

On Life after Death

by C.G. Jung

THE NAUTIS PROJECT

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WHAT I HAVE to tell about the hereafter, and about life after death, consists entirely of memories, of images in which I have lived and of thoughts which have buffeted me. These memories in a way also underlie my works; for the latter are fundamentally nothing but attempts, ever renewed, to give an answer to the question of the interplay between the "here" and the "hereafter." Yet I have never written expressly about a life after death; for then I would have had to document my ideas, and I have no way of doing that. Be that as it may, I would like to state my ideas now.

Even now I can do no more than tell stories—"mythologize." Perhaps one has to be close to death to acquire the necessary freedom to talk about it. It is not that I wish we had a life after death. In fact, I would prefer not to foster such ideas. Still, I must state, to give reality its due, that, without my wishing and without my doing anything about it, thoughts of this nature move about within me. I can't say whether these thoughts are true or false, but I do know they are there, and can be given utterance, if I do not repress them out of some prejudice. Prejudice cripples and injures the full phenomenon of psychic life. And I know too little about psychic life to feel that I can set it right out of superior knowledge. Critical rationalism has apparently eliminated, along with so many other mythic conceptions, the idea of life after death. This could only have happened because nowadays most people identify themselves almost exclusively with their consciousness, and imagine that they are only what they know about themselves. Yet anyone with even a smattering of psychology can see how limited this knowledge is. Rationalism and doctrinairism are the disease of our time; they pretend to have all the answers. But a great deal will yet be discovered which our present limited view would have ruled out as impossible. Our concepts of space and time have only approximate validity, and there is therefore a wide field for minor and major deviations. In view of all this, I lend an attentive ear to the strange myths of the psyche, and take a careful look at the varied events that come my way, regardless of whether or not they fit in with my theoretical postulates.

Unfortunately, the mythic side of man is given short shrift nowadays. He can no longer create fables. As a result, a great deal escapes him; for it is important and salutary to speak also of incomprehensible things. Such talk is like the telling of a good ghost story, as we sit by the fireside and smoke a pipe.

What the myths or stories about a life after death really mean, or what kind of reality lies behind them, we certainly do not know. We cannot tell whether they possess any validity beyond their indubitable value as anthropomorphic projections. Rather, we must hold clearly in mind that there is no possible way for us to attain certainty concerning things which pass our understanding.

We cannot visualize another world ruled by quite other laws, the reason being that we live in a specific world which has helped to shape our minds and establish our basic psychic conditions. We are strictly limited by our innate structure and therefore bound by our whole being and thinking to this world of ours. Mythic man, to be sure, demands a "going beyond all that," but scientific man cannot permit this. To the intellect, all my mythologizing is futile speculation. To the emotions, however, it is a healing and valid activity; it gives existence a glamour which we would not like to do without. Nor is there any good reason why we should.

Parapsychology holds it to be a scientifically valid proof of an afterlife that the dead manifest themselves—either as ghosts, or through a medium—and communicate things which they alone could possibly know. But even though there do exist such well-documented cases, the question remains whether the ghost or the voice is identical with the dead person or is a psychic projection, and whether the things said really derive from the deceased or from knowledge which may be present in the unconscious.¹

Leaving aside the rational arguments against any certainty in these matters, we must not forget that for most people it means a great deal to assume that their lives will have an indefinite continuity beyond their present existence. They live more sensibly, feel better, and are more at peace. One has centuries, one has an inconceivable period of time at one's disposal. What then is the point of this senseless mad rush?

Naturally, such reasoning does not apply to everyone. There are people who feel no craving for immortality, and who shudder at the thought of sitting on a cloud and playing the harp for ten thousand years! There are also quite a few who have been so buffeted by life, or who feel such disgust for their own existence, that they far prefer absolute cessation to continuance. But in the majority of cases the question of immortality is so urgent, so immediate, and also so ineradicable that we must make an effort to form some sort of view about it.

¹ Concerning "absolute knowledge" in the unconscious, cf. "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (CW8), pp.48iff.

But how?

My hypothesis is that we can do so with the aid of hints sent to us from the unconscious—in dreams, for example. Usually we dismiss these hints because we are convinced that the question is not susceptible to answer. In response to this understandable skepticism, I suggest the following considerations. If there is something we cannot know, we must necessarily abandon it as an intellectual problem. For example, I do not know for what reason the universe has come into being, and shall never know.

Therefore I must drop this question as a scientific or intellectual problem. But if an idea about it is offered to me—in dreams or in mythic traditions—I ought to take note of it. I even ought to build up a conception on the basis of such hints, even though it will forever remain a hypothesis which I know cannot be proved.

A man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it—even if he must confess his failure. Not to have done so is a vital loss. For the question that is posed to him is the age-old heritage of humanity: an archetype, rich in secret life, which seeks to add itself to our own individual life in order to make it whole. Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known—and that too with limitations—and live in a known framework, just as if we were sure how far life actually extends. As a matter of fact, day after day we live far beyond the bounds of our consciousness; without our knowledge, the life of the unconscious is also going on within us. The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized.

The unconscious helps by communicating things to us, or making figurative allusions. It has other ways, too, of informing us of things which by all logic we could not possibly know. Consider synchronistic phenomena, premonitions, and dreams that come true. I recall one time during the Second World War when I was returning home from Bollingen. I had a book with me, but could not read, for the moment the train started to move I was overpowered by the image of someone drowning. This was a memory of an accident that had happened while I was on military service. During the entire journey I could not rid myself of it. It struck me as uncanny, and I thought, "What has happened? Can there have been an accident?"

I got out at Erienbach and walked home, still troubled by this memory. My second daughter's children were in the garden. The family was living with us, having returned to Switzerland from Paris because of the war. The children stood looking rather upset, and when I asked, "Why, what is the matter?" they told me that Adrian, then the youngest of the boys, had fallen into the water in

the boathouse. It is quite deep there, and since he could not really swim he had almost drowned. His older brother had fished him out. This had taken place at exactly the time I had been assailed by that memory in the train. The unconscious had given me a hint. Why should it not be able to inform me of other things also?

I had a somewhat similar experience before a death in my wife's family. I dreamed that my wife's bed was a deep pit with stone walls. It was a grave, and somehow had a suggestion of classical antiquity about it. Then I heard a deep sigh, as if someone were giving up the ghost. A figure that resembled my wife sat up in the pit and floated upward. It wore a white gown into which curious black symbols were woven. I awoke, roused my wife, and checked the time. It was three o'clock in the morning. The dream was so curious that I thought at once that it might signify a death. At seven o'clock came the news that a cousin of my wife had died at three o'clock in the morning.

Frequently foreknowledge is there, but not recognition. Thus I once had a dream in which I was attending a garden party. I saw my sister there, and that greatly surprised me, for she had died some years before. A deceased friend of mine was also present. The rest were people who were still alive. Presently I saw that my sister was accompanied by a lady I knew well. Even in the dream I had drawn the conclusion that the lady was going to die. "She is already marked," I thought. In the dream I knew exactly who she was. I knew also that she lived in Basel. But as soon as I woke up I could no longer, with the best will in the world, recall who she was, although the whole dream was still vivid in my mind. I pictured all my acquaintances in Basel to see whether the memory images would ring a bell. Nothing!

A few weeks later I received news that a friend of mine had had a fatal accident. I knew at once that she was the person I had seen in the dream but had been unable to identify. My recollection of her was perfectly clear and richly detailed, since she had been my patient for a considerable time up to a year before her death. In my attempt to recall the person in my dream, however, hers was the one picture which did not appear in my portrait gallery of Basel acquaintances, although by rights it should have been one of the first.

When one has such experiences—and I will tell of others like them—one acquires a certain respect for the potentialities and arts of the unconscious. Only, one must remain critical and be aware that such communications may have a subjective meaning as well. They may be in accord with reality, and then again they may not. I have, however, learned that the views I have been able to form on the basis of such hints from the unconscious have been most rewarding. Naturally, I am not going to write a book of revelations about them, but I will acknowledge that I have a "myth" which encourages me to look deeper into this whole realm. Myths are the earliest form of science. When I speak of things after death, I am speaking out of inner prompting, and can go no farther than to

tell you dreams and myths that relate to this subject.

Naturally, one can contend from the start that myths and dreams concerning continuity of life after death are merely compensating fantasies which are inherent in our natures—all life desires eternity. The only argument I can adduce in answer to this is the myth itself.

However, there are indications that at least a part of the psyche is not subject to the laws of space and time. Scientific proof of that has been provided by the well-known J. B. Rhine experiments.² Along with numerous cases of spontaneous foreknowledge, non-spatial perceptions, and so on—of which I have given a number of examples from my own life—these experiments prove that the psyche at times functions outside of the spatio-temporal law of causality. This indicates that our conceptions of space and time, and therefore of causality also, are incomplete. A complete picture of the world would require the addition of still another dimension; only then could the totality of phenomena be given a unified explanation. Hence it is that the rationalists insist to this day that parapsychological experiences do not really exist; for their world-view stands or falls by this question. If such phenomena occur at all, the rationalistic picture of the universe is invalid, because incomplete. Then the possibility of an other-valued reality behind the phenomenal world becomes an inescapable problem, and we must face the fact that our world, with its time, space, and causality, relates to another order of things lying behind or beneath it, in which neither "here and there" nor "earlier and later" are of importance. I have been convinced that at least a part of our psychic existence is characterized by a relativity of space and time. This relativity seems to increase, in proportion to the distance from consciousness, to an absolute condition of timelessness and spacelessness.

Not only my own dreams, but also occasionally the dreams of others, helped to shape, revise, or confirm my views on a life after death. I attach particular importance to a dream which a pupil of mine, a woman of sixty, dreamed about two months before her death. She had entered the hereafter. There was a class going on, and various deceased women friends of hers sat on the front bench. An atmosphere of general expectation prevailed. She looked around for a teacher or lecturer, but could find none. Then it became plain that she herself was the lecturer, for immediately after death people had to give accounts of the total experience of their lives. The dead were extremely interested in the life experiences that the newly deceased brought with them, just as if the acts and experiences taking place in earthly life, in space and time, were the decisive ones.

In any case, the dream describes a most unusual audience whose like could scarcely be found on earth: people burningly interested in the final psychological results of a human life that was in no way remarkable, any more

² Extra-sensory Perception (Boston, 1934); The Reach of the Mind (New York, 1947).

than were the conclusions that could be drawn from it—to our way of thinking. If, however, the "audience" existed in a state of relative non-time, where "termination," "event," and "development" had become questionable concepts, they might very well be most interested precisely in what was lacking in their own condition.

At the time of this dream the lady was afraid of death and did her best to fend off any thoughts about it. Yet death is an important interest, especially to an aging person. A categorical question is being put to him, and he is under an obligation to answer it. To this end he ought to have a myth about death, for reason shows him nothing but the dark pit into which he is descending. Myth, however, can conjure up other images for him, helpful and enriching pictures of life in the land of the dead. If he believes in them, or greets them with some measure of credence, he is being just as right or just as wrong as someone who does not believe in them. But while the man who despairs marches toward nothingness, the one who has placed his faith in the archetype follows the tracks of life and lives right into his death. Both, to be sure, remain in uncertainty, but the one lives against his instincts, the other with them.

The figures from the unconscious are uninformed too, and need man, or contact with consciousness, in order to attain to knowledge. When I began working with the unconscious, I found myself much involved with the figures of Salome and Elijah. Then they receded, but after about two years they reappeared. To my enormous astonishment, they were completely unchanged; they spoke and acted as if nothing had happened in the meanwhile. In actuality the most incredible things had taken place in my life. I had, as it were, to begin from the beginning again, to tell them all about what had been going on, and explain things to them. At the time I had been greatly surprised by this situation. Only later did I understand what had happened: in the interval the two had sunk back into the unconscious and into themselves—I might equally well put it, into timelessness. They remained out of contact with the ego and the ego's changing circumstances, and therefore were ignorant of what had happened in the world of consciousness.

Quite early I had learned that it was necessary for me to instruct the figures of the unconscious, or that other group which is often indistinguishable from them, the "spirits of the departed." The first time I experienced this was on a bicycle trip through upper Italy which I took with a friend in 1910. On the way home we cycled from Pavia to Arona, on the lower part of Lake Maggiore, and spent the night there. We had intended to pedal on along the lake and then through the Tessin as far as Faido, where we were going to take the train to Zurich. But in Arona I had a dream which upset our plans.

In the dream I was in an assemblage of distinguished spirits of earlier centuries; the feeling was similar to the one I had later toward the "illustrious ancestors" in the black rock temple of my 1944 vision. The conversation was conducted in

Latin. A gentleman with a long, curly wig addressed me and asked a difficult question, the gist of which I could no longer recall after I woke up. I understood him, but did not have a sufficient command of the language to answer him in Latin. I felt so profoundly humiliated by this that the emotion awakened me.

At the very moment of awakening I thought of the book I was then working on, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, and had such intense inferiority feelings about the unanswered question that I immediately took the train home in order to get back to work. It would have been impossible for me to continue the bicycle trip and lose another three days. I had to work, to find the answer.

Not until years later did I understand the dream and my reaction. The bewigged gentleman was a kind of ancestral spirit, or spirit of the dead, who had addressed questions to me—in vain! It was still too soon, I had not yet come so far, but I had an obscure feeling that by working on my book I would be answering the question that had been asked. It had been asked by, as it were, my spiritual forefathers, in the hope and expectation that they would learn what they had not been able to find out during their time on earth, since the answer had first to be created in the centuries that followed. If question and answer had already been in existence in eternity, had always been there, no effort on my part would have been necessary, and it could all have been discovered in any other century. There does seem to be unlimited knowledge present in nature, it is true, but it can be comprehended by consciousness only when the time is ripe for it. The process, presumably, is like what happens in the individual psyche: a man may go about for many years with an inkling of something, but grasps it clearly only at a particular moment.

Later, when I wrote the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, once again it was the dead who addressed crucial questions to me. They came—so they said—"back from Jerusalem, where they found not what they sought." This had surprised me greatly at the time, for according to the traditional views the dead are the possessors of great knowledge. People have the idea that the dead know far more than we, for Christian doctrine teaches that in the hereafter we shall "see face to face." Apparently, however, the souls of the dead "know" only what they knew at the moment of death, and nothing beyond that. Hence their endeavor to penetrate into life in order to share in the knowledge of men. I frequently have a feeling that they are standing directly behind us, waiting to hear what answer we will give to them, and what answer to destiny. It seems to me as if they were dependent on the living for receiving answers to their questions, that is, on those who have survived them and exist in a world of change; as if omniscience or, as I might put it, omni-consciousness, were not at their disposal, but could flow only into the psyche of the living, into a soul bound to a body. The mind of the living appears, therefore, to hold an advantage over that of the dead in at least one point: in the capacity for attaining clear and decisive cognitions. As I see it, the three-dimensional world in time and space is like a system of co-ordinates; what is here separated into ordinates and abscissae may

appear "there," in space-timelessness, as a primordial image with many aspects, perhaps as a diffuse cloud of cognition surrounding an archetype. Yet a system of co-ordinates is necessary if any distinction of discrete contents is to be possible. Any such operation seems to us unthinkable in a state of diffuse omniscience, or, as the case may be, of subjectless consciousness, with no spatio-temporal demarcations. Cognition, like generation, presupposes an opposition, a here and there, an above and below, a before and after.

If there were to be a conscious existence after death, it would, so it seems to me, have to continue on the level of consciousness attained by humanity, which in any age has an upper though variable limit. There are many human beings who throughout their lives and at the moment of death lag behind their own potentialities and—even more important—behind the knowledge which has been brought to consciousness by other human beings during their own lifetimes. Hence their demand to attain in death that share of awareness which they failed to win in life.

I have come to this conclusion through observation of dreams about the dead. I dreamed once that I was paying a visit to a friend who had died about two weeks before. In life, this friend had never espoused anything but a conventional view of the world, and had remained stuck in this unreflecting attitude. In the dream his home was on a hill similar to the Tullinger hill near Basel. The walls of an old castle surrounded a square consisting of a small church and a few smaller buildings. It reminded me of the square in front of the castle of Rapperswil. It was autumn. The leaves of the ancient trees had turned gold, and the whole scene was transfigured by gentle sunlight. My friend sat at a table with his daughter, who had studied psychology in Zurich. I knew that she was telling him about psychology. He was so fascinated by what she was saying that he greeted me only with a casual wave of the hand, as though to intimate: "Don't disturb me." The greeting was at the same time a dismissal. The dream told me that now, in a manner which of course remains incomprehensible to me, he was required to grasp the reality of his psychic existence, which he had never been capable of doing during his life.

I had another experience of the evolution of the soul after death when—about a year after my wife's death—I suddenly awoke one night and knew that I had been with her in the south of France, in Provence, and had spent an entire day with her. She was engaged on studies of the Grail there. That seemed significant to me, for she had died before completing her work on this subject. Interpretation on the subjective level—that my anima had not yet finished with the work she had to do—yielded nothing of interest; I know quite well that I am not yet finished with that. But the thought that my wife was continuing after death to work on her further spiritual development—however that may be conceived—struck me as meaningful and held a measure of reassurance for me.

Ideas of this sort are, of course, inaccurate, and give a wrong picture, like a

body projected on a plane or, conversely, like the construction of a four-dimensional model out of a three-dimensional body. They use the terms of a three-dimensional world in order to represent themselves to us. Mathematics goes to great pains to create expressions for relationships which pass empirical comprehension. In much the same way, it is all-important for a disciplined imagination to build up images of intangibles by logical principles and on the basis of empirical data, that is, on the evidence of dreams. The method employed is what I have called "the method of the necessary statement." It represents the principle of *amplification* in the interpretation of dreams, but can most easily be demonstrated by the statements implicit in simple whole numbers.

One, as the first numeral, is unity. But it is also "*the* unity," the One, All-Oneness, individuality and non-duality—not a numeral but a philosophical concept, an archetype and attribute of God, the monad. It is quite proper that the human intellect should make these statements; but at the same time the intellect is determined and limited by its conception of oneness and its implications. In other words, these statements are not arbitrary. They are governed by the nature of oneness and therefore are necessary statements. Theoretically, the same logical operation could be performed for each of the following conceptions of number, but in practice the process soon comes to an end because of the rapid increase in complications, which become too numerous to handle.

Every further unit introduces new properties and new modifications. Thus, it is a property of the number four that equations of the fourth degree can be solved, whereas equations of the fifth degree cannot. The necessary statement of the number four, therefore, is that, among other things, it is an apex and simultaneously the end of a preceding ascent. Since with each additional unit one or more new mathematical properties appear, the statements attain such a complexity that they can no longer be formulated.

The infinite series of natural numbers corresponds to the infinite number of individual creatures. That series likewise consists of individuals, and the properties even of its first ten members represent—if they represent anything at all—an abstract cosmogony derived from the monad. The properties of numbers are, however, simultaneously properties of matter, for which reason certain equations can anticipate its behavior.

Therefore I submit that other than mathematical statements (i.e., statements implicit in nature) are likewise capable of pointing to irrepresentable realities beyond themselves—such, for example, as those products of the imagination which enjoy universal acceptance or are distinguished by the frequency of their occurrence, like the whole class of archetypal motifs. Just as in the case of some factors in mathematical equations we cannot say to what physical realities they correspond, so in the case of some mythological products we do not know

at first to what psychic realities they refer. Equations governing the turbulence of heated gases existed long before the problems of such gases had been precisely investigated. Similarly, we have long been in possession of mythologems which express the dynamics of certain subliminal processes, though these processes were only given names in very recent times.

The maximum awareness which has been attained anywhere forms, so it seems to me, the upper limit of knowledge to which the dead can attain. That is probably why earthly life is of such great significance, and why it is that what a human being "brings over" at the time of his death is so important. Only here, in life on earth, where the opposites clash together, can the general level of consciousness be raised. That seems to be man's metaphysical task—which he cannot accomplish without "mythologizing." Myth is the natural and indispensable intermediate stage between unconscious and conscious cognition. True, the unconscious knows more than consciousness does; but it is knowledge of a special sort, knowledge in eternity, usually without reference to the here and now, not couched in language of the intellect. Only when we let its statements amplify themselves, as has been shown above by the example of numerals, does it come within the range of our understanding; only then does a new aspect become perceptible to us. This process is convincingly repeated in every successful dream analysis. That is why it is so important not to have any preconceived, doctrinaire opinions about the statements made by dreams. As soon as a certain "monotony of interpretation" strikes us, we know that our approach has become doctrinaire and hence sterile.

Although there is no way to marshal valid proof of continuance of the soul after death, there are nevertheless experiences which make us thoughtful. I take them as hints, and do not presume to ascribe to them the significance of insights.

One night I lay awake thinking of the sudden death of a friend whose funeral had taken place the day before. I was deeply concerned. Suddenly I felt that he was in the room. It seemed to me that he stood at the foot of my bed and was asking me to go with him. I did not have the feeling of an apparition; rather, it was an inner visual image of him, which I explained to myself as a fantasy. But in all honesty I had to ask myself, "Do I have any proof that this is a fantasy? Suppose it is not a fantasy, suppose my friend is really here and I decided he was only a fantasy—would that not be abominable of me?" Yet I had equally little proof that he stood before me as an apparition. Then I said to myself, "Proof is neither here nor there! Instead of explaining him away as a fantasy, I might just as well give him the benefit of the doubt and for experiment's sake credit him with reality." The moment I had that thought, he went to the door and beckoned me to follow him. So I was going to have to play along with him! That was something I hadn't bargained for. I had to repeat my argument to myself once more. Only then did I follow him in my imagination.

He led me out of the house, into the garden, out to the road, and finally to his house. (In reality it was several hundred yards away from mine.) I went in, and he conducted me into his study. He climbed on a stool and showed me the second of five books with red bindings which stood on the second shelf from the top. Then the vision broke off. I was not acquainted with his library and did not know what books he owned. Certainly I could never have made out from below the titles of the books he had pointed out to me on the second shelf from the top.

This experience seemed to me so curious that next morning I went to his widow and asked whether I could look up something in my friend's library. Sure enough, there was a stool standing under the bookcase I had seen in my vision, and even before I came closer I could see the five books with red bindings. I stepped up on the stool so as to be able to read the titles. They were translations of the novels of Emile Zola. The title of the second volume read: "The Legacy of the Dead." The contents seemed to me of no interest. Only the title was extremely significant in connection with this experience.

Equally important to me were the dream-experiences I had before my mother's death. News of her death came to me while I was staying in the Tessin. I was deeply shaken, for it had come with unexpected suddenness. The night before her death I had a frightening dream. I was in a dense, gloomy forest; fantastic, gigantic boulders lay about among huge jungle-like trees. It was a heroic, primeval landscape. Suddenly I heard a piercing whistle that seemed to resound through the whole universe. My knees shook. Then there were crashings in the underbrush, and a gigantic wolfhound with a fearful, gaping maw burst forth. At the sight of it, the blood froze in my veins. It tore past me, and I suddenly knew: the Wild Huntsman had commanded it to carry away a human soul. I awoke in deadly terror, and the next morning I received the news of my mother's passing.

Seldom has a dream so shaken me, for upon superficial consideration it seemed to say that the devil had fetched her. But to be accurate the dream said that it was the Wild Huntsman, the "*Grünhult*," or Wearer of the Green Hat, who hunted with his wolves that night—it was the season of Föhn storms in January. It was Wotan, the god of my Alemannic forefathers, who had gathered my mother to her ancestors—negatively to the "wild horde," but positively to the "*sälig lüt*," the blessed folk. It was the Christian missionaries who made Wotan into a devil. In himself he is an important god—a Mercury or Hermes, as the Romans correctly realized, a nature spirit who returned to life again in the Merlin of the Grail legend and became, as the *spiritus Mercurialis*, the sought-after arcanum of the alchemists. Thus the dream says that the soul of my mother was taken into that greater territory of the self which lies beyond the segment of Christian morality, taken into that wholeness of nature and spirit in which conflicts and contradictions are resolved.

I went home immediately, and while I rode in the night train I had a feeling of great grief, but in my heart of hearts I could not be mournful, and this for a strange reason: during the entire journey I continually heard dance music, laughter, and jollity, as though a wedding were being celebrated. This contrasted violently with the devastating impression the dream had made on me. Here was gay dance music, cheerful laughter, and it was impossible to yield entirely to my sorrow. Again and again it was on the point of overwhelming me, but the next moment I would find myself once more engulfed by the merry melodies. One side of me had a feeling of warmth and joy, and the other of terror and grief; I was thrown back and forth between these contrasting emotions.

This paradox can be explained if we suppose that at one moment death was being represented from the point of view of the ego, and at the next from that of the psyche. In the first case it appeared as a catastrophe; that is how it so often strikes us, as if wicked and pitiless powers had put an end to a human life.

And so it is—death is indeed a fearful piece of brutality; there is no sense pretending otherwise. It is brutal not only as a physical event, but far more so psychically: a human being is torn away from us, and what remains is the icy stillness of death. There no longer exists any hope of a relationship, for all the bridges have been smashed at one blow. Those who deserve a long life are cut off in the prime of their years, and good-for-nothings live to a ripe old age. This is a cruel reality which we have no right to sidestep. The actual experience of the cruelty and wantonness of death can so embitter us that we conclude there is no merciful God, no justice, and no kindness.

From another point of view, however, death appears as a joyful event. In the light of eternity, it is a wedding, a *mysterium coniunctionis*. The soul attains, as it were, its missing half, it achieves wholeness. On Greek sarcophagi the joyous element was represented by dancing girls, on Etruscan tombs by banquets. When the pious Cabbalist Rabbi Simon ben Jochai came to die, his friends said that he was celebrating his wedding. To this day it is the custom in many regions to hold a picnic on the graves on All Souls' Day. Such customs express the feeling that death is really a festive occasion.

Several months before my mother's death, in September 1922, I had a dream which presaged it. It concerned my father, and made a deep impression upon me. I had not dreamed of my father since his death in 1896. Now he once more appeared in a dream, as if he had returned from a distant journey. He looked rejuvenated, and had shed his appearance of paternal authoritarianism. I went into my library with him, and was greatly pleased at the prospect of finding out what he had been up to. I was also looking forward with particular joy to introducing my wife and children to him, to showing him my house, and to telling him all that had happened to me and what I had become in the meanwhile. I wanted also to tell him about my book on psychological types, which had

recently been published. But I quickly saw that all this would be inopportune, for my father looked preoccupied. Apparently he wanted something from me. I felt that plainly, and so I refrained from talking about my own concerns.

He then said to me that since I was after all a psychologist, he would like to consult me about marital psychology. I made ready to give him a lengthy lecture on the complexities of marriage, but at this point I awoke. I could not properly understand the dream, for it never occurred to me that it might refer to my mother's death. I realized that only when she died suddenly in January 1923.

My parents' marriage was not a happy one, but full of trials and difficulties and tests of patience. Both made the mistakes typical of many couples. My dream was a forecast of my mother's death, for here was my father who, after an absence of twenty-six years, wished to ask a psychologist about the newest insights and information on marital problems, since he would soon have to resume this relationship again. Evidently he had acquired no better understanding in his timeless state and therefore had to appeal to someone among the living who, enjoying the benefits of changed times, might have a fresh approach to the whole thing.

Such was the dream's message. Undoubtedly, I could have found out a good deal more by looking into its subjective meaning—but why did I dream it just before the death of my mother, which I did not foresee? It plainly referred to my father, with whom I felt a sympathy that deepened as I grew older.

Since the unconscious, as the result of its spatio-temporal relativity, possesses better sources of information than the conscious mind—which has only sense perceptions available to it—we are dependent for our myth of life after death upon the meager hints of dreams and similar spontaneous revelations from the unconscious. As I have already said, we cannot attribute to these allusions the value of knowledge, let alone proof. They can, however, serve as suitable bases for mythic amplifications; they give the probing intellect the raw material which is indispensable for its vitality. Cut off the intermediary world of mythic imagination, and the mind falls prey to doctrinaire rigidities. On the other hand, too much traffic with these germs of myth is dangerous for weak and suggestible minds, for they are led to mistake vague intimations for substantial knowledge, and to hypostatize mere phantasms.

One widespread myth of the hereafter is formed by the ideas and images centering on reincarnation. In one country whose intellectual culture is highly complex and much older than ours → am, of course, referring to India—the idea of reincarnation is as much taken for granted as, among us, the idea that God created the world, or that there is a *spiritus rector*. Cultivated Hindus know that we do not share their ideas about this, but that does not trouble them. In keeping with the spirit of the East, the succession of birth and death is viewed as an endless continuity, as an eternal wheel rolling on forever without a goal.

Man lives and attains knowledge and dies and begins again from the beginning. Only with the Buddha does the idea of a goal emerge, namely, the overcoming of earthly existence.

The mythic needs of the Occidental call for an evolutionary cosmogony with a *beginning* and a *goal*. The Occidental rebels against a cosmogony with a beginning and mere *end*, just as he cannot accept the idea of a static, self-contained, eternal cycle of events. The Oriental, on the other hand, seems able to come to terms with this idea. Apparently there is no unanimous feeling about the nature of the world, any more than there is general agreement among contemporary astronomers on this question. To Western man, the meaninglessness of a merely static universe is unbearable. He must assume that it has meaning. The Oriental does not need to make this assumption; rather, he himself embodies it. Whereas the Occidental feels the need to complete the meaning of the world, the Oriental strives for the fulfillment of meaning in man, stripping the world and existence from himself (Buddha).

I would say that both are right. Western man seems predominantly extraverted. Eastern man predominantly introverted. The former projects the meaning and considers that it exists in objects; the latter feels the meaning in himself. But the meaning is both without and within.

The idea of rebirth is inseparable from that of karma. The crucial question is whether a man's karma is personal or not. If it is, then the preordained destiny with which a man enters life represents an achievement of previous lives, and a personal continuity therefore exists. If, however, this is not so, and an impersonal karma is seized upon in the act of birth, then that karma is incarnated again without there being any personal continuity.

Buddha was twice asked by his disciples whether man's karma is personal or not. Each time he fended off the question, and did not go into the matter; to know this, he said, would not contribute to liberating oneself from the illusion of existence. Buddha considered it far more useful for his disciples to meditate upon the Nidana chain, that is, upon birth, life, old age, and death, and upon the cause and effect of suffering.

I know no answer to the question of whether the karma which I live is the outcome of my past lives, or whether it is not rather the achievement of my ancestors, whose heritage comes together in me. Am I a combination of the lives of these ancestors and do I embody these lives again? Have I lived before in the past as a specific personality, and did I progress so far in that life that I am now able to seek a solution? I do not know. Buddha left the question open, and I like to assume that he himself did not know with certainty.

I could well imagine that I might have lived in former centuries and there encountered questions I was not yet able to answer; that I had to be born again

because I had not fulfilled the task that was given to me. When I die, my deeds will follow along with me—that is how I imagine it. I will bring with me what I have done. In the meantime it is important to insure that I do not stand at the end with empty hands. Buddha, too, seems to have had this thought when he tried to keep his disciples from wasting time on useless speculation.

The meaning of my existence is that life has addressed a question to me. Or, conversely, I myself am a question which is addressed to the world, and I must communicate my answer, for otherwise I am dependent upon the world's answer. That is a suprapersonal life task, which I accomplish only by effort and with difficulty. Perhaps it is a question which preoccupied my ancestors, and which they could not answer. Could that be why I am so impressed by the fact that the conclusion of *Faust* contains no solution? Or by the problem on which Nietzsche foundered: the Dionysian side of life, to which the Christian seems to have lost the way? Or is it the restless Wotan-Hermes of my Alemannic and Frankish ancestors who poses challenging riddles?

What I feel to be the resultant of my ancestors' lives, or a karma acquired in a previous personal life, might perhaps equally well be an impersonal archetype which today presses hard on everyone and has taken a particular hold upon me—an archetype such as, for example, the development over the centuries of the divine triad and its confrontation with the feminine principle; or the still pending answer to the Gnostic question as to the origin of evil, or, to put it another way, the incompleteness of the Christian God-image.

I also think of the possibility that through the achievement of an individual a question enters the world, to which he must provide some kind of answer. For example, my way of posing the question as well as my answer may be unsatisfactory. That being so, someone who has my karma—or I myself—would have to be reborn in order to give a more complete answer. It might happen that I would not be reborn again so long as the world needed no such answer, and that I would be entitled to several hundred years of peace until someone was once more needed who took an interest in these matters and could profitably tackle the task anew. I imagine that for a while a period of rest could ensue, until the stint I had done in my lifetime needed to be taken up again.

The question of karma is obscure to me, as is also the problem of personal rebirth or of the transmigration of souls. "With a free and open mind" I listen attentively to the Indian doctrine of rebirth, and look around in the world of my own experience to see whether somewhere and somehow there is some authentic sign pointing toward reincarnation. Naturally, I do not count the relatively numerous testimonies, here in the West, to the belief in reincarnation. A belief proves to me only the phenomenon of belief, not the content of the belief. This I must see revealed empirically in order to accept it. Until a few years ago I could not discover anything convincing in this respect, although I kept a sharp lookout for any such signs. Recently, however, I

observed in myself a series of dreams which would seem to describe the process of reincarnation in a deceased person of my acquaintance. But I have never come across any such dreams in other persons, and therefore have no basis for comparison. Since this observation is subjective and unique, I prefer only to mention its existence and not to go into it any further. I must confess, however, that after this experience I view the problem of reincarnation with somewhat different eyes, though without being in a position to assert a definite opinion.

If we assume that life continues "there," we cannot conceive of any other form of existence except a psychic one; for the life of the psyche requires no space and no time. Psychic existence, and above all the inner images with which we are here concerned, supply the material for all mythic speculations about a life in the hereafter, and I imagine that life as a continuance in the world of images. Thus the psyche might be that existence in which the hereafter or the land of the dead is located.

From the psychological point of view, life in the hereafter would seem to be a logical continuation of the psychic life of old age. With increasing age, contemplation, and reflection, the inner images naturally play an ever greater part in man's life. "Your old men shall dream dreams."³ That, to be sure, presupposes that the psyches of the old men have not become wooden, or entirely petrified—*sero medicina paratur cum mala per longas convaluere* moms.⁴ In old age one begins to let memories unroll before the mind's eye and, musing, to recognize oneself in the inner and outer images of the past. This is like a preparation for an existence in the hereafter, just as, in Plato's view, philosophy is a preparation for death.

The inner images keep me from getting lost in personal retrospection. Many old people become too involved in their reconstruction of past events. They remain imprisoned in these memories. But if it is reflective and is translated into images, retrospection can be a *reculer pour mieux sauter*. I try to see the line which leads through my life into the world, and out of the world again.

In general, the conception people form of the hereafter is largely made up of wishful thinking and prejudices. Thus in most conceptions the hereafter is pictured as a pleasant place. That does not seem so obvious to me. I hardly think that after death we shall be spirited to some lovely flowering meadow. If everything were pleasant and good in the hereafter, surely there would be some friendly communication between us and the blessed spirits, and an outpouring upon us of goodness and beauty from the prenatal state. But there is nothing of the sort. Why is there this insurmountable barrier between the departed and the living? At least half the reports of encounters with the dead tell of terrifying experiences with dark spirits; and it is the rule that the land of the dead

³ Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28.

⁴ The medicine is prepared too late, when the illness has grown strong by long delay.

observes icy silence, unperturbed by the grief of the bereaved.

To follow out the thought that involuntarily comes to me: the world, I feel, is far too unitary for there to be a hereafter in which the rule of opposites is completely absent. There, too, is nature, which after its fashion is also God's. The world into which we enter after death will be grand and terrible, like God and like all of nature that we know. Nor can I conceive that suffering should entirely cease. Granted that what I experienced in my 1944 visions—liberation from the burden of the body, and perception of meaning—gave me the deepest bliss. Nevertheless, there was darkness too, and a strange cessation of human warmth. Remember the black rock to which I came! It was dark and of the hardest granite. What does that mean? If there were no imperfections, no primordial defect in the ground of creation, why should there be any urge to create, any longing for what must yet be fulfilled? Why should the gods be the least bit concerned about man and creation? About the continuation of the Nidana chain to infinity? After all, the Buddha opposes to the painful illusion of existence his *quod non*, and the Christian hopes for the swift coming of this world's end.

It seems probable to me that in the hereafter, too, there exist certain limitations, but that the souls of the dead only gradually find out where the limits of the liberated state lie. Somewhere "out there" there must be a determinant, a necessity conditioning the world, which seeks to put an end to the after-death state. This creative determinant—so I imagine it—must decide what souls will plunge again into birth. Certain souls, I imagine, feel the state of three-dimensional existence to be more blissful than that of Eternity. But perhaps that depends upon how much of completeness or incompleteness they have taken across with them from their human existence.

It is possible that any further spell of three-dimensional life would have no more meaning once the soul had reached a certain stage of understanding; it would then no longer have to return, fuller understanding having put to rout the desire for re-embodiment. Then the soul would vanish from the three-dimensional world and attain what the Buddhists call nirvana. But if a karma still remains to be disposed of, then the soul relapses again into desires and returns to life once more, perhaps even doing so out of the realization that something remains to be completed.

In my case it must have been primarily a passionate urge toward understanding which brought about my birth. For that is the strongest element in my nature. This insatiable drive toward understanding has, as it were, created a consciousness in order to know what is and what happens, and in order to piece together mythic conceptions from the slender hints of the unknowable.

We lack concrete proof that anything of us is preserved for eternity. At most we can say that there is some probability that something of our psyche continues

beyond physical death. Whether what continues to exist is conscious of itself, we do not know either. If we feel the need to form some opinion on this question, we might possibly consider what has been learned from the phenomena of psychic dissociation. In most cases where a split-off complex manifests itself it does so in the form of a personality, as if the complex had a consciousness of itself. Thus the voices heard by the insane are personified. I dealt long ago with this phenomenon of personified complexes in my doctoral dissertation. We might, if we wish, adduce these complexes as evidence for a continuity of consciousness. Likewise in favor of such an assumption are certain astonishing observations in cases of profound syncope after acute injuries to the brain and in severe states of collapse. In both situations, total loss of consciousness can be accompanied by perceptions of the outside world and vivid dream experiences. Since the cerebral cortex, the seat of consciousness, is not functioning at these times, there is as yet no explanation for such phenomena. They may be evidence for at least a subjective persistence of the capacity for consciousness—even in a state of apparent unconsciousness.⁵

The thorny problem of the relationship between eternal man, the self and earthly man in time and space was illuminated by two dreams of mine.

In one dream, which I had in October 1958, I caught sight from my house of two lens-shaped metallically gleaming disks, which hurtled in a narrow arc over the house and down to the lake. They were two UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects). Then another body came flying directly toward me. It was a perfectly circular lens, like the objective of a telescope. At a distance of four or five hundred yards it stood still for a moment, and then flew off. Immediately afterward, another came speeding through the air: a lens with a metallic extension which led to a box—a magic lantern. At a distance of sixty or seventy yards it stood still in the air, pointing straight at me. I awoke with a feeling of astonishment. Still half in the dream, the thought passed through my head: "We always think that the UFOs are projections of ours. Now it turns out that we are their projections. I am projected by the magic lantern as C. G. Jung. But who manipulates the apparatus?"

I had dreamed once before of the problem of the self and the ego. In that earlier dream I was on a hiking trip. I was walking along a little road through a hilly landscape; the sun was shining and I had a wide view in all directions. Then I came to a small wayside chapel. The door was ajar, and I went in. To my surprise there was no image of the Virgin on the altar, and no crucifix either, but only a wonderful flower arrangement. But then I saw that on the floor in front of the altar, facing me, sat a yogi—in lotus posture, in deep meditation. When I looked at him more closely, I realized that he had my face. I started in profound fright, and awoke with the thought: "Aha, so he is the one who is meditating

⁵ Cf. "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (CW 8), pp. 506 ff.

me. He has a dream, and I am it." I knew that when he awakened, I would no longer be.

I had this dream after my illness in 1944. It is a parable: My self retires into meditation and meditates my earthly form. To put it another way: it assumes human shape in order to enter three-dimensional existence, as if someone were putting on a diver's suit in order to dive into the sea. When it renounces existence in the hereafter, the self assumes a religious posture, as the chapel in the dream shows. In earthly form it can pass through the experiences of the three-dimensional world, and by greater awareness take a further step toward realization.

The figure of the yogi, then, would more or less represent my unconscious prenatal wholeness, and the Far East, as is often the case in dreams, a psychic state alien and opposed to our own. Like the magic lantern, the yogi's meditation "projects" my empirical reality. As a rule, we see this causal relationship in reverse: in the products of the unconscious we discover mandala symbols, that is, circular and quaternary figures which express wholeness, and whenever we wish to express wholeness, we employ just such figures. Our basis is ego-consciousness, our world the field of light centered upon the focal point of the ego. From that point we look out upon an enigmatic world of obscurity, never knowing to what extent the shadowy forms we see are caused by our consciousness, or possess a reality of their own. The superficial observer is content with the first assumption. But closer study shows that as a rule the images of the unconscious are not produced by consciousness, but have a reality and spontaneity of their own. Nevertheless, we regard them as mere marginal phenomena.

The aim of both these dreams is to effect a reversal of the relationship between ego-consciousness and the unconscious, and to represent the unconscious as the generator of the empirical personality. This reversal suggests that in the opinion of the "other side," our unconscious existence is the real one and our conscious world a kind of illusion, an apparent reality constructed for a specific purpose, like a dream which seems a reality as long as we are in it. It is clear that this state of affairs resembles very closely the Oriental conception of Maya.⁶

Unconscious wholeness therefore seems to me the true *spiritus rector* of all biological and psychic events. Here is a principle which strives for total realization—which in man's case signifies the attainment of total consciousness. Attainment of consciousness is culture in the broadest sense, and self-knowledge is therefore the heart and essence of this process. The Oriental attributes unquestionably divine significance to the self, and according to the

⁶ A tendency to question the locus of reality manifested itself early in Jung's life, when as a child he sat upon the stone and toyed with the idea that the stone was saying, or was, "I." Cf. the well-known butterfly dream in Chuangtzu. - A.J.

ancient Christian view self-knowledge is the road to knowledge of God.

The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life. Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interest upon futilities, and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance. Thus we demand that the world grant us recognition for qualities which we regard as personal possessions: our talent or our beauty. The more a man lays stress on false possessions, and the less sensitivity he has for what is essential, the less satisfying is his life. He feels limited because he has limited aims, and the result is envy and jealousy. If we understand and feel that here in this life we already have a link with the infinite, desires and attitudes change. In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted. In our relationships to other men, too, the crucial question is whether an element of boundlessness is expressed in the relationship.

The feeling for the infinite, however, can be attained only if we are bounded to the utmost. The greatest limitation for man is the "self; it is manifested in the experience: "I am *only* that!" Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious. In such awareness we experience ourselves concurrently as limited and eternal, as both the one and the other. In knowing ourselves to be unique in our personal combination—that is, ultimately limited—we possess also the capacity for becoming conscious of the infinite. But only then!

In an era which has concentrated exclusively upon extension of living space and increase of rational knowledge at all costs, it is a supreme challenge to ask man to become conscious of his uniqueness and his limitation. Uniqueness and limitation are synonymous. Without them, no perception of the unlimited is possible—and, consequently, no coming to consciousness either—merely a delusory identity with it which takes the form of intoxication with large numbers and an avidity for political power.

Our age has shifted all emphasis to the here and now, and thus brought about a daemonization of man and his world. The phenomenon of dictators and all the misery they have wrought springs from the fact that man has been robbed of transcendence by the shortsightedness of the super-intellectuals. Like them, he has fallen a victim to unconsciousness. But man's task is the exact opposite: to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious. Neither should he persist in his unconsciousness, nor remain identical with the unconscious elements of his being, thus evading his destiny, which is to create more and more consciousness. As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. It may even be assumed that just as the unconscious affects us, so the increase in our consciousness affects the unconscious.