



THE CRY OF MERLIN: JUNG, THE PROTOTYPICAL ECOPSYCHOLOGIST

THE DAIRY FARMER'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE
VOLUME II

DENNIS L. MERRITT, PH.D.

THE CRY OF MERLIN:
JUNG, THE PROTOTYPICAL
ECOPSYCHOLOGIST

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The four volumes of *The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe* offer a comprehensive presentation of Jungian ecopsychology. Volume 1, *Jung and Ecopsychology*, examines the evolution of the Western dysfunctional relationship with the environment, explores the theoretical framework and concepts of Jungian ecopsychology, and describes how it could be applied to psychotherapy, our educational system, and our relationship with indigenous peoples. Volume 2, *The Cry of Merlin: Jung, the Prototypical Ecopsychologist*, reveals how an individual's biography can be treated in an ecopsychological manner and articulates how Jung's life experiences make him the prototypical ecopsychologist. Volume 3, *Hermes, Ecopsychology, and Complexity Theory*, provides an archetypal, mythological and symbolic foundation for Jungian ecopsychology. Volume 4, *Land, Weather, Seasons, Insects: An Archetypal View* describes how a deep, soulful connection can be made with these elements through a Jungian ecopsychological approach. This involves the use of science, myths, symbols, dreams, Native American spirituality, imaginal psychology and the *I Ching*. Together, these volumes provide what I hope will be a useful handbook for psychologists and environmentalists seeking to imagine and enact a healthier relationship with their psyches and the world of which they are a part.

My thanks to Craig Werner for his comprehensive and sensitive editorial work, and to Tom Lane and David McKee for their constructive comments.

To my father, my grandfathers, and The Grandfathers

The peasant's alternating rhythm of work secures him unconscious satisfactions through its symbolical content—satisfactions which the factory workers and office employees do not know and can never enjoy. What do these know of his life with nature, of those grand moments when, as lord and fructifier of the earth, he drives his plough through the soil, and with a kingly gesture scatters the seed for the future harvest; of his rightful fear of the destructive power of the elements, of his joy in the fruitfulness of his wife who bears him the daughters and sons who mean increased working-power and prosperity?...From all this we city-dwellers, we modern machine-minders, are far removed.

—Carl Jung, *CW* 7, ¶ 428

INTRODUCTION

Carl Jung's life is one of the great psychological and spiritual journeys of the last century. As a biologist and ecologist I am impressed with how deeply Jung was connected with nature and how that connection affected the development of his ideas. His life provided the basis for his theoretical constructs, the practice of Jungian psychology, and the basic elements of Jungian ecopsychology presented in volume 1 of *The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe*. Ecopsychology is a new field that emerged in the 1990s to examine how our values, perceptions and attitudes affect our relationship with the environment. Like deep ecology it explores ways of connecting us more deeply with the environment, calls for a deep analysis of our dysfunctional relationship with the environment, and examines the psychological dimensions of the challenges of developing a sustainable human culture.

Jung's holistic, integrated perspective on life and nature, shaped by and in turn shaping his concept of the archetypes, makes him a prototypical ecopsychologist and deep ecologist. Jung viewed every psychology as a subjective confession and examining his life reveals both the profundity of and the lacuna in his constructs, particularly in relation to Christianity. (n 1) Delineating this lacuna and understanding Jung's ideas within the broader framework of his life, place and times can be seen as an ecopsychological exercise. Jung's identification with the archetypal figure of Merlin is associated with his interest in the Medieval attempt to address the questions of evil and the European pagan unconscious, which Jung considered to be the main questions of our time.

* Note: MDR refers throughout the text to C.G. Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* and CW refers throughout the text to *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*.

CHAPTER 1

Jung's Formative Years and his Connection with Nature

Jung's deep connection with nature begins with his cultural and national experience of being Swiss. The Swiss are defined by their admiring relationship with their beautiful Alps. They are enthusiastic hikers, and the Alps are laced with breathtaking trails. One can hike for hours, turn a bend in the trail, and come across a small restaurant where a cup of hot chocolate can be had—nature and culture united. The Swiss national identity is based on the myth of the democratic, yeoman dairy farmers of the Alps—"alp" meaning "mountain meadow." They preserve this identity in stories like Wilhelm Tell and in subsidies for Alpine farmers—the higher the farm, the greater the subsidy. How else could a 21st century farmer survive by cutting hay with a scythe on a mountain-side? The isolation of mountain valley villages kept alive a mythology of the land and its spirits long after other countries had banished these stories to academic presses and children's books. (n 2) To this day one can witness "pagan" festivals in many Swiss cities and towns. (n 3)

Jung was born into this archaic cultural and natural milieu in 1875 and spent his boyhood years in the country with Swiss peasants. As a psychologist he emphasized the importance of the natural and cultural background on an individual's nature. A significant cultural influence on Jung's development and character is the centuries-old democratic tradition in Switzerland. Barbara Hannah, a Jungian analyst who lived in Switzerland and wrote one of the best biographies on Jung, wrote, "Democracy, in the best sense of the word, is born and bred in the Swiss." (Hannah 1991, p. 12) Important government decisions are put to the direct vote of the people, who, like Jung, take their citizenship responsibilities seriously. Democracy at its best is an ecopsychological concept because all elements are given a voice and integrated into the whole. A second key factor was Switzerland's decision over 400 years ago to avoid external wars. Jung said the Swiss "introverted war" by using their warlike instincts against each other "in the form of domes-

tic quarrels called 'political life.'" Although an improvement over projecting one's shadow (dark side) onto other nations, Jung believed "the only struggle that is really worth while [is] the fight against the overwhelming power-drive of the shadow." (CW 10, ¶ 455) Owning one's shadow is a humbling experience that inhibits the projection of evil onto others by way of justifying wars or decimating nature in the process of trying to control its unruly forces. Jung's Swiss heritage both aided and complicated his struggle with the shadow.

Born in a small village in rural Switzerland, Jung's experiences with the natural environment in his early years made a deep impact on his whole life. He was always close to nature in his youth and his contact with the peasants left him imbued as an adult with a certain realistic and down-to-earth attitude. (n 4) He was immersed in a Swiss landscape decades before the advent of automobiles and freeways, suburbs and TVs. His earliest memory was of lying in his baby stroller and noticing the soft play of sunlight on the leaves above him. (MDR, p. 6) He distinctly remembered seeing the Alps for the first time: an aunt held him up to see the sunset on Uetliberg in the distance, which became the land of his dreams. He was to spend his adult life living across from the Uetliberg in Zurich. As a child he remembered becoming completely enthralled by the dance of sunlight on the waves on the lake: his parents could not pull him away. "I must live near a lake, without water, I thought, nobody could live at all." (p. 7) As an adult he built a grand home on the lakeshore in Kusknacht just south of Zurich.

Jung was a lonely, isolated child who lived largely in his intrapsychic world as a consequence of his dysfunctional family situation and unusual childhood. His difficult early life added an archetypal dimension to his experience of nature. Powerful dreams, visions and spontaneous symbolic activities punctuated Jung's life and kept him connected with the archetypal realm. As a child he spent endless hours alone playing games he invented and only he could play. (Bair 2003, p. 22) He couldn't bear to be watched as he played. He made few friends and was described as being an "asocial monster." (p. 23) Jung grew up as an only child for the first 9-1/2 years of his life, the son of a poor country minister in a society where class and money were important. Both parents were from a long line of ministers and Jung had many uncles who were ministers. He suffered from the minister's child syndrome where parishioners watch the family with a critical eye, taking a secret delight in their missteps and problems. (Hannah 1991, p. 27) Not surprisingly, spiritual questions became an early focus in his life.

Jung's mother was severely depressed when Jung was born and for years after spent much time alone in her room. She found rural life away from family roots in Basel to be dismal and suffered through several miscarriages before Jung was born. Her marriage did not go well, and Jung overheard terrible fights as his father's seething anger exploded at his mother behind closed doors. (Bair 2003, p. 20) Jung suffered from a terrible eczema he later attributed to being around his dismal parents. Attachment theorists understand the trauma to Jung's psyche when his mother disappeared into the hospital for months at a time when Jung was 3 years old. He felt abandoned by his mother and for decades distrusted love and women. (MDR, p. 8) (see Appendix G: Jung's Eros Wound and his Image of God)

A maid who cared for Jung while his mother was away came to symbolize the "essence of womanhood" and later the basis of his concept of the anima, the "inner woman" in a man. She seemed "very strange and yet strangely familiar." Jung felt she belonged only to him and was somehow connected "with other mysterious things I could not understand." (MDR, p. 8) The situation was compounded by a histrionic mother who openly and enthusiastically talked about ghosts and spirits that visited her at night. Jung was terrified of his mother at night and once had an apparition of a ghost with detaching heads emerging from her bedroom. (p. 18) He often had choking fits and once nearly fell into the Rhine River, an incident he later attributed to "a fatal resistance to life in this world." (p. 9)

Adding to this background were three powerful experiences that provided the context for a nightmare at age 3 or 4 that laid the psychological foundation for the rest of Jung's life and a sense of a spirit of the earth. The first was watching his father preside over the funerals of people who drowned in the Rhine. Jung was fascinated by these victims who got buried in black boxes in the ground, rendering them no longer present after Lord Jesus had taken them to himself. (MDR, p. 10) The second experience was playing beside the road in front of his house and a Catholic priest came walking by. Jung fled in a panic at the sight of this unusual man wearing a dress. He had overheard his father speaking in anxious tones about the Jesuits, so they must be dangerous people. (p. 10, 11) (n 5) The third ingredient for the nightmare was a childhood misunderstanding of a bedtime song his mother sang to him. It seemed to young Jung she was singing about Jesus as some kind of winged bird who reluctantly "took" children like bitter medicine to prevent Satan from eating them. (p. 9, 10)

In Jung's nightmare, he discovered an underground temple hewn out of stone that enclosed a giant phallus sitting on a golden throne. A single eye atop its head gazed upward into an aura of brightness. Jung was terrified that the motionless object might start creeping towards him. His mother's voice called out, "That is the man-eater!" (MDR, p. 11, 12) Jung awoke in terror and was afraid to fall asleep for several nights afterwards.

The dream haunted him for years. Decades later he realized the phallus had a sanctity that was worshipped in ancient rituals and ceremonies. (n 6) He interpreted the underground temple to be a tomb, and linked the phallus as the source of the light above it with the etymology of the word phallus: "shining, bright." (MDR, p. 12, 13) (n 7) Jesus was never quite acceptable or lovable after the nightmare because of his association with death and "his underground counterpart." The dream "brought the Above and the Below together" while the phallus as an underground God "not to be named" initiated Jung "into the secrets of the earth" and "the realm of darkness." The dream set his life's goal: "to bring the greatest possible amount of light" into that realm. (p. 15) This "ur-experience," as Jung described it, became the foundation of his concept of the Spirit in nature and of God in matter, and eventually led to his psycho-spiritual interest in alchemy. The dream encapsulated a basic element in Jung's personality and his relationship to his inner and outer worlds as a veiled, secret and hidden phallic energy "undisclosed apart from its maternal or feminine containment." (Noel 1974, p. 239, 240) (see Appendix H: Jung's Phallic Self Image)

Jung confessed at the end of his life that his childhood experiences of processes in the background shaped his entire life and his early dreams "determined my course from the beginning." (MDR, p. 356) (n 8) He said his nightmare ushered in the unconscious beginnings of his intellectual life. (p. 15) An experience that powerful and frightening can stimulate the mind of a child to be more vigilant and struggle to figure things out, a development that can produce a premature split between psyche and soma. (Winnicott 1949/1975)

There are symbolic, mythic and sacred dimensions of the phallus associated with intellectual life, a *joie de vivre*, Eros and healing—all strong qualities in Jung's adult life. (n 9) The sacred dimension of the phallus is particularly important for the Western male since Christianity has no sacred image of phallic energy. The sharpest contrast is presented in a Hindu myth of Super Shiva—Creator, Maintainer, and Destroyer—worshipped as a prodigious phallus. (n 10)

Jung survived his childhood aided by symbolic activities in nature. He was fascinated with fire and stone between the ages of 7 and 9 and tried to keep a fire burning forever in the small cave of an old stone wall, a “living” fire that had “an unmistakable aura of sanctity.” (MDR, p. 19, 20) He loved to sit on “his stone” that he felt a secret relationship with. It perplexed him for hours at a time whether he was the one sitting on the stone or was he the stone upon which young Jung sat. He could so completely identify with the stone that he had the unpleasant feeling of being out of himself. Such experiences lent a “quality of eternity” to his childhood—the eternal, archetypal domain that every child experiences. (p. 20, 21) (n 11)

Jung engaged in a highly symbolic activity at age 10 that helped transform the fearful phallic energy of his nightmare into a more human and personal form. (Hannah 1991, p. 34) He carved an old ruler into a manikin and painted it black. The figure had several associations to the men who stood around the graves at funerals: it had a frock coat, top hat, and boots. He lay the manikin in a little bed in a pencil case that included *his* stone—a smooth stone from the Rhein that Jung painted so it looked like it had an upper and lower half. He hid the pencil case in the attic where no one could find it. Occasionally a little scroll of paper was placed in it upon which Jung had written, in a secret language, the things that pleased him; a communication that “had the character of a solemn ceremonial act.” “It was an inviolable secret which must never be betrayed for the safety of my life depended on it,” Jung wrote. (MDR, p. 21, 22) He would think about the manikin whenever he felt guilty, hurt, or oppressed by his father’s irritability or his mother’s invalidism. (Jung had many anxiety dreams and choking fits prior to puberty associated with the unbearable atmosphere at home.) (p. 18) The manikin exemplified what he called a symbol: “The best unconscious expression at the time for something that is essentially unknown.” (Hannah 1991, p. 33)

He subsequently forgot about the manikin until age 35 when he read about soul stones (stones believed to carry the souls of people) during preliminary studies for *Symbols of Transformation*. Such stones are found near Arlesheim, France and were the revered *churingas* of the Australian aborigines. Stones are considered to be eternal because it appears they will last forever. The stone was the supply of the life force for Jung’s manikin—a very pagan notion. (n 12) In the Von Eschenbach version of the Grail story the grail is a stone. Jung’s readings about soul stones gave him his first awareness of what he would come to call archetypes—

psychic components of our collective unconscious. The adult Jung recognized the manikin as “a little cloaked god of the ancient world, a Telesphoros such as stands on the monuments of Asklepios [Greek god of healing] and reads to him from a scroll.” (MDR, p. 23) (see Appendix H) Antique gods “sometimes represented by a human figure and sometimes by a phallus,” were placed in special receptacles for sacred objects (kistas). (Hannah 1991, p. 34)

Jung attributed his childhood nightmare to more than dysfunctional family dynamics and experiencing a fearful side of his mother. At its core Jung believed he had imbibed a “religious faith [that] had lost its original living quality” and had been reduced to empty religious forms and rigid collective values. (von Franz 1975, p. 15) When God seems to die, the energy formally contained by the cultural God image turns dark and negative as it returns to the underworld, the depths of the collective unconscious. It energizes the depths and can first appear there in the form of a phallus. (p. 16, 17, 29, 30) Christ’s energies become “God’s reflection in physical nature.” (CW 13, ¶ 284; von Franz 1975, p. 30) In the depths, the energies can be transformed “into a hidden nature-god of creativity,” transformed into positive, life-enforcing and supportive energies as illustrated by Jung’s manikin with its stone. (von Franz 1975, p. 29) (n 13)

Jung considered the secrets of the manikin, the phallus dream, and the Jesuit experience to be the essential features of his boyhood, belonging to a mysterious realm associated with nature. (MDR, p. 22) Late in life he would extol the virtues of having an inviolable secret to further the development of one’s unique character and an inner guidance. (n 14) He felt it was vitally important for a person to “sense that he lives in a world which in some respects is mysterious,” where inexplicable things happen that can’t be anticipated. (MDR, p. 356)

Nature reflected Jung’s inner state as a child; it incorporated both the beauty of the bright daylight world and a world of shadows “filled with frightening, unanswerable questions which had me at their mercy.” (MDR, p. 19) His interest “in plants, animals, and stones grew” as he searched nature for answers to the strange mystery of life. His Christian beliefs were qualified by “that thing under the ground,” a secret “that people don’t know about.” (p. 22)

When attending Gymnasium in Basel during his twelfth year, Jung began a neurotic pattern of fainting spells that kept him out of school for 6 months. (n 15) During that time he plunged into the “world of

the mysterious” that entailed avid reading in his father’s library and spending a great deal of time in nature. (MDR, p. 30, 31) Everything in nature “seemed alive and indescribably marvelous” as he tried to crawl “into the very essence of nature and away from the whole human world.” (p. 32) Many children keep some semblance of sanity in difficult childhoods by escaping into nature if only by climbing a favorite tree in their backyard. Eventually Jung was embarrassed to realize he had led himself astray by “my passion for being alone, my delight in solitude.” He forced himself to recover, an event he saw as marking the beginnings of a life of conscientiousness and “an unusual diligence.” (p. 32)

The experience with the manikin and the heroic ego-strengthening effort of overcoming the fainting spells helped Jung emerge from the “dense cloud” of his childhood in his eleventh or twelfth year. (Hannah 1991, p. 44) What emerged was an individual with a firm sense of authority and self-will. Previously *he had been* willed to do things. (MDR, p. 32, 33) What also emerged was a dissociative experience of living in two ages simultaneously and being two different people. One person was a paltry ego now aware of his poor background and the other was an old man of dignity, power, authority, respect and awe; a man of the eighteenth century, a century with which Jung felt a curious and strong identity. (p. 33, 34) The manikin had evolved into a formulation of the Self that could serve as the archetypal base for the development of a healthy and whole ego. The “old man” compensated for Jung’s inadequacies in dealing with a harsh world and it kept him in touch with a childlike sense of wholeness and the archetypal realm of the collective unconscious in all of us.

In addition, Jung started praying to God, a unique being of a secret nature for whom “it was impossible to form any correct conception.” God was not linked with Jung’s distrust of his familiar image of Jesus or associated with black robed priests. (MDR, p. 27) His complex apprehension of God and nature would continue to occupy his thoughts as he passed through adolescence.

CHAPTER 2

The Dark Side of God and “God’s World” as Nature

The dualities Jung felt in his life, nature, and God were crystallized in “the most shattering” experience in his life—an experience at age twelve of “the dark side of God.” (Bair 2003, p. 846 note 41) It began with Jung walking by the Basel Cathedral on a fine summer day and being overwhelmed by its beauty and the beauty of the world. As he thought of God the creator high above on a golden throne, he suddenly choked up and was numbed by the feeling there was something he dare not think. After struggling valiantly for three days and nights to prevent the forbidden thought from breaking through, he finally arrived at the conclusion God himself was forcing him to think this thought. He felt he was leaping into hell fire as he let the image emerge: God high in heaven let loose a gigantic turd from beneath his golden throne that destroyed the Basel Cathedral! (MDR, p. 36-39)

Jung immediately felt an enormous, indescribable relief and a sense of grace, unutterable bliss, and illumination. He felt freed by the realization that “the immediate living God...stands, omnipotent and free, above His Bible and His Church, who calls upon man to partake of His freedom, and can force him to renounce his own views and convictions in order to fulfill without reserve the command of God...One must be utterly abandoned to God; nothing matters but fulfilling His will.” (MDR, p. 40) (n 16) He was shamed by this horrible, secret realization that God could be something terrible, but also felt a kind of distinction for knowing this. (p. 40, 41) (n 17)

This powerful experience of God’s dark side increased Jung’s sense of a great mystery in life and in nature and laid the foundation for his reliance upon messages from the unconscious. He felt liberated and began a life-long and private task of intensely searching God’s intentions. It emboldened him to pursue thoughts and philosophical and spiritual paths beyond the pale of conventional viewpoints.

Finding no readings in his father's library to support his experience, Jung was left to brood over his dark secret. At such times he felt strangely reassured and calmed when he sat on his stone. The conflict would cease when he thought he was the stone—the Other that was timeless and imperishable. While Jung felt he was the sum of his emotions, the stone was eternal, with no uncertainties and no need to communicate. (MDR, p. 42)

At age 15 Jung still suffered many rejections and felt “unworthy, undeserving and unlikable.” (Bair 2003, p. 30) While compensating for insecurity and guilt over his many faults, he began to grow more aware of having two personalities. Personality No. 1 was his faulty ego, while Personality No. 2 was closely associated with God *in* nature. It had evolved out of his experience of the timeless world of stone and the phallus-manikin-18th century man:

[No. 2 was old], skeptical, mistrustful, remote from the world of men, but close to nature, the earth, the sun, the moon, the weather, all living creatures, and above all close to the night, to dreams, and to whatever “God” worked directly in him. (MDR, p. 44, 45)

Nature seemed to be a better expression of God than His human creation. To enter God's realm was like entering a temple where one was

transformed and suddenly overpowered by a vision of the whole cosmos, so that he could only marvel and admire, forgetful of himself. Here lived the “Other,” who knew God as a hidden, personal, and at the same time suprapersonal secret. Here nothing separated man from God; indeed, it was as though the human mind looked down upon Creation simultaneously with God. (MDR, p. 45)

Noticeable by its absence is the archetype of Eros in the form of love, intimacy and the warmth of human relationships, of the archetypal image of Jesus as a god of love. Jung experienced a feeling of self-worth and being his true self when he passed into “the peace and solitude of this ‘Other,’ Personality No. 2.” (p. 45) At age 14 he felt God was physically present when he was atop Rigi mountain on Lake Lucern; *that* was His world, “the real world, the secret.” (p. 78)

During that fourteenth year he had a Dionysian experience of “an entirely new and unexpected state of consciousness” when he got “shamefully, gloriously, triumphantly drunk.” The painful dichotomies

of inner/outer, I/other dissolved into a oneness with the universe and everything in it—"a premonition of beauty and meaning." (MDR, p. 77) Dionysus was the Greek god of the vine, wine making, ritual madness, and ecstasy. His energies are associated with the goddess cults of the ancient Middle East where beer and wine were made in the temples for the wild, erotic festivals of the Sacred Prostitute. Ecstatic and erotic energies were used to enter divine and prophetic states. (see volume 3 of *The Dairy Farmer's Guide*, Appendix G: The Sacred Prostitute and the Erotic Feminine and Appendix H: The Black Goddess)

Church gradually became a torment for the adolescent Jung because men dared to pretend they knew God's will and intentions. Jung was devastated by his first communion at age 15 when he felt God was absent. (MDR, p. 52-56) People knew "nothing of the vast despair, the overpowering elation and the outpouring of grace which...constituted the essence of God." (p. 55) Jung had a growing sense of destiny and responsibility for the fate assigned to him. "I knew that I had to find the answer out of my deepest self," he wrote, "that I was alone before God, and that God alone asked me these terrible things." (p. 47) Often he had "the feeling that in all decisive matters I was no longer among men, but was alone with God." Then he was outside time and "belonged to the centuries...Talks with the 'Other' were my profoundest experiences:...a bloody struggle...[and a] supreme ecstasy." (p. 48)

There was no one he could communicate these thoughts to. He realized the dark side of human nature, above all in himself. (Hannah 1991, p. 50) Jung played alone and spent much time alone in his secret world, sustained by his connection with nature. This long and profound passage reflects his adolescent feelings about animals, plants, and stones and their relationship to God's world:

Because they are so closely akin to us and share our unknowingness, I loved all warm-blooded animals who have souls like ourselves and with whom, so I thought, we have an instinctive understanding. We experience joy and sorrow, love and hate, hunger and thirst, fear and trust in common—all the essential features of existence with the exception of speech, sharpened consciousness, and science. And although I admired science in the conventional way, I also saw it giving rise to alienation and aberration from God's world, as leading to a degeneration which animals were not capable of. Animals were dear and faithful, unchanging and trustworthy. People I now distrusted more than ever.

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Front Cover: Jung's relief carving on the side of his Bollingen Tower, a place he associated with Merlin. The inscription reads, “*May the light arise, which I have borne in my body.*” The woman reaching out to milk the mare is Jung's anima, his inner feminine, as “a millennia-old ancestress.” The image is an anticipation of the Age of Aquarius, under the constellation of Pegasus, the winged horse. The feminine element is said to receive a special role in this new eon. Jung suggested that the springs gushing forth from the hoof prints of Pegasus, also known as the “fount horse,” are associated with the Water Bearer, the symbol of Aquarius.

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