

CARL JUNG, FATHER VICTOR WHITE AND THE BOOK OF JOB

Abstract: this article concerns the nature of friendship and of that between Carl Jung and Victor White and of their philosophical discourse on the nature of God. While this piece cannot answer the question of how evil as well as good came into the world, that dialogue is instructive as to the realms of thought on that issue. Central to this is the text of the Book of Job and what it may mean in enabling speculation as to the Divine nature.

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Introduction

There were two men with whom the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung could speak about matters which touched him personally; Earnest Newman, who lived in Israel, and Father Victor White, an English Dominican priest who, despite living in England, visited Jung and stayed with him over several successive summers from 1946 in the intimate setting of his primitive tower by the lake in Bollingen. That friendship ended in what Jung regarded as betrayal and Father White thought of as pique. The overt cause was a review that the Dominican wrote in Blackfriars Magazine in 1955 of the psychologist's book *Answer to Job*. This article considers the dynamic of this unlikely friendship and how philosophical disengagement on a principle close to two brilliant men can undermine affection. Here, the rift was deep and irreparable, but the chasm that opened up was over the deepest cavern of all, the perplexing nature of the Godhead as considered from the aspect of the dynamic of evil in the world.

Friendship

The dynamic of any friendship is mysterious. On the surface, those two men could not be predicted to be likely to share their deepest feelings. Jung was unconstrained by doctrine and whatever faith he held, it was certainly not that of any denomination, despite which he described himself as a 'dye'd in the wool Protestant'. Father White subscribed to Catholic doctrine and on successive occasions had sworn the anti-modernist oath declaring that what Faith proclaimed as true was true as a matter of factual reality. Jung was the elder by nearly thirty years. He was a medical doctor and psychiatrist, while Father White was principally a teacher of theology. Faith had not saved Father White from a nervous breakdown in 1940, ostensibly brought on by a crisis of belief connected with that anti-modernist oath.¹ Following psychoanalysis, his unconscious mind announced the way out in three waking visions of a dazzling white sun, a revolving disc and a windmill. His therapist interpreted these as mandala symbols, a signal of return to wholeness, and advised that he return to teaching at Blackfriars College, the Dominican seminary, in Oxford. Two years later,

¹ See the following biographical note on Father White: Ann Conrad Lammers and Adrian Cunningham, *The Jung White Letters* (London, Routledge 2007) 315ff.

immersed in Jung's writings, he presented lectures to his former therapist's discussion group. These were later published and, more in hope of establishing contact than any expectation of being received seriously, he sent them to Jung. The psychologist warmly received them.² More than that, he wanted to meet their author. By that time, having experienced two world wars, Jung's focus had especially turned to the problem of evil. It is possible that he felt that without expert theological assistance, anything he wrote on that issue would lack a necessary dimension. Father White was invited to come and stay with him in the isolation of the Swiss countryside beside Lake Zurich at Bollingen. There, the psychologist had put up an archaic tower, built in stone, partly by Jung's own hand, excluding electricity and every other aspect of the modern world. Trust established itself between the two men almost from that first visit. How deep their confidence became is apparent from the letters which they exchanged.³ Father White was Jung's most significant male friend since he and Sigmund Freud had parted ways decades earlier. Jung's approach to the unconscious included free association, myth analysis, and image drawing, but the principal window on the inner life of a person, which he shared with Freud, was the interpretation of dreams. Since Freud's 1900 book 'The Interpretation of Dreams', what our unconscious produces in sleep has assumed an almost sacred aspect for psychologists, a key to unlocking the soul of a person. Long after Freud's death, while being interviewed by John Freeman on British television, Jung mentioned that he and Freud had analysed each other's dreams. Freeman asked did he remember the significant features of Freud's dreams. Jung replied 'Well, that is rather indiscreet to ask. There is such a thing as a professional secret'. Pressed on the basis of Freud being dead 'these many years', he firmly shut the door: 'Yes, but these considerations last longer than life. I prefer not to talk about it'.⁴ Father White and Jung shared their dreams with each other, that much we know from their correspondence, and it is likely that this deliberate exchange of intimacy reflects the depth of their friendship. After all, we do not know what they said to each other in the isolated tower in Bollingen, only that they were together for many uninterrupted days. In a letter to Father White of January 1948, Jung wrote about a dream of his father. In it, he appeared as a priest-librarian who led his son to an upper room of an ancient building where all but a circular central section of the floor was missing and from where a bridge connected to a room where the dreamer understood he was to encounter the 'supreme presence'; his father kneels by his side in sympathy as he tries to bow his forehead to the floor on entering the bridge,⁵ but then the dreamer awakens before reaching his goal.⁶ However this is to be interpreted, the reference by Jung to his father signifies how close he was to Father White.

Both men had unfulfilled relationships with their fathers. Each of their fathers was a Protestant clergyman. The philosophical speculations simmering in Jung even as a boy failed to find an outlet in the doctrinal rigidity of his father's approach. Over months of instruction in Christian doctrine, in preparation for confirmation, Jung eagerly awaited the chance to debate the mystery of the Trinity with his father. When the time came, his father announced that as he did not really understand the Trinity, they would pass over that mystery. They were never close, though Jung appreciated one gesture of his father's in particular, which was to forego, because of a lack of money, in favour of his son, a journey in a cable car up to the top of one of Switzerland's highest mountains. Father White had similar paternal issues. He

² Later, the papers became chapters in Father White's book *God and the Unconscious* (London 1952).

³ The Jung White Letters seems to reproduce all but those which are lost.

⁴ E.A. Bennett, 'What they really said' (1967) 113(500) *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 802.

⁵ This was St Charles House, Begbroke in Oxford where he stayed from September 1919 to April 1921 until he was accepted for ordination training and was sent to study in Valladolid in Spain.

⁶ Jung White Letters, 3 January 1948, pp 113-118.

left the Church of England, of which his father was a priest, and at the age of sixteen entered a Catholic institution dedicated to the conversion of Anglican clergymen. It is possible that the guidance of a father was to be replaced by entry into the discipline of religious life. Victor White soon found priestly formation and religious discipline a sterile and crushing restriction. Whatever his expectations might have been, they were not fulfilled and perhaps they were unreal. At one stage, he felt that precipitously entering the Catholic Church had cut him off from Orthodox Christianity, where doctrine was less defined and faith was approached as an impenetrable mystery. Despite questioning the wisdom of his vocation to the priesthood, he stuck with it to the premature end of his life.

Father White's Issue

Father White approached Jung as friend and confidant on the deepest existential problem which he faced. Perhaps he leaned too much on the elderly alienist. His priesthood in the Catholic Church was a constant concern that assumed storm force at various points. Having suffered a nervous breakdown in 1940, more was yet to come. In 1952, in a letter to another friend, he noted the departure from the Dominican Friars of his best friend within the order, 'for the most conscientious reasons which I am bound in varying measure to share.'⁷ November of the following year saw him telling Jung in a letter of how many of his own friends, and of his patients in analysis, he had been the cause of leaving the Church. The conflict was immense. His avowed task was to bring as many as possible 'into the one Ark of Salvation', yet their 'God simply isn't my god any more; my very clerical clothes have become a lie...my position has become morally impossible and dishonest'. But, he was fifty-one and unable to move out into a world for which he was 'totally unequipped'.⁸ In a letter to Jung in March 1954, he grappled with the psychologist's view of man's shadow side as having force in itself, as opposed to being merely an absence of good. He called the conversion of Saul, the Hebrew pharisee who became Saint Paul, as leading to an 'unholy muddle of love-aggression' and as a transmutation from the 'law-lover into the law-hater'. The result, he emotes, was that:

...the Church has been progressively rotted by pharisaism ever since – and never more so than to-day. All 'good Catholics', from the Pope to poor little, scrupulous nuns are law-obsessed. And so with all the enemies of the Church who are treated in the same aggressive-defensive way, whether sex or communism. The poor dears are sex-obsessed and communist-obsessed, and more and more inclined to adopt the police-state mentality of communism while ignoring its merits.⁹

Jung replied comfortingly, that much 'heathendom, barbarism and real evil' had been taken out of the Church by the 'old popes and bishops'. The Church could move towards transition where 'old showy and easily understandable ways and methods' have lost significance and 'should be slowly replaced by more meaningful principles.'¹⁰

Events then began to overtake Father White. In May of 1954, he was elevated to the rank of master of theology. It was little consolation. His mood, after again being required by his

⁷ Jung White Letters p 321.

⁸ Jung White Letters, 8 November 1953, p 216.

⁹ Jung White Letters, 4 March 1954, p 229.

¹⁰ Jung White Letters, 10 April 1954 pp 235-237.

superiors to take the anti-modernist oath, was ‘this is just too much. I cannot bear any more’.¹¹ It was expected that he would become the Regent of Studies at Blackfriars in time for the coming academic year. He was, after all, their outstanding teacher. He was also pondering a trail of speculation that psychology could add to the mission of the Church. This cast suspicion on him. In place of Father White, the regency was instead given to a conservative; a man whom he described as ‘a complete incompetent’. He was then ordered by his superiors to transfer to California, and he went, though deeply dissatisfied by his treatment. He wrote that all of ‘the fuss about the oath, the degree, and my beautiful self-sacrifice *pro bono publico* has been a sort of sacrifice of Isaac – or maybe something a great deal more comic.’¹²

It was some time into this crisis that Father White began writing his philippic on Jung’s *Answer to Job*. The circumstances of this are beyond peculiar. He had described the book on receiving it from Jung as ‘the most exciting and moving book I have read in years: and somehow it arouses tremendous bonds of sympathy between us, and lights up all sorts of dark places both in the Scriptures and in my own psyche.’¹³ Yet, in stark opposition, there is the review of 1955 which flips that on its head. In that year, Jung was coping in his eighty-first year with the serious illness of his wife Emma, who was soon to die, and the review was taken as a very nasty personal blow. When you read the text, Jung’s reaction is not a surprise. When Father White went to visit Emma Jung at the cancer clinic where she was being treated, the two men met. It was a cold meeting. The warmth and trust of their friendship had been dissolved. They met again briefly in June 1958. Father White had perhaps exchanged a set of parents, and certainly paternal authority, for the institution of the Church and that disembodied mother and father had hurt him badly. Given the circumstances, it is hard to conclude that he meant what he wrote about a work that is one of Jung’s most personal statements. But that review is best set in context of the disagreement which ostensibly inspired the review and which for ten years had dominated their correspondence; that of the nature and genesis of evil.

The Origin and Definition of Evil

In the letters that they exchanged, Jung returns again and again to the problem of evil, teasing through his own ideas as against Catholic doctrine and as against the Church Fathers, using Father White as a debating partner. From those letters, their relationship emerges as entirely equal, characterised by mutual intellectual respect, alongside Jung’s determination to learn by leaving no stone unturned. This is balanced by the defence of traditional ideas by Father White. The focus of this exchange was whether evil was not a force in itself, as Jung felt was the correct position, but was the absence of good: the *privatio boni* concept expounded by Father White, which although not Church doctrine, and so capable of being debated, was so bound up with the basic tenets of Catholic faith to allow little latitude for interpretation.¹⁴ This ‘*sententia communis*’ holds that all that is created is good because it is created by God, who alone is good; that evil is the absence of good, just as darkness is the absence of light and cold the absence of heat at 0° Kelvin, and that evil came into the created world from the world of men through the wrongful exercise of their free will. Since freedom gave a choice

¹¹ Jung White Letters, 15 May 1954, p 243.

¹² Jung White Letters, 25 September 1954, p 247.

¹³ Jung White Letters, 5 April 1952, p 181. He later claimed that he thought that Jung was never going to publish the book.

¹⁴ See Jung’s letter of June 30th 1952 and Father White’s reply of 9 July 1952; Jung White Letters, p 198-204.

between what was good and what was not, humanity by choosing not to do good brought about evil. Jung's eventual contradiction of this analysis might have been foreseen from even his earliest childhood and it forms the centre of the argument presented in *Answer to Job*. On one particular day, as a boy, his elation at the perfection of Nature elevated his thoughts into accepting the goodness of the divinity. From somewhere in his mind this belief came to be challenged over several days. Whatever the source of the challenge to his childlike belief, conflict within himself demanded that an opposing point of view be expressed. Eventually, as he records in his biography *Memories Dreams and Reflections*, he opened his consciousness to the thought that seemed to want to emerge. It was of perfection in the order of the universe, in the form of a gigantic cathedral, watched over from on high by Providence, an apparent confirmation of his first thoughts, but that perfection was suddenly horribly ruined and sullied by the same power.¹⁵ This difference between them on the nature of evil, with Father White attempting to persuade Jung towards the truth expounded by the Church, charged their correspondence with emotion. This escalated after Father White had received and applauded *Answer to Job*, despite later claiming that he thought that it was never going to be published.¹⁶ On April 5th 1952 Father White wrote:

In Catholic theology of course the devil is *not* intrinsically evil (many Fathers consider him the best and noblest of all God's creatures; he is 'evil' precisely inasmuch as he has *deprived* himself of his due and connatural relationship to God. The 'evil' in hell is likewise the *privation* of the divine vision (and so of man's own entelechy); and so likewise in the damned. (A 'privatio boni' in every case.) Of course these are called 'eternal' only in the sense of timeless and endless, not in the sense in which God is eternal ('interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio'). There is no question of dualism in the sense of some positive existence co-existing with, but other than, the *summum bonum*¹⁷ which must include all good. Of course a moral, man-made, chosen dualism should be admitted in the sense that man (and angels) may refuse the unity. But this, so far from involving a permanent and intrinsic evil principle, would mean that even our *disorder* comes from within the divine order: from which standpoint of course hell is good!¹⁸

Jung was not going to be swayed by this. Intellectually, and in terms of his practical experience, he was not convinced that the evil of the world came from the freedom of humanity to choose what was not good because thereby nothing would be chosen. Evil, he felt, was a real force and not just the deformation of the natural choice of God's thinking creation for good. Father Johannes Lotz SJ, whom he had recently met, had admitted that the concept of *privatio boni* was 'a puzzle'. He replied to Father White that evil could be explained as a 'disintegration' or 'decomposition' of goodness, just as matter becomes bad and so changes in essence:

A bad egg is not characterized by a mere decrease of goodness, however, since it produces qualities of its own, that did not belong to the good egg. It develops among other things H₂S, which is a particularly unpleasant substance of its own right. It derives very definitely from the highly complex albumen of the good egg and thus forms a most obvious evidence for the thesis: Evil derives

¹⁵ C.G. Jung, *Memories Dreams and Reflections* (London, Routledge & Keegan Paul 1963) 36.

¹⁶ Jung White Letters, 17 March 1955, p 259.

¹⁷ Capital letters are not used.

¹⁸ Jung White Letters, 5 April 1952, p 183. Written on receipt of *Answer to Job* in the German edition.

from Good. Thus the formula of ‘decomposition’ is in so far rather satisfactory, as it acknowledges that Evil is as substantial as Good, because H2S is as tangibly real as the albumen. In this interpretation Evil is far from being a μή ὄν¹⁹... But what about the privatio boni? Good by definition must be good throughout, even in the smallest particles. You cannot say, that a small good is bad. If then a *good thing disintegrates into minute fragments, each of them remains good and therefore eatable like a loaf of bread divided into small particles. But when the bread rots, it oxidizes and changes its original substance. There are no more nourishing carbohydrates, but acids, i.e. from a good substance has come a bad thing. The ‘decomposition’ theory would lead to the ultimate conclusion that the Summum Bonum can disintegrate and produce H2S, the characteristic smell of Hell. Good then would be corruptible, i.e. it would possess an inherent possibility of decay. This possibility of corruption means nothing less than a tendency inherent to the Good to decay and to transform into Evil... I am quite satisfied with the non-hypostatising of Good and Evil. I consider them not as substances, but as a merely psychological judgement, since I have no means of establishing them as metaphysical substances. I don’t deny the possibility of a belief, that they are substances and that Good prevails against Evil... But if you try to make something logical or rationalistic out of that belief, you get into a remarkable mess...*²⁰

Well, if friendship is chemistry of a kind, heat had certainly entered this equation. Not surprisingly, the reaction cascaded. July 1952 saw a numbered refutation of the last letter. Father White discharging an artillery battery of philosophical ordinance. Jung had at the early stage of this dispute, in December 1949, written to Father White that calling evil a μή ὄν, a non-being, was more than a mistake; Hitler and Stalin could not represent ‘a mere ‘accidental lack of perfection’’. Any such attitude struck at the heart of his fundamental message that personal progress was impossible without the conscious realisation of personal moral wrong, and hence that the ‘future of mankind very much depends upon the recognition of the shadow.’²¹ Fundamental to Jung’s approach to analysis was that the first step for the analysand was to acknowledge his or own flawed nature and repellent actions. This ascribing to evil of a state of neutrality, because it is an absence of good, stung Father White. Paraphrasing that letter of three years before, he wrote back:

My dear C.G., I love you and owe you more than I can say. When you write like that it hurts – I feel it is terribly unworthy of you – and I wonder what makes you do it. (I leave aside the point that MH ON, at least since Plato and Aristotle, does not mean ‘nothing at all’.) But I am sure that never in my life have I called Evil a decreasing Good – or anything like it. Never have I said Absolute Evil was a neutral condition – on the contrary I have said (I expect) that it is a non-existent abstraction, as Absolute Blindness and Absolute Darkness, or even Absolute Buttercup, are non-existent abstractions. Christian doctrine has never denied the existence of Evils – evil people, things, actions – these are the real evils which Christian faith and practice makes one wrestle with daily to an extent that amazes me in my pastoral work, and the like of which I must confess I seldom find elsewhere, least of all (quite frankly) among the members of psychological clubs. Never, certainly, does Christian doctrine encourage us to escape from real, concrete evils, within or without, to reified

¹⁹ A non-being.

²⁰ Jung White Letters, 30 April 1952, p 190-191.

²¹ Jung White Letters, 31 December 1949, p 140-143.

abstractions. (Indeed, I suspect that Absolute Evil is one of the devil's cleverest inventions: get people bothering about TON KAKON, and they'll trouble no more about TA KAKA!)²²

They then met in Bollingen, in the isolation of the tower by the lake. There was no electricity there; no modern conveniences to interrupt the communing of their souls.

We do not know what they said but whatever this discussion was, it was uppermost in their resulting correspondence. Father White returned to Oxford. Shortly after, he wrote to Jung recounting a dream about him confessing to him as a priest that 'for many years he has been brutally cruel to his wife'.²³ One shudders. Father White visited the psychologist and his wife the following September; a letter thanks them for listening to what he called his own 'mild case'.²⁴ That case got a lot worse. Jung's response is not to be criticised; it was that of a friend supporting the trouble of a friend. Two lengthy letters from Jung characterise the correspondence of 1953 and 1954 where the psychologist writes of the vitality of Christian symbols and of the value of Father White's work, even if the result was that those counselled by Father White left the Faith.²⁵ This was, the psychologist thought, their life's journey. There were to be no further visits to Bollingen.

The Review

Father White's review of the English edition of *Answer to Job* infuriated Jung. It is not at all surprising. He accused the psychologist of misreading the biblical text. According to the review, the Book of Job, in a correct reading, is like one of those films where you imagine all the way through that you are in reality, only to realise at the end that it is a dream: 'by a *dream*, in a *vision* by night, when deep sleep falleth upon men and they are sleeping in their beds; then he openeth the ears of men, and teaching instructeth them what they are to learn, that he may withdraw a man from what he is doing, and may deliver him from pride.'²⁶ Jung is accused of being 'blindly angry', and of being no more subtle than the little uneducated girl of George Bernard Shaw's set of short stories 'The Adventures of a Black Girl in Her Search for God'.²⁷ He posits that that Jung has been duped by 'some satanic trickster', writing the book 'not in earnest' and wonders whether he was 'purposely torturing his friends and devotees?' Jung, he writes, had deliberately read the Scriptures through a pair 'of highly distorting spectacles.' The analysis in *Answer to Job* is childish, he charges, since expecting the world only to be good is to assume the satisfaction of desires, replacing love with the egotism of want. Further, since Jung had repeatedly said that the only observation he could ever make was psychological, and that he could never comment on metaphysics, Father White threw this back at him and in effect accused him of a useless exercise in commenting on what his own psyche subjectively thought about the subjective psyche of Job.²⁸ And then there is this:

²² Jung White Letters, 9 July 1952, p 200-204. The editors point to a grammatical error; but the point is that by focusing on the abstraction of evil, people lose sight of the necessity of making moral choices.

²³ Jung White Letters, 10 August 1952, p 205.

²⁴ Jung White Letters, 15 September 1953, p 215.

²⁵ Jung White Letters, 24 November 1953 and April 10 1954, pp 218 -243.

²⁶ Quoting Job 33, 15-17. The emphasis and punctuation is in the original and all quotations from the original review are taken from the Jung White letters, here p 350.

²⁷ Published in 1932. The young lady converts to Christianity, disputes with other faiths and then marries a red-headed Irishman, raising children before returning to her metaphysical disputations.

²⁸ See for instance Jung White Letters, 5 October 1945, p 9. Psychologists who follow Jung refer to the centre of the psyche as the archetype of the self or the God image, both terms being used interchangeably.

This book should neither be laughed off nor should it provoke anger or disgust. It does not belong to the large and worthless library written by cranks who wrest the Scriptures to prove some crackpot theory. It has – and this is its most distressing feature – the ingenuity and power, the plausibility and improbability, the clear-sightedness and blindness of the typical paranoid system which rationalizes and conceals an even more unbearable grief and resentment. Its depth and tragedy we can only guess from the fact that it calls upon, not other men, but the hallowed names and symbols of God to carry the projection of the criminal and pathological persecutor. A Christian reader should hear, beneath all the provocation, behind the seeming mockery of all he holds most sacred and most dear, a profoundly moving cry of anguish, a reproachful signal of distress.²⁹

One wonders how any man in his right mind could write such a review of a friend's work, never mind send such a review to that friend. Yet Father White posted an offprint of his affronting article to Jung.

Almost as a man defying the Holy Inquisition, Jung retorted in a letter of 2 April 1955 by affirming his right to think critically. More and more his thoughts as an old man were haunted by the horror of a return to war, and with weapons vastly more destructive than those of the two world conflicts he had watched from the fastness of neutral Switzerland. He had to speak out:

Just as Job lifted his voice so that everybody could hear him, I have come to the conclusion, that I better risk my skin and do my worst or best, to shake the unconsciousness of my contemporaries, than to allow my laxity to let things drift towards the impending world catastrophe. Man must know that he is Man's worst enemy just as much as God had to learn from Job about His own antithetical nature.³⁰

Some of his response is barbed. Jung could afford to be independent, he wrote, the implication being that Father White could not; as his letters to the psychologist had made clear. No one had been more sympathetic of Father White's mental torment: he would just have to put up with it as he had chosen God in place of man and both were likely to overcharge him: the only respite being in the middle, a place he was not likely to want to go. 'My psychology unfortunately tries to be honest. It is certainly the hard way, neither an easy consolation nor a narcotic.' He feels himself to be unwise, but so, he says were 'all the martyrs of your Church'.³¹

Throughout the correspondence, Jung had never up to that point used 'Him' as a title of respect for God, sometimes crossing it out when used by his secretary in favour of 'him'. This letter is the exception. Jung asserts that he is answerable to no one:

I have not made this world nor have I put a human soul into it. This is His work and His responsibility and there is no judge above Him that is why the story begins with Job on the human level and with the assumption of personality on

²⁹ Jung White Letters, p 355. When later published some passages were amended by the more obviously offensive sentences being left out. This quotes the original in Blackfriars Magazine.

³⁰ Jung White Letters p 261, 2 April 1955.

³¹ *ibid* 264.

the divine level. One can like Job's lament about it, but it is to no purpose. It is just so. If turmoil and torment becomes too great there is still the oneness of the Self, the divine spark with its inviolable precincts, offering its extramundane peace.³²

The rift between them had been well and truly established. Since they took such opposing and emotional views one wonders: so, what was the fuss all about?

The Book and the Interpretation

Job was a 'perfect and upright' man, 'one that feared God, and eschewed evil'.³³ One day, an assembly of 'the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them'.³⁴ How this could happen, we do not know, but the incident asserts the presence of evil even among the ranks of the blessed. Satan, apparently on familiar terms with God, taunts Him that if his faithful servant Job were to be crushed by misfortune, he would forsake the covenant of the people of Israel and, the devil predicts: 'he will curse thee to thy face'.³⁵ In effect, Satan sets out to tempt God by asserting that the righteousness and good living of Job manifests only because his life has been one of immense good fortune: he has a large, happy family and is a person of immense wealth precisely because God has 'blessed the work of his hands'.³⁶ Satan asks God to 'touch' all he has, in order to test his fidelity. Almost as if trapped in time, and almost as if the all-knowing nature of divinity is suspended, God assents. The Lord put into the power of Satan everything that Job possessed: permission is given to Satan to test Job by any evil short of touching him physically. Satan goes about his nasty task, no doubt revelling in it. Misfortune replaces the good fortune of Job. A savage tribe attacks his home; his wealth is destroyed, then his children are killed in a violent storm. Despite this, Job declines to curse God: 'naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'.³⁷ But this is not the end of Job's sufferings.

In a second assembly of 'the sons of God' Satan is again present and the challenge is again made. God points to the fidelity of Job 'although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause'.³⁸ Satan proposes a second test, proposing to God to allow him to 'touch his bone and his flesh', arguing that if Job's body were to be destroyed that he then would curse God.³⁹ The Lord allows the second test. Satan now moves in the realm of the body; sickness replaces health. Job is made desperately ill; his body is so badly covered in sores that his only relief is to scrape himself with a piece of broken pot and to sit 'down among the ashes'.⁴⁰ Then Job's wife, who has lost her children, let us not forget, demands to know why he retains his integrity; why not curse God and die, she asks. Job answers: 'What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'⁴¹ This declaration is the pivot around which Jung's interpretation

³² *ibid* 265.

³³ Job 1:1.

³⁴ Job 1:6.

³⁵ Job 1:11.

³⁶ Job 1:10.

³⁷ Job 1:21.

³⁸ Job 2:3.

³⁹ Job 2:5.

⁴⁰ Job 2:8.

⁴¹ Job 2:10.

of the Book of Job revolves. Implicit in this statement, in Jung's interpretation, is the realisation in the mind of a human person that God is Lord over both good and evil.

According to Jung, Job, through his sufferings at the hand of the God, became aware of the fullness of the Divine nature as embracing all creation, whether for good or for evil. Job's conscious awareness of God becomes a mirror through which God sees Himself. In Job, God sees a being possessing a consciousness beyond his own in the sense that Job's words acknowledge the shadow which God had never yet seen in Himself. Job's awareness of God becomes a mirror through which God realises that aspect of Himself. God looks down at Job and sees a being unhampered by ideology and embracing truth as the ultimate value, no matter how unpalatable. The Divinity responds not in rage but in a sense of fellowship; He is not to destroy humanity but to embrace the consciousness of His own shadow and physically adopt human form.

From the deliberate placing of a test in the path of Adam and Eve, the acceptance of which caused God to drive them from paradise, from the testing of Job, and from the petition in the Lord's prayer, *καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμῶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμῶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*, 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil', Jung concludes that, like the human unconscious, the Divine nature embraces the capacity to unleash negative as well as positive forces. Job, in his encounter with God has been forced to this realisation. For the first time since creation, God's shadow has been acknowledged in the consciousness of a living being. Human consciousness has not shied away from the truth. In contemplating Job's fidelity, the Divine consciousness wonders at the transcendent power of human nature. Human discrimination is such that it does not need to be bound up and limited by received ideas. Instead, it is empowered to explore even the most unpalatable facts. This aspect of human consciousness was of an amplitude beyond even that of God. What God had created had grown beyond, and had thus informed, His own nature: the mystery of God's creation expanding itself.

In Islam, Allah could never become human by embracing incarnation: the Divine nature would be emptied of what that nature is; all knowing, all merciful, all potent. Coming from a speculative Christian tradition it is posited by Jung that God's experience with the suffering Job led Him to embrace the entirety of his creation and so experienced the impulse to expand the Divine nature through the Incarnation.⁴² In Christ, therefore, God became man. Hence, Job is inspired to proclaim in prefiguration of Christ and in defiance of his own suffering: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God'.⁴³ By the mystery of the Incarnation, God embraced human nature; that which saw the truth and reflected fearlessly on the Divine nature. Jung was thus moved to write:

God has a terrible double aspect: a sea of grace is met by a seething lake of fire, and the light of love glows with the fierce dark heat of which it is said 'ardet non lucet' - it burns, but gives no light. That is the eternal, as distinct from the temporal, Gospel: one can love God, but must fear him.⁴⁴

Although, at the time, these words were widely condemned as blasphemy, perhaps in this context it is apt to quote Christ's words as transcribed by Luke:

⁴² C.G. Jung *Collected Works* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1994) 11.632-648.

⁴³ Job 19: 25, 26. See also Isaiah chapter 45 and Psalm 35.

⁴⁴ (n 42) 11.733.

And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.⁴⁵

Jung's final statement on the problem of evil in the world in *Answer to Job* seems to carry us beyond a scientific reflection on the God-image in the human psyche. One human mind engages the central human teachings on the ultimate truth beyond any knowledge, the essence of which has only ever become capable of being known through the specific act of the Creator revealing Himself. Jung's apparent metaphysical speculations are made possible by a determination to engage with the truth, but to disclaim the possibility of a final answer to any question that exists outside the scientifically verifiable realm of the observation of the unconscious, insofar as that in itself is knowable. Perhaps a brief critical comment might be offered as an alternative to Father White's views?

A Critique

The analysis by Jung of the Book of Job focuses on Jaweh, not on the character of Job. Jung does not comment on Job's insistence that the truth, as he has come to know it, that suffering comes to the good people and to bad people, cannot be denied. Nor does he identify the ultimate privilege which Job's stubborn honesty brings about. Job is tested a third time, but not by Divine permission. On this last occasion, he is tried by human intervention into his predicament. Here we have the exercise of human opinion; often daft and rarely of any use; but often a source of ideas that man proclaims as ultimate reality and which lead to catastrophe. Three of Job's friends come, ostensibly to comfort him. They torture him further with a series of pronouncements. These are the recitation of ideological doctrines. They ignore reality and replace reason by received thought. Repeating the then traditional doctrine, they claim that because of the covenant of God with his people, suffering is inflicted as an instrument of justice through divine wrath at individual sin: 'But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers'.⁴⁶ No righteous person has been met by disaster, Job's 'comforters' tell him, but the rebuke of God is delivered solely against the wicked in chastisement and correction. Thus, they assert that Job must be guilty of injustice and wickedness,⁴⁷ and his children, who have been killed, must have been punished as they indeed deserved.⁴⁸

Despite the darkness which fills Job's life, which is in truth not a punishment because he is guiltless, Job insists that he will not bow false obeisance by believing his sufferings to be a just Divine retribution based on fault. The 'comforters' spout out the prevailing ideology, but Job's consciousness has expanded beyond the unthinking acceptance of mere ideas as a substitute for the truth. His attitude is that experience of reality must temper what we believe. Job answers these torrents of accepted wisdom by proclaiming his own innocence.⁴⁹ He tells the

⁴⁵ Luke 12.4-6. See also Matthew 10.26.

⁴⁶ I Samuel 12:15.

⁴⁷ Job 8: 1-20; 18: 1-21.

⁴⁸ Job 8: 1-7.

⁴⁹ Job 9: 15-23; 31-1-40.

'comforters' that he has not sinned: what they proclaim is false, since experience shows that the wicked prosper, that no one reproaches them for their sins and that thousands join in the funeral processions of evil men to their well-guarded tombs, where even the earth lies gently over their bodies.⁵⁰ To state otherwise is to lie: deceit is no comfort, he proclaims.⁵¹ As an honest man, Job refuses to yield to a lie by admitting to guilt which he does not bear. Instead, he confronts the Divine nature, not in blasphemy, but in the exercise of the privilege of humanity that arises from the divinely endowed consciousness within him: we can lie but we can also tell the truth as we see it; the acknowledgment of reality is the assertion of God's creation. He calls aloud directly to God that He hear his petition: as God's servant he demands an account of his Master. The outcome of the encounter between Job and his 'comforters' is that, in answer to his unwavering demand that he should have an audience with the Creator to hear out his faithful servant's complaint of injustice, God comes to his physical creation on the Earth and appears in person. God speaks of the mystery of creation. This is His answer to Job:

Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?⁵²

Job's response to the awesome presence of the Creator is to accept his ignorance of the Divine nature and his foolishness at ascribing human motivations to God: 'Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.'⁵³ In consequence of the forthright truthfulness of his nature, even in confronting the Almighty, it is God as the unfathomable power that has responded to Job. His encounter with the truth has cost him all he possesses but his reward has been the presence of God and the revelation that God is beyond human knowledge and comprehension. Job's 'comforters' are chastised by the Lord for not speaking honestly. According to the text, Job has renewed wealth bestowed on him, he lives to a great age and his descendants are numberless. He enjoys God's favour: even his plea for the forgiveness of his friends is also answered; they are not disgraced for their dishonesty.⁵⁴

The reward of Job can be regarded as an allegory, perhaps one of what Christians now call redemption: the essence of what Job is has been empowered. The possessions with which Job is endowed are symbolic for his increased amplitude as a conscious and thus honesty thinking person. Just as people can diminish themselves, so too can they be increased. It is adherence to the truth, and a disavowal of ideology, that has vastly increased Job through the human power of consciousness.

Aftermath

⁵⁰ Job 21: 27-33.

⁵¹ Job 38: 2-8.

⁵² Job 28.

⁵³ Job 42.

⁵⁴ Job 42.

It is possible that Jung had felt that his book on Job had offended and confused. For this he was not sorry. He believed that God welcomed debate and that the divine spark of reason was to be used critically. I do not believe that *Answer to Job* is about the archetype of the Self, or the God image. I believe it is a deliberate deconstruction of what he felt was the over-emphasis in the Catholic and Protestant religion on the goodness of God, a one-sidedness that was dangerously lacking in balance. In a letter to a Protestant clergyman just before his split with Father White, Jung had written in reference to Jacob's fight with the angel in Genesis 32:24ff:

The attribute of 'coarse' is mild in comparison to what you feel when God dislocates your hip or when he slays the first born. I bet Jacob's punches he handed to the angel were not just caresses or polite gestures. They were of a good hard kind; as you rightly say 'with the gloves off'. That is one side of my experience with what is called 'God'. 'Coarse' is too weak a word for it. 'Crude', 'violent', 'cruel', 'bloody', 'hellish', 'demonic' would be better. That I was not downright blasphemous I owe to my domestication and polite cowardice. At each step I felt hindered by a beatific vision of which I'd better say nothing.⁵⁵

Jung was not again to speculate publicly on metaphysical matters. Instead, he affirmed the unknowable, unapproachable and unfathomable nature of the Godhead. It was a mystery and to be left as a mystery. Just as Job did not know and had spoken on that which was beyond human understanding, in answer to a letter from a teenage Swiss girl, he wrote: 'One must always remember that God is a mystery, and everything we say about it is said and believed by human beings. We make images and concepts, and when I speak of God I always mean the image man has made of him. But no one knows what he is like, or he would be a god himself.'⁵⁶

Jung refused any proposal of further discussion after his letter of 2 April 1955. Father White had set out an agenda for debate on the problems associated with *Answer to Job*, but silence, or a polite acknowledgment from Jung's secretary, met that and any further communication. Four years later, Father White had a bad accident while riding on his motorcycle. The Prioress of the small contemplative community where he had served for some years wrote to Jung of his misfortune. Jung responded. In writing that he sincerely hoped that 'no irreparable damage has been done', he must be taken as referring to Father White's injuries; but he might also have been referring to the rift in their friendship.⁵⁷ Fragmentary correspondence resumed, though Jung insisted that his response to criticism was justified. He also wrote:

I think of you in everlasting friendship. *Ultra posse nemo obligatur*. Thus I ask for your forgiveness, as it is incumbent on one, who has given cause for scandal and vexation. It is difficult not to be crushed by the inexorable truth: *Le Vray en forme brute est plus faux que le faux* or the mountain you have heaped up is your burial mound.⁵⁸

Father White's troubles were not over; he contracted cancer and was operated on in 1960. Jung sent a photograph; as a man in his 85th year he could not travel but he came, as he said, in effigy.⁵⁹ To the end they were squabbling about Job; Father White telling Jung that he regretted to have

⁵⁵ Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, *C.G. Jung Letters Volume II* (Princeton 1975) 156, to Reverend Erastus Evans, 17 February 1954.

⁵⁶ *ibid* 384, to Roswitha N, 17 August 1957.

⁵⁷ Jung White Letters p 282,

⁵⁸ Jung White Letters, 25 March 1960, pp 284-286.

⁵⁹ Jung White Letters, 30 April 1960, pp 287-288.

assumed his 'shadow role'.⁶⁰ The priest's final words were: 'May I add that I pray with all my heart for your wellbeing, whatever that may be in the eyes of God'. He died shortly afterwards. At the prompting of the Prioress, on the first anniversary of his death, Carl Gustav Jung arranged to have a Mass said in Switzerland for the repose of the soul of his friend Victor White.

Afterword

In an age when certainty that only the material world exists predominates, theological speculation between friends, here leading to an irreparable personal rift, may seem futile. Yet, for all their differences, it was a shared faith that God exists which perhaps bound them together: otherwise what was the point of discussion on the Divine nature? Reading that other mammoth, yet also illuminating, set of correspondence of Jung with a worthy intellectual companion, his letters to and from Freud, one is struck by the rift apparent from the moment when Jung asserted that there was a power outside the material world, one which could even move matter. Losing his parents in favour of the Catholic church perhaps meant that for Father White, criticism of its doctrine became as unbearable as attacking his mother or father. Yet, without the years of honest friendship, Jung would not have become equipped to write the masterly speculations that characterised his final years.

From the pain and disappointment of childhood on, everyone is imbued with the realisation that in this imperfect world, tragedy and destruction are manifest together with the polar opposites of beauty and order. Outside of our world, eternity proceeds, but with starkly different ultimate realms. Even Christ, as the embodiment of God's realisation of the worth of human nature and love for humanity, proclaimed that that humanity should fear the Father. As the author of creation, while His authority can only be pleaded to, since reality reflects truth and since the *Λόγος* has embraced human nature, honest debate on the origin of evil is surely not a denial of respect. It cannot be known if a tragedy occurs to prevent something worse occurring later on, as in Stalin or Pol Pot dying as a child. Nor can it always be said that evil actions are the spur that impels human inertia towards solving lingering problems. The opening prayers of the Orthodox Liturgy embrace exclusively those who enter the church building 'with faith, reverence and fear of the Lord' and continue with a later plea for 'a good defence before the dread judgment seat'. Perhaps the ultimate fear is of the unknowable, since certainly we fear the unknown, the dread that may come. Yet, that there are gifts, of which friendship is one of the greatest, cannot be doubted, together with the bounty that is this world. We are all within a polarity where care against the natural shocks of the flesh promotes good and where fear of the eternal consequences of wrong and the imperative, in consequence, to do what is right has driven on many women and men to actions promoting awareness and good order. Here, ordinary and seemingly everyday deeds become heroic. Thus, we exist within a perhaps survivable polarity, the awareness of which can drive us towards choosing right. It cannot be known if this is part of an eternal plan, since time is only a fragment of eternity, just as intellect brings us no further than knowledge and reason. Not all is known or will be known. Perhaps we can go no further than what is recorded by Isaiah: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Jung White Letters, pp 289-292.

⁶¹ Isaiah 55:8-9.