference to the specific techniques for inducing alterations of consciousness, we can draw a distinction between Entheogenic esotericism *sensu stricto* (based upon the use of psychoactive substances) and *sensu lato* (based upon other techniques for trance induction¹⁰⁷). From this perspective, then, Jung’s *Liber Novus* would clearly fall within the domain of Entheogenic Religion *sensu lato*.¹⁰⁸

A classic example of Entheogenic Religion is the Platonic tradition of *manía*, usually referred to as divine frenzy or divine madness.¹⁰⁹ In Plato’s formulation, it might look to outsiders as if the “seeker of wisdom” is crazy and out of his mind, but in fact he behaves so strangely because he is “full of God” (he is “enthusiastic” in the original and literal sense, as in *Phaedrus* 249 d). We have seen that Romantic Mesmerism was based upon a structurally similar argument: according to its defenders, the visions seen in states of Somnambulant trance might look crazy and irrational from the shallow perspectives on “sanity” proper to normal daytime rationality, but actually revealed the deeper truths of the soul – the “nocturnal side of nature”. *Liber Novus* is based upon the same premises. As far as we can tell from the available evidence, Jung’s overwhelming experience of being “filled”, “possessed” or “inspired” by the *Geist der Tiefe* began spontaneously, as a symptom of his extreme state of emotional stress in the final months of in 1913; but he seems to have learned to navigate it through a technique of visualization referred to as “active imagination.”¹¹⁰ Similar to many other twentieth-century representatives of Entheogenic Religion,¹¹¹ Jung identified the “illness” from which he suffered as a pathological over-emphasis on science and rationali-

¹⁰⁵ Pfister, Friedrich (1970): Ekstase. In *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. Stuttgart², pp. 944–987.

¹⁰⁶ To emphasize the flexibility and fluency of such states, I prefer to speak of “alterations of consciousness” rather than the more traditional terminology “altered states of consciousness.” See Baruss, Imants (2003): *Alterations of Consciousness: An Empirical Analysis for Social Scientists*. Washington.

¹⁰⁷ On the basic techniques for inducing Trance in a religious context, see Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2015): Trance, in: Segal, Robert – Kocku von Stuckrad (eds): *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*. Leiden/Boston.

¹⁰⁸ Many forms of modern and contemporary Entheogenic Religion derive their basic ideas, worldviews, or frameworks for interpretation from Western esoteric traditions and could therefore be described, more specifically, as Entheogenic Esotericism. Whether Jung would fall within that more specific category is debatable, for *Liber Novus* has certainly been influenced by many different esoteric as well as non-esoteric sources and traditions.

¹⁰⁹ See text, above; and cf. Hanegraaff (2010).

¹¹⁰ See Humbert, Elie G. (1971): Active Imagination: Theory and Practice, in: Spring 1971, pp. 101–113; Hull, R.F.C. (1971): Bibliographical Notes on Active Imagination in the Works of C.G. Jung, in: Spring 1971, pp. 115–120.

¹¹¹ I am thinking here of the many spiritual psychotherapies; or therapeutic spiritualities; associated with e.g. Transpersonal Psychology (for instance Stanislav Grof’s practice of

ty alone, which had caused him to seriously neglect the non-rational dimensions of his psyche. Significantly referred to as the *Geist dieser Zeit*, this illness had afflicted not just him personally, but Western culture as a whole. To heal the disbalance that caused the disruption, he began to deliberately welcome and cultivate a state of *mania*.

In the end, Jung concluded, divine madness was not actually an illness from which he needed to be cured in order to return to sanity. On the contrary, the rationalist ideal of “sanity” was the illness, and only by “going mad” would he perhaps have a chance to restore his mental balance and get well. He was convinced that the same logic governed events in the outside world: in a desperate attempt to heal its own pathology, the soul of Europe was going crazy too, and the outcome was uncertain. “Wird auch aus diesem Weltfest des Todes [...] einmal die Liebe steigen?”¹¹² Thomas Mann asked himself at the very end of *Der Zauberberg*. He did not know the answer, and neither did Jung.

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“Holotropic Breathing”, which uses hyperventilation as a means to induce trance), Neo-Shamanism (for instance Michael Harner’s “Core Shamanism”, which uses rhythmic drumming), or Ayahuasca Religions (which uses a psychoactive brew from the Amazon region). For a particularly impressive description of how such types of entheogenic healing work, see the brilliantly written account by Knight, Michael Muhammad (2013): Tripping with Allah. Islam, Drugs, and Writing. Berkeley; and see analysis in Hanegraaff, Wouter J. (2013): Fatima’s Knight. wouterjhanegraaff.blogspot.com (26 December).

¹¹² Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (final line).

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