

THE SEARCH FOR ROOTS

C. G. JUNG AND THE TRADITION OF GNOSIS



Alfred Ribi

Foreword by Lance S. Owens

“Excellent book...Ribi has the feel of Gnosis and knows his sources, both ancient and modern.

There is no doubt that it was Jung, and not Hans Jonas, who rediscovered Gnosticism and its importance for modernity.”

Gilles Quispel, Professor of Early Christian History
Utrecht University

Alfred Ribi knows Jung and the Jungian tradition from the ground up. But even more noteworthy, he recognized C. G. Jung's roots in the tradition of Gnosis, and carefully followed those roots to their source.

C. G. Jung located the historical foundation of his psychology in the Gnosis of antiquity. Dr. Ribi now closely examines Jung's life-long association with Gnostic tradition and his use of Gnostic writings. He illustrates how a dialogue between Jungian and Gnostic studies can open new perspectives on the experiential nature of Gnosis, both ancient and modern. Creative engagement with Gnostic tradition further broadens the imaginative scope of modern depth psychology, and adds an essential context for understanding the voice of the soul emerging in our modern age.

Alfred Ribi entered the C. G. Jung Institute in 1964 after having completed his medical degree and several years as a research scientist. He trained with Marie-Louise von Franz, Jung's closest associate during the last decades of his life. For nearly fifty years Dr. Ribi has worked as an analyst, teacher, and examiner with the C. G. Jung Institute, Zurich; for several years he served as the Institute's Director of Studies. He is a past president of both the Foundation for Jungian Psychology and the Psychological Club of Zurich.

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COVER IMAGE: Frontispiece from Wilhelm Schultz, *Dokumente der Gnosis* (Jenna, 1910). This book was one of Jung's earliest sources on Gnosticism.



The Search for Roots:
C. G. Jung and the Tradition of Gnosis

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The Search for Roots

C. G. Jung and the Tradition of Gnosis

Alfred Ribí

Foreword by Lance S. Owens

Preview Edition – Foreword Only



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Biographical note: Alfred Ribi was born in 1931. He studied medicine in Zurich, followed by specialization in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy FMH. In 1963, he began analysis with Marie-Louise von Franz—a close associate of C. G. Jung—and subsequently worked for many years with Dr. von Franz as a colleague. He is a diplomat of the C. G. Jung Institute, Zurich, where he has served as Director of Studies, and as a teaching and control analyst, lecturer and examiner of the Institute. He is a past President of the Foundation for Jungian Psychology, and of the Psychological Club Zurich. Since 1968, Dr. Ribi has been in private practice in Meilen, and now in Erlenbach.

Cover Illustration: Frontispiece from Wilhelm Schultz, *Dokumente der Gnosis* (Jenna, 1910). This book was one of Jung's earliest sources on Gnostic tradition.

Second Printing (with corrections)

If you don't understand this speech, don't trouble your heart over it. For as long as a person does not become this truth, he will not understand this speech. For this is a naked truth, which has come directly out of the heart of God.

Meister Eckhart

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Only the Foreword and notes to the Foreword are included here.*

Foreword

by Lance S. Owens

I. Alfred Ribi and the Search for Roots

In November of 1960, seven months before his death, C. G. Jung suffered what he called “the lowest ebb of feeling I ever experienced.” He explained the sentiment in a letter to Eugene Rolfe:

I had to understand that I was unable to make the people see what I am after. I am practically alone. There are a few who understand this and that, but almost nobody sees the whole... I have failed in my foremost task: to open people’s eyes to the fact that man has a soul and there is a buried treasure in the field and that our religion and philosophy are in a lamentable state.¹

Looking back now over the last half-century, it appears Jung had reason to lament. He has not been wholly understood. But the cause lay not just in the sprawling scope and complex tenor of his writings. In retrospect, it is evident Jung had not revealed the whole. During his life, Jung cautiously and consciously elected not to publicly share the experiential key to his vast opus. He knew it, too, would not—at least, not then—be understood.

The missing key was, we now see, his long-sequestered Red Book, the work Jung formally titled *Liber Novus*, the “New Book.” Begun when he was thirty-eight years old and based on experiences carefully recorded in his journals between 1913 and 1916, *Liber Novus* contained Jung’s account of a life-altering journey into the depths of vision. At the commencement, he called his venture “my most difficult experiment.”² For over sixteen years Jung labored at calligraphically transcribing and illuminating a compilation from his journal record into the exquisite folio volume known as the Red Book. This was his

buried treasure; it is the foundation of Jung's oeuvre, and the Rosetta stone to decode his subsequent hermeneutics of creative imagination.

Nearly a century after its composition, the publication in 2009 of *Liber Novus* has instigated a broad reassessment of Jung's place in cultural history. Among many revelations, the visionary events recorded there expose the experiential foundation of Jung's complex association with the Western tradition of Gnosis,³ a perennial praxis he identified as the historical antecedent of his psychology.

To understand the whole of Dr. Jung, it is imperative that we finally delve into the depths of his Gnostic vision and the ways in which that ancient rhizome nurtured his life task. This new edition of Dr. Alfred Ribi's multidimensional examination of Jung's relationship with Gnosis and its ancient textual witness thus comes at an important time. Initially authored in the decade prior to publication of *Liber Novus*, current release of this English edition offers a necessary bridge between the past and forthcoming understanding of Jung's Gnostic roots.

Ribi and Jung

Alfred Ribi is a formidable scholar, known to all those who have studied at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich over the last fifty years. His many books have however appeared heretofore only in German language editions, and he has not received due recognition from English readers. Since the historical importance of this volume is uniquely interwoven with the author's personal background, let me here introduce Dr. Alfred Ribi and tell a bit about how this book came to be written.

Jung traced the historical lineage of his psychology back to the Gnostic communities that had existed two thousand years ago at the beginning of the Christian age. That ancestry was important to Jung; he asserted, "the uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology."⁴ Alfred Ribi took Jung's assertion seriously; he stands apart in the analytical community for the erudition and intellectual rigor he has applied to investigation of Jung's association with the Gnosis. Allowing that Jung was correct, Ribi recognized that there was a natural and fraternal dialogue awaiting exploration

between the burgeoning field of Gnostic studies and Jungian psychology.

Dr. Ribi is thus not here principally addressing colleagues in the Jungian fold, nor the casual reader seeking an easily digestible dollop of “Jung-lite.” His purpose is much more focused. Ribi is trying to open a constructive dialogue between Jungian and Gnostic studies. If engaged, that interchange will eventually expose a hermeneutics attuned to the experiential nature of Gnosis, both ancient and modern. Such a dialogue will broaden the foundation, cultural location, and imaginative scope of modern depth psychology. This is a transformative undertaking. It is an undertaking true to Jung’s vision of his work.

Dr. Ribi entered the C. G. Jung Institute in 1964 after having completed his medical training and a few years of scientific research in physiology. Marie-Louise von Franz, for many years Jung’s closest associate, became Ribi’s analyst. Jung had died three years before Ribi arrived at the Institute, but his memory was still a vital presence. Like many others of his generation in Zurich, Ribi was introduced to Jung not only through his writings, but also by the insights, private perspectives and very personal recollections of people who had known Jung well. For decades thereafter Ribi enjoyed collegial relationships with Dr. von Franz and others still active in Zurich who had worked closely with Jung.

During his association with the C. G. Jung Institute over the past fifty years, Dr. Ribi has worked continuously as an analyst, teacher and examiner of the Institute; he also served as the Institute’s Director of Studies. He is an eminent past president of both the Foundation for Jungian Psychology and the Psychological Club of Zurich. After a half-century of engagement, it is safe to say that Ribi knows Jung and the Jungian tradition from the ground up. But even more noteworthy, he recognized Jung’s deeper roots, and he carefully searched them out.

A natural scholar with a keen talent for research, Ribi committed himself not only to his work as an analyst and a teacher, but also to the study of the historical foundations of Jung’s psychology. Jung’s indispensable assistant during the twenty years he labored with the alchemical tradition, Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz, assisted Ribi in his early investigation of alchemical texts. In addition to studying all that Jung wrote about alchemy, he went further: he acquired and reviewed

the original sixteenth and seventeenth century documents Jung had studied, ultimately accumulating a library of original alchemical works nearly equal to Jung's own.

Dr. von Franz eventually provided Dr. Ribi with the rare opportunity to closely study Jung's private alchemical notebooks, composed between 1935 and 1953.⁵ Methodically working page by page through these notes and indexes, he observed the method underlying the development of Jung's hermeneutics of alchemy. He also discovered that throughout these notes, Jung continued to admix excerpts from Gnostic literature he was still reading—a revealing fact not previously known.

Ribi was searching for the roots of Jung's psychology, and they apparently ran back two thousand years to the Gnostics, Jung's purported "first psychologists." It was time, Ribi saw, to extend the historical understanding of analytical psychology into the textual tradition of the Gnosis. To do this, he elected to employ the same method Jung had used in his study of alchemy—the method he discovered while scrutinizing Jung's notebooks.

This was a natural continuation of Jung's prior effort. But Ribi now had available what Jung did not: an extensive collection of Gnostic texts recently discovered at Nag Hammadi. Although Jung had studied Gnostic materials for many decades, prior to the Nag Hammadi discovery there was a limited number of classical Gnostic writings available, and much existed only in recensions composed by ancient opponents of the tradition. Jung had stated as much, and therefore correctly judged that he lacked the adequate primary material to solidly link his own observations and experiences with the Gnostics in the first centuries. With the addition of the Nag Hammadi materials, the situation had changed, and Ribi saw the effort was now both possible and necessary.

Toward a New Hermeneutics of Gnosis

When I asked Dr. Ribi at what point during the course of his work he first perceived the importance of the Gnostic tradition to Jung, he responded without hesitation: "At the beginning." I then questioned if others around him in the Jungian community over the years had shared

his interests or perceptions. His reply was, “No. Only Quispel understood; he was the only one I could talk with.”

Gilles Quispel (1916-2006) was a Dutch scholar who in 1952—with financial assistance facilitated by Jung—acquired the first “codex” (as these ancient book are termed) from the cache of Coptic Gnostic texts that had very recently been uncovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. This manuscript is now known as the Jung Codex, or Codex I. It was formally presented to Dr. Jung and the C. G. Jung Institute in 1953 and remained with the Institute until being repatriated to Egypt in 1975. This was the first portion of the large collection of Nag Hammadi manuscripts to reach academic hands, and Gilles Quispel was one of the first scholars to fully recognize the immense importance of the discovery for Gnostic studies. Quispel would spend the rest of his long career working on the Nag Hammadi materials.

With the friendship and assistance of Gilles Quispel—by then a renowned scholar of Gnosticism—Ribi met other specialists studying and translating the ancient library of Gnostic writings recovered at Nag Hammadi. Before final publication of the entire Nag Hammadi collection in 1977, Ribi read every translation and commentary published in German, French and English academic editions and monographs.⁶

Over the years, Ribi worked methodically through each of the some fifty Gnostic texts recovered at Nag Hammadi, analyzing the translations in various languages, noting key words, concepts and recurring themes: essential, following techniques Jung used in his study of alchemy. Ribi indexed the terminological interrelationships and the visionary formations appearing in the texts. In the process he compiled thousands of pages of intricate notes, all transcribed in a beautiful calligraphic hand. These notes are now bound in several volumes as a witness to his work.

Ribi’s study extended beyond the Nag Hammadi texts to Gnostic material that Jung had read, and to a careful examination of the usages Jung made of this material. Eventually, Ribi established that Jung had understood the core of Gnostic tradition very well, despite his lacking the supplementary material from Nag Hammadi. While the Nag Hammadi scriptures vastly broaden the textual evidence concerning the classical Gnostic experience, the writings Jung had available to him

offered an adequate foundation for his conclusions. For the most part, the newly available texts garnered support for Jung's reading.

Throughout this labor, Dr. Ribí engaged dialogue with specialists working in the then still developing field of Gnostic studies. His interest was not only in their work, but also in sharing with them psychological perspectives on the nature of the experience underlying Gnosis. The wider field of Gnostic studies needed awareness of the psychological nature of the tradition, and in Ribí's judgment, Jung's hermeneutics served that need.

The efforts of Alfred Ribí, Gilles Quispel and others with like interests—notably including the independent scholar Stephan Hoeller,⁷ and of course the globally influential efforts of Jung himself—were not without effect. In 2005, Dr. Marvin Meyer, the general editor and primary translator of the definitive 2007 international edition of *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*,⁸ proclaimed that in Gnostic writings, “The story ...is as much a story about psychology as it is about mythology and metaphysics.”⁹

Gnostic writings are a story about psychology. Coming from Marvin Meyer, the leading academic author in this field, and stated in an introduction addressed to the general reader, this is a transformational affirmation about the root of Gnostic tradition. If these ancient manuscripts reveal a story about psychology, then where in the modern world do we find a hermeneutics for, or an analog of their ancient psychology? Dr. Ribí offers an answer.

The Problematic Heresy

Over preceding decades, Jung's connection with Gnostic tradition naturally received comment, and occasionally it generated controversy. Plentiful evidence regarding his sympathetic interest in Gnosticism appeared throughout his published writings. More evidence came in comments he made in his private seminars.¹⁰ And then, there was a little book he had printed, titled the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* (*Seven Sermons to the Dead*), which at a very early date robustly signaled the Gnostic foundation of Jung's vision.

Jung privately printed the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* in 1916, not long after their transcription in his journal.¹¹ In 1917 Jung added

the Sermons—along with an amplifying Gnostic commentary spoken by Philemon—to the final manuscript section of *Liber Novus*, where they stand as a summary revelation of his experience. Jung gave copies of his 1916 printing of the Sermons to trusted students over many subsequent years. H. G. Baynes—at the time, Jung’s principal assistant—prepared an English translation of *Septem Sermones* in the early 1920s. With Jung’s approval, the English edition was printed in 1925 and it also was privately distributed for use by disciples who did not read German.¹² Numerous individuals working with Jung in those early years eventually read his Gnostic revelation.

In the mid-1930s Jung began his intense study of the alchemical tradition; over the next twenty years alchemy’s symbolic language was a central theme in his many publications.¹³ In alchemy Jung believed that he had found crucial evidence for an enduring Western cultural transmission of Gnostic vision spanning two millennia, reaching from the beginnings of the Christian age forward to his own experiences of psychic reality. Readers of Jung often overlooked the fact that this study of alchemy was wed historically with his Gnostic studies—at least in Jung’s appraisal. Thus, in his writings on alchemy, one finds abundant references to Gnostic texts presented with parallel commentaries.

Near the end of his life Jung affirmed to Aniela Jaffe, “The main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis, but rather with the approach to the numinous.”¹⁴ For Jung, this was the primal experience of Gnosis. After a visit around 1955, his old associate Karl Kerényi remarked (perhaps partly in jest) that Jung then considered himself a kind of “Pope...of the Gnostics.”¹⁵ No joking was involved in 1952, however, when the philosopher and theologian Martin Buber published a vehement attack upon Jung’s Gnosticism. Exposing pernicious heresy was serious business for Buber.¹⁶

Buber’s assault and the publication of an evasive response from Jung undoubtedly dampened public discussion of Gnosis within the Jungian community over subsequent years.¹⁷ But there were other issues at work motivating an amnesia of Gnosis. Following Jung’s death in 1961, the analytical community, along with a growing number of C. G. Jung Institutes dedicated to clinical training, progressively became the primary custodians and propagators of Jung’s work. Post mortem, Jung was institutionalized.

For the institution, the persistent and troubling issue was whether Jung's psychology would be viewed as a spiritual discipline or as a clinically validated therapy. There was obviously no professional profit in nominating Jung as a Gnostic prophet. Of course, many Jungian therapists continue to affirm the essentially spiritual aspects of their work, and they quote Jung in support. But culturally and professionally, it remains problematic to associate a school of clinical psychology with a widely anathematized heresy intimately entangled in the origins of Christianity.

The publication in 1982 of Stephan A. Hoeller's landmark study, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermones to the Dead*, aroused a wider general awareness and discussion of Jung's allegiance with classical Gnosticism.¹⁸ Hoeller was, however, an independent scholar and a bishop of a modern Gnostic church, who stood outside the established Jungian analytical community. For many Jungian analysts, empathetic links between Jung and Gnostic tradition remain inimical to the scientific respectability of their profession. As Barbara Stephens stated in her 2001 reassessment of the Jung-Buber controversy, the issue of therapy as a spiritual praxis is the paradigmatic ground for "Holy Wars" within a fragmenting Jungian analytical tradition.¹⁹

A Modern Gnostic, a New Book

John Dourley, a Catholic priest and Jungian analyst who has written extensively about the controversy between Jung and Buber, concluded that Jung's only proper rejoinder to Buber—strangely not made at the time but evident in Jung's wider work—might well have been and should have been, "So, what's the matter with being a gnostic...?"²⁰

Dr. Ribí is in essential agreement: within Jung's own conceptualization of the term, he was a Gnostic—but a *modern* Gnostic, creatively nurturing an ancient and perennial Gnosis into a new time. And there is *nothing the matter with that*—indeed, it deserves a much deeper acknowledgement and understanding than it has received in past years.

In his exploration of Jung's Gnosis, Ribí artfully traverses the two places where past ventures into this terrain have frequently mired down. First—and this discussion takes up approximately the first half of his book—Ribí dissects the multiple dimensions of the Buber-Jung

controversy. His bold opening psychological analysis of Martin Buber, starting with his mother's abandonment of him, is likely to raise a few analytical eyebrows and objections. But Ribí declares his biases and intentions: he is a physician, psychiatrist and Jungian analyst, with decades of clinical experience, exploring a fundamental human conflict. And he is digging deeply into the psyche for understanding. To explain Jung's approach to the experience of Gnosis as a psychological fact, he examines Buber's own encounter with and interpretation of psychological facts—at least to the extent Buber publicly disclosed them. Buber diagnosed Jung as a Gnostic, and Ribí accedes. But what then in contradistinction was Buber? And why did Buber see such danger in the attitude he identified as Gnostic? The real subject of interest, Ribí explains, is the light this conflict casts on a vastly larger historical story: the two millennia long confrontation between *Belief* and *Gnosis*.

In the second part of his work, Ribí offers a probing study of the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*. By working together themes from the *Septem Sermones*, ancient Gnostic texts, and Jung's collected writings, he weaves a witness to Jung's intimate relationship with the historical tradition of Gnosis. Jung did not have available to him the Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi quoted by Ribí in this section; nevertheless, Ribí demonstrates how the Nag Hammadi materials independently support Jung's Gnostic identification of his psychology.

But just as Jung did not have the Nag Hammadi texts, Ribí did not have *Liber Novus*. Ribí intuited the power of Jung's experience during the period he was composing *Liber Novus* and accurately regards the *Septem Sermones* as a signal of these experiences. He even identifies the volumes containing Gnostic texts that Jung had in his library and probably read during the period prior to writing the *Septem Sermones*. Nonetheless, Ribí was forced by the absence of primary documentation—material at that time still sequestered—to make a provisional reconstruction of events leading up to composition of the *Septem Sermones*. The depths Jung had probed and the power of his visions during this period simply could not be estimated. Only his private record could finally tell that tale.

Publication of *Liber Novus* now discloses the visionary foundation underlying Jung's life-long association with the Gnosis. This material supports and significantly supplements Ribí's study. In preparing this

English edition, it therefore was clear that the recently available material from *Liber Novus* should be discussed. That discussion could not, however, be integrated into the original text without radically altering the established work.

Therefore, in an extension of this foreword, I will add a discussion of *Liber Novus* and the story of Jung's initial encounter with the Gnosis. Putting the new pieces together with Ribí's probing exposition of previously apparent facts, we see Alfred Ribí did indeed construct a bridge to the future. His historic study opens the way toward a transformational understanding of C. G. Jung and the tradition of Gnosis.

II. The Perennial Rhizome

Writing in 1950, Jung explained his situation forty years earlier, at the threshold of the experience that produced *Liber Novus*:

The psyche is not of today; its ancestry goes back many millions of years. Individual consciousness is only the flower and the fruit of a season, sprung from the perennial rhizome beneath the earth; and it would find itself in better accord with the truth if it took the existence of the rhizome into its calculations. For the root matter is the mother of all things.²¹

He recounts that his intense study of mythologies around 1911 forced him to conclude that without a myth, a human "is like one uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him, or yet with contemporary human society." Jung continues,

So I suspected that myth had a meaning which I was sure to miss if I lived outside it in the haze of my own speculations. I was driven to ask myself in all seriousness: "What is the myth you are living?" I found no answer to this question, and had to admit that I was not living with a myth, or even in a myth, but rather in an uncertain cloud of theoretical possibilities which I was beginning to regard with increasing distrust... So, in the most natural way, I took it upon myself to get to know "my" myth, and I regarded this as the task

of tasks... I simply had to know what unconscious or preconscious myth was forming me, from what rhizome I sprang.²²

So, beginning on the night of 12 November 1913, and continuing over the next several years, he confronted the portentous “task of tasks.” C. G. Jung stepped to the rim of the world where, as he declared, “the mirror-image begins;”²³ he called it “a voyage of discovery to the other pole of the world.”²⁴ And he found his myth, the rhizome from which he sprang. He explained, as reported in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*:

The knowledge I was concerned with, or was seeking, still could not be found in the science of those days. I myself had to undergo the original experience, and, moreover, try to plant the results of my experience in the soil of reality; otherwise they would have remained subjective assumptions without validity.²⁵

In 1948, he described the event to Victor White: “I wanted the proof of a living Spirit and I got it. Don’t ask me at what price.”²⁶ The “original experience” and “living Spirit” of the Depths had led him to what he avowed in 1916 to be a “new spring of life.”²⁷ But from the very beginning of his odyssey in 1913, Jung struggled with a rare hermeneutic task: translating his imaginative encounters—his visions—concretely into word and image. He had to plant what he had undergone in the soil of reality. The translators of *Liber Novus* comment:

At the outset of *Liber Novus*, Jung experiences a crisis of language. The spirit of the depths, who immediately challenges Jung’s use of language along with the spirit of the time, informs Jung that on the terrain of his soul his achieved language will no longer serve.²⁸

The theoretical, didactic and discursive forms of his previous scientific jargon would not carry the fact of this experience. Jung confronts the challenge before him in his introduction to *Liber Novus*, and he makes this petition to the reader for understanding:

My speech is imperfect. Not because I want to shine with words, but out of the impossibility of finding those words, I speak in im-

ages. With nothing else can I express the words from the depths.²⁹

Near the end of life, Jung spoke of his visions as “the fiery magma out of which the stone that had to be worked was crystallized.”³⁰ Jung’s first task—his *primary hermeneutic task*, the first interpretive challenge—was a crystallization of the stone. That stone, the fact he would work for the rest of his life, originated in a protean visionary experience playing out over several years. It was a descent into mythopoetic imagination.

He was compelled to give this experience expressive form. Early in the experience, Elijah had said to him in a vision, “Seek untiringly, and above all write exactly what you see.”³¹ But how would he put in words the fictive facts of vision? In response, Jung entered an intensely focused and deeply considered formational process. The voice of the depths spoke in symbol and image. And so, in translating his experience, did Jung. Even the graphic form of words on the pages of the Red Book needed to speak with the voice of image.

Jung further intuited that his experience of the Depths was not unprecedented, but somehow linked with previous history, with a fact that had existed as lived event earlier in time. Where and how it had existed must have been ambiguous at the beginning of his journey in 1913 and 1914. Nonetheless, with parchment and paint, and archaic calligraphic pen, he had to bridge with word and image a chasm in time, thus linking past and present. And future.

The process unfolded in a dynamic progression. As the transcription of the manuscript of *Liber Novus* proceeded, parchment sheets changed to paper pages in the Red Book; the artistic images he imaginatively brought to form became more abstractly expressive, and the calligraphic hand became less cramped. Finally, around 1917 and 1918, a unifying symbol began to constellate in the form of cross and circle. And at the end of 1919, he crystallized in *Liber Novus* an image titled “the Philosopher’s Stone.”³² In its sum, *Liber Novus* reveals these strata. But it is all stone from one same source. This was Jung’s primary “hermeneutics of vision,” a many-layered working of vision formed to image.

The Epochal Event

By late 1914, as the first draft of *Liber Novus* took form, Jung recognized that what he had experienced was of more than personal import. It was epochal. It was a new hermeneutics of human creativity, one made possible only by and through, and then in sensuous formation of an extraordinary human venture of vision.

In a letter to Kurt Plachte³³ dated 10 Jan 1929, Jung defined the symbol—and here he undoubtedly speaks of the living symbol formed from this own venture—as, “the sensuously perceptible expression of an inner experience.” Jung continues and asserts that symbolic expression is the highest form of thought possible: “The highest form of intellectual process would be symbolic experience and its symbolic expression.”³⁴ He explains this further by resorting to an ancient Gnostic vocabulary:

The symbol belongs to a different sphere from the sphere of instinct. The latter sphere [of instinct] is the mother, the former [the sphere of symbol] the son (or God). For my private use I call the sphere of paradoxical existence, i.e., the instinctive unconscious, the Pleroma, a term borrowed from Gnosticism. The reflection and formation of the Pleroma in individual consciousness produce an image of it (of like nature in a certain sense), and that is the symbol. In it all paradoxes are abolished. In the Pleroma, Above and Below lie together in a strange way and produce nothing; but when it is disturbed by the mistakes and needs of the individual a waterfall arises between Above and Below, a dynamic something that is the symbol. Like the Pleroma, the symbol is greater than man. It overpowers him, shapes him, as though he had opened a sluice that pours a mighty stream over him and sweeps him away.³⁵

A year later, in 1930, he wrote further about what happens when this mighty stream is let loose. Speaking about signal imaginative creations across the ages, he asserts that great imaginative art,

draws its strength from the life of mankind and we completely miss its meaning if we try to derive it from personal factors... Whenever the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear upon the conscious outlook of an age, this event is

a creative act which is of importance for a whole epoch. A work of art is produced that may truthfully be called a message to generations of men... This is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of the times and shows the way, by word or deed, to its fulfillment..."³⁶

Jung was speaking in kind of his own hidden book, *Liber Novus*: the primary translation to word of vision; a multifaceted layering of symbols; word in image and image in word, reaching back and forward in time, "a creative act which is of importance for a whole epoch...a message to generations of men."

Finding Gnostic Parallels

In 1912, C. G. Jung felt an urgent need to understand the "unconscious or preconscious myth" that was "forming him." Between November of 1913 and late spring of 1914, he began his extraordinary odyssey into the depths of the inner world. Though imaginative, mythic, apparently fictive, and ultimately subjective, what Jung met in his wanderings spoke with the voice of an objective fact. It was independent, ineffably ancient, and yet intimately and synchronously involved with human history. He perceived it as real, and the story it told had the tenor of a revelation.

The experience placed a weighty vocation upon him. He needed to link what had happened to him—both the experience and the new book it produced—to its root, to its history. He explains his situation:

First I had to find evidence for the historical prefiguration of my inner experiences. That is to say, I had to ask myself, "Where have my particular premises already occurred in history?" If I had not succeeded in finding such evidence, I would never have been able to substantiate my ideas.³⁷

Analytical psychology is fundamentally a natural science, but it is subject far more than any other science to the personal bias of the observer. The psychologist must depend therefore in the highest degree upon historical and literary parallels if he wishes to exclude at least the crudest errors in judgment. Between 1918 and 1926 I had seriously studied the Gnostic writers, for they too had

been confronted with the primal world of the unconscious and had dealt with its contents...³⁸

By recognizing historical roots, Dr. Jung gave substance and sustenance to his psychology. The first place he searched and found those roots was in the Gnostic writers. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* records he undertook his study of Gnostic writings between 1918 and 1926.³⁹ However, that initial date was incorrectly stated. His serious study actually began three years earlier, in 1915.

As Jung undertook the calligraphic transcription of the first pages of his draft manuscript into the Red Book in 1915, he was already searching the records of humanity for evidence that he was not alone in his extraordinary experience. He hunted it in history. At that point, Jung turned anew to reading the accounts of the ancient Gnosis. Sonu Shamdasani has noted that Jung began his close study of the Gnostic works while on military service in January and October 1915.⁴⁰ And now he approached the texts with a unique interpretive tool: his own experience of the prior two years.

This period in Jung's life has been his greatest enigma. He described it as the "numinous beginning which contained everything,"⁴¹ but until very recently, we knew next to nothing about it. Disclosure of the primary records⁴² now allows examination of the transformations that occurred in late 1915 and early 1916—the months after Jung had completed his drafts of the initial two sections of *Liber Novus*, and during which he started the calligraphic transcription of those drafts into the big folio volume that became known as the Red Book.⁴³ But to understand Jung's enormously important awakening during this period, the events must be carefully placed in temporal context. Without comprehending what happened to Jung during these years, I do not believe it is possible to fully grasp the motivation and focus of his later works. Indeed, it seems much has not yet been understood.

Barbara Hannah recorded: "He [Jung] told me more than once that the *first* parallels he found to his own experience were in the Gnostic texts, that is, those reported in the *Elenchos* of Hippolytus."⁴⁴ It is now evident that Jung studied the Gnostic materials preserved by Hippolytus in 1915 and saw then the parallels with his own experience. This connection with the Gnosis instigated intense interest and further

reading of the then extant Gnostic literature. Gnostic myth thereafter supplied a vocabulary for expression of the experiences recorded in *Liber Novus*.

Of course, he had already crossed paths with some of this material during his feverish and wide-ranging study of mythologies four years earlier, around 1911, while working on *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*. But then, as he much later commented, he had not understood it.⁴⁵ The situation was different by the end of 1915. The events of the prior two years had granted Jung the interpretive key to Gnostic vision. He recognized the vision behind these ancient texts, because he too had experienced it.

Again, consider what had happened to him; order the events and their formidable effects. His contemporaneous ledgers of his visionary venture—as recorded in the journals known as the “Black Books”—began on 12 November 1913 with Jung’s petition to his soul: “My Soul, where are you?”⁴⁶ That supplication led in the next few months to a flood of imaginative material. The vision he called the *Mysterium*—the encounter with Elijah and Salome—came in late December 1913. Thereafter new encounters constellated almost nightly—the Red One, Ammonius, Izdubar, the Eye of Evil, the horde of dead Anabaptists on their way to Jerusalem, and Jung’s first meeting with Philemon: all of this erupted over the weeks from December to February. By March the visions ebbed, and finally abated in June 1914.

In August 1914 came the outbreak of the First World War. During the following months of late 1914 and early 1915, Jung composed the drafts of what would become *Liber Primus* and *Liber Secundus*—the first two of the three completed sections of *Liber Novus*. Thereafter, he confronted a second onslaught of imaginative experiences; these commenced in the late summer of 1915. This second wave of visions was compiled in 1917 for inclusion as the last section of *Liber Novus*, called *Scrutinies*.⁴⁷ That last section included his summary revelation, independently titled *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, as mentioned earlier.

In the months following completion of the first two sections of *Liber Novus* and before the second onslaught of vision in later 1915—the middle or transitional period in the formulation of *Liber Novus*—a distinctly Gnostic voice and Gnostic myth powerfully entered into

Jung's vocabulary. This was apparently a period when Jung intensely identified the Gnostic root of his epochal revelation.

Reading Hippolytus

Jung stated repeatedly to his associate Barbara Hannah, that the *first* historical parallels he found for his experience were in the Gnostic texts recorded by the ancient heresiologist Hippolytus (170—235 CE), in his work *Elenchos*. Note that Jung did not speak of parallel concepts or ideas, but of finding parallel experiences: Jung recognized images of his visionary encounter with the soul in the writings preserved by Hippolytus. The two obvious questions that remain unanswered (and perhaps previously unasked) are: *when* did this reading of Hippolytus occur, and *what* were the specific experiences he saw mirrored in those writings?

Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* (cited by Jung using the abbreviated Greek title *Elenchos*) had only been discovered at the Mt. Athos monastery in Greece in 1842. A first published edition of the Greek text appeared in 1851, but with authorship still then tentatively attributed to Origen.⁴⁸ The work would not be firmly accredited to Hippolytus until the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ A generally recognized value of Hippolytus' *Elenchos* is that it contains abundant quotations from second century Gnostic writings, texts that were otherwise completely lost.

By the end of 1915 Jung had acquired several books dealing with Gnosticism, and at least three of them included major excerpts from the recently discovered writings of Hippolytus.⁵⁰ Dr. Ribi notes two of these books as possible early sources used by Jung: Wolfgang Schultz, *Dokumente der Gnosis* (Jena, 1910),⁵¹ and G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London, 1906).⁵² Both texts were indeed important to Jung, as I will explain below. But there is another book in Jung's library that should also be mentioned: Jung had Mead's *Simon Magus* (1892), which quotes all of Hippolytus' extended commentary on Simon Magus along with excerpts from his writings.⁵³ Since Jung subsequently recognized his guide Philemon had once been Simon Magus (I will explain further below), one surmises that he read this material with a focused personal interest.

I have examined these volumes and other related books still held in Jung's personal library.⁵⁴ Based on that study, I believe it was the work by Wolfgang Schultz—*Dokumente der Gnosis* (*Documents of Gnosis*), published in 1910—that initially transformed Jung's understanding of his experiences and opened his perception to Gnostic parallels. Though he of course subsequently read widely on Gnosticism, this appears to have been a singular book that awakened his attention in 1915.

The evidence for this conclusion requires further explanation. Jung lightly added marginalia to a small number of his books; perhaps a few hundred of the over four thousand books in his library have some marginal markings. In most cases, Jung would simply make a line in the margin; more rarely he would underline a passage. Of the books that he marked, few contain more than a couple such notations.⁵⁵ But in this book, *Dokumente der Gnosis*, Jung marked or underlined passages on the vast majority of the pages. Although never previously noted, this appears to be the most heavily marked book in his library collection.⁵⁶ At the time he read it, this book clearly evoked an unusual response from him; his atypically extensive markings emphatically reflect that fact.

Dokumente der Gnosis contains a collection of excerpts from ancient records, many preserved by patristic sources—primarily Hippolytus and, to a lesser degree, Irenaeus—along with Schultz's commentary. In this collection, Schultz provides an accurate overview of classical Gnosticism's extant textual legacy. He dedicates his chapters to various schools, teachers, or source texts associated with Gnostic tradition. Jung said that reading the Gnostic texts preserved by Hippolytus was important to him. Hippolytus is the main source quoted in nine of the nineteen chapters of this volume, including the chapters on Simon Magus and Basilides.⁵⁷

When did Jung read this book, or add the marginalia to it? Jung quotes *Dokumente der Gnosis* several times in *Psychological Types*, which he drafted during 1919, so he had surely already studied the book prior to that year.⁵⁸ Based on other evidence, one can date his reading of the book to a time before December 1915. Again, I must explain.

Schultz's book is attractively printed and includes an impressive frontispiece. [It is reproduced on the cover of this book.] That frontispiece gives a modernistic rendering of an ancient Gnostic gem—very

similar in its central motif to the engraving on the Alexandrian Gnostic gem that Jung mounted on a ring and wore for the remainder of his life.⁵⁹ In December of 1915 Jung painted in his Red Book an image of Izdubar, the God from the East, whom Jung had both sickened and then nurtured to glorious rebirth.⁶⁰ The layout of the crocodile and serpentine figures surrounding Izdubar in Jung's painting are so strikingly similar to the frontispiece engraving in *Dokumente der Gnosis*, one concludes that it served as an inspiration for Jung's artwork. This line of reasoning affirms that Jung had examined the book before December 1915, when he painted the picture of Izdubar.

Grounded on the preceding construction of events, I suggest Jung studied *Dokumente der Gnosis* in 1915, and that this book opened the door to an evolving Gnostic self-identification. In Schultz's compilation of ancient sources, including key Gnostic texts reproduced by Hippolytus, Jung recognized parallels with his visionary experiences.

There were of course many other sources of which Jung availed himself. In both content and structure, Schultz had based his book on the 1900 work by G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, which contained essentially the same material but often in greater detail and with a more psychologically astute commentary. Schultz expresses his debt to Mead's work in the foreword to *Dokumente der Gnosis*; in support of his own work, he however asserts that the German translation of Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (*Fragmente eines verschollenen Glaubens*, Berlin, 1902) was of inferior quality, and tainted by a Theosophical tone.

By 1915, Jung already knew about and had cited some of G.R.S. Mead's work.⁶¹ It is likely that Jung picked up *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* promptly after reading Schultz. Jung went on to cite Mead frequently in later years.⁶² In 1931, he described *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* as, "a standard work on Gnosticism. There is no other book that can compare with it, it is written with love and great understanding... There is nothing in German equal to this book by Mead; it is well worth reading."⁶³

We now come to the next question: What were the specific Gnostic texts reported by Hippolytus that offered parallels to Jung's own visionary experience? Throughout his later writings Jung frequently cited Gnostic material preserved by Hippolytus (Jung ultimately judged

that Hippolytus must have been a Gnostic sympathizer, occultly conveying texts and teachings under the cloak of an orthodox critique). These many references aside (and Dr. Ribi discusses several of them), there are two key Gnostic myths related by Hippolytus that strikingly reflected Jung's experiences up until 1915. The first is the story of Simon Magus and his consort Helena; the second is the story of Sophia and the demiurge. Both tales subsequently entwine themselves in the parts of *Liber Novus* composed after 1915.

Philemon, Simon Magus and Helena

Intriguingly, at the conclusion of *Liber Novus* it is disclosed that Philemon—Jung's "ghostly guru"⁶⁴ prominently mentioned in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*—was the ancient Gnostic teacher Simon Magus. While considering how Jung read Simon's history, one must keep this strange fact in mind. In telling the story of Simon Magus, Schultz quotes Hippolytus. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* and his earlier work *Simon Magus* (all in Jung's library) include this same material; the latter work by Mead adds quotations from other ancient sources that mention Simon Magus.

Simon Magus, "the Magician," is the first historical figure named in ancient accounts of the Gnosis. The date of his life remains unclear; most reports place Simon in the first century of the Christian era. Later critics generally identified Simon Magus as the father of Gnostic "heresy." Writing in the late second century, the early orthodox apologist Irenaeus called him, "the Samaritan Simon, from whom all the heresies took their origin."⁶⁵ Hippolytus is, however, the most complete primary source on Simon Magus; he recounts both Simon's history and quotes from writings attributed to him.

Accounts of Simon's life emphasize that he had a consort named Helena. Later critics asserted that Helena was a prostitute whom Simon had purchased in the Phoenician port of Tyre and then liberated. Simon told the tale differently, adding a mythic or archetypal dimension. He proclaimed that in Helena he found and liberated a deific feminine power hidden within physical creation. Helena was a manifestation of the divine *Sophia* (Wisdom); through her mediation, Simon had met the primal *Epinoia*. This term, *Epinoia* (imperfectly translated

by the words “thought” or “conception”), appears often in subsequent Gnostic mythologies as the title for the first feminine emanation manifest within the primordial mystery of divinity.⁶⁶

Simon says of her: “Wisdom was the first Conception (or Thought) of My Mind, the Mother of All, by whom in the beginning I conceived in My Mind the making of the Angels and Archangels.”⁶⁷ Using gender in metaphor, Simon explained that the *masculine* Mind, or Logos, was in primordial relationship with a *feminine* syzygy, which Simon named *Epinoia*—the primal first Thought of the divine Mind. G. R. S. Mead commented upon this story in his *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, explicitly noting its psychological nature:

The Logos and his Thought, the World-soul, were symbolized as the Sun (Simon) and Moon (Selēnē, Helen); ...Helen was the human soul fallen into matter and Simon the mind which brings about her redemption.⁶⁸

When Jung met this text in 1915, would he have seen a reflection of his own experience? It seems as though he did. In a vision recorded at the beginning of his imaginative journey during December of 1913 Jung had met Elijah and Salome. Upon first encountering Salome, he was shocked by her presence and questioned, “Was she not vain greed and criminal lust?” Salome nonetheless declared her love for him and wished to become his bride.⁶⁹ Jung realized he also loved Salome.⁷⁰ In the draft of *Liber Novus*, composed in 1914-15, he penned a reflection on his encounter with Salome. Therein he ponders the relationship of the masculine mind (described as Forethought, or Logos) with Salome, which he equates with Eros.⁷¹ This commentary parallels the Logos-Epinoia relationship expounded by Simon Magus in his consideration of Helena. In the 1920s Jung wrote yet another private analysis of his encounter with Elijah and Salome and there he affirmed, “they might just as well have been called Simon Magus and Helena.”⁷²

Jung probably also found a more intimate mirror of the tale of Simon and Helena in his personal life. But here the details remain veiled. Like Simon with Helena, Jung’s encounter with the mystery of the soul was apparently facilitated by his relationship to a woman. On 14 November 1913, Jung wrote in his journal the following comment

addressed to the soul: "And I found you again only through the soul of the woman."⁷³ It might be surmised that he was referring to his relationship with Toni Wolff, the woman who at this complex juncture in his life apparently assisted him in his mythopoetic journey. Whatever the manner in which that relationship is conjectured, later in his psychological commentary on "Anima and Animus," Jung did state that the anima can "be realized only through a relation to a partner of the opposite sex."⁷⁴ The complex liaison with the anima played a foundational role in Jung's psychology, and Simon's consort, Helena, is often mentioned. In 1927 he wrote, "The anima-type is presented in the most succinct and pregnant form in the Gnostic legend of Simon Magus."⁷⁵

The Universal Root

Hippolytus also supplies portions of a text attributed to Simon Magus, called the "Great Announcement" or "Great Expectation." Much later Jung quotes this "remarkable" (as he called it) text in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, and gives it an extended commentary:

In the gnosis of Simon Magus, Helen is *prote ennoia*, sapientia, and *epinoia*. The last designation also occurs in Hippolytus: "For Epinoia herself dwelt in Helen at that time." In his "Great Explanation", Simon says [here begins the quotation from Hippolytus]:

"There are two offshoots from all the Aeons, having neither beginning nor end, from one root, and this root is a certain Power, an invisible and incomprehensible Silence. One of them appears on high and is a great power, the mind of the whole, who rules all things and is a male; the other below is a great Thought, a female giving birth to all things."⁷⁶

Simon Magus had more to say that would have interested Jung in 1915. As reported by Hippolytus, Simon also indicates there is a "Great and Boundless Power" that has been "sealed, hidden and concealed" and placed within the Dwelling that we call humankind. "And he [Simon] says that man here below, born of blood, is the Dwelling, and that the Boundless Power dwells in him, which he says is the Universal

Root.” This Power has a two-fold nature: one part is concealed inwardly, the other is outwardly manifest; furthermore, “the concealed (parts) ...are hidden in the manifested, and the manifested produced by the concealed.”⁷⁷ The concealed portion must be met through “imaging” and by “art;” otherwise it will perish unknown.⁷⁸

All of these texts roused Jung’s attention, as evidenced by his use of the material in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* many decades later.⁷⁹ But again, the question is: did he see in them a reflection of his own experiences recorded through 1915? At the outset of *Liber Novus*, Jung encountered contrasting realities, concealed and manifest, one reflecting the other. The concealed had been revealed to him through images, through the “art” of mythopoetic imagination. Jung gave this summary of the revelation of the concealed:

The world of the inner is as infinite as the world of the outer. Just as you become a part of the manifold essence of the world through your bodies, so you become a part of the manifold essence of the inner world through your soul. This inner world is truly infinite, in no way poorer than the outer one. Man lives in two worlds.⁸⁰

In *Liber Novus*, Jung was gathering empirical evidence for a collective foundation, or primordial rhizome, underlying consciousness; in his scientific writings, he later termed it the “collective unconscious.” Simon Magus’ “Universal Root” seems an apt analog to Jung’s later conceptualization of a collective unconscious.

Jung’s relationship with Simon Magus became even more complex and peculiar around 1916. In an episode during the summer of 1916, recorded in his journal and recounted on the last pages of *Liber Novus*, Jung was walking in the garden with Philemon. A figure appeared to them; Jung identified him in the journal as Christ. Philemon addressed Christ, “My master, my brother.” Christ responded, but recognized Philemon as Simon Magus. Philemon explained to Christ that his name was once Simon Magus, but that now he has become Philemon.⁸¹

The *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* are recorded in a more fully elaborated form in the last section of *Liber Novus*, compiled in 1917. In this final version of the Sermons, Philemon (who was identified in 1916 as Simon Magus) appears vested in the white robes of an Alexandrian

Gnostic priest. Resting his hand on Jung's shoulder, Philemon—not Jung or the Gnostic teacher Basilides⁸²—addresses the Sermons to the dead. In this version, a homiletic dialogue between Philemon and Jung follows each sermon; Philemon therein declares to Jung that his statements in the Sermons are an expression of his knowledge, his *gnosis*.⁸³

Jung painted a portrait of Philemon (or, Simon Magus?) during 1924 in his Red Book; above the picture, he inscribed in Greek an appellation: “Father of the Prophets, Beloved Philemon.”⁸⁴ On the facing page, he painted an image of a veiled woman standing on an altar within a sanctuary. Above her he inscribed, “*Dei sapientia in mysterio*” (“The Wisdom of God in mystery”). These two facing portraits mark principal companions met during his visionary journey. They form a thematic conclusion to Jung's transcription of *Liber Novus* into his red leather folio volume.⁸⁵

Around the time Jung finished these images, he had begun construction of his Tower at Bollingen. Above the door of the Tower, he carved a dedication, consecrating the place: “*Philemonis sacrum*” (Shrine of Philemon). On a bedroom wall upstairs in the Tower, in large mural format, he again painted an image of Philemon. Above that painting, he added the appellation: “Philemon, the Prophets' Primal Father.”⁸⁶ Jung obviously had a formidable relationship with this figure named Philemon, who was also anciently known as Simon Magus. No less complex was his relationship with a protean feminine power met in guise of the soul. In 1924, he named her *Sapientia*: Sophia, the Wisdom of God in a mystery. Both figures apparently integrated themselves within Jung's perception of a Gnostic heritage.

Sophia, the Demiurge, and the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*

The published edition of *Liber Novus* includes three appendices provided as an integral part of the editorial apparatus constructed by Sonu Shamdasani. Each appendix offers a glimpse into Jung's journal accounts. These are indispensable to the understanding of the mythic framework within the sections of *Liber Novus* composed after 1915—the months during which Jung confronted his roots in the Gnostic tradition.

The first of the supplements, Appendix A, supplies a facsimile

copy of a page from Black Book 5, on which Jung carefully sketched his first symbolic “mandala,” the *Systema Muditotius*. Apparently done around mid-January 1916, Jung’s drawing might be most aptly described not as a mandala—a term Jung would not use until several years later—but as a Gnostic aeonology.⁸⁷ This complex symbolic figure would be interpreted some two weeks later in the text Jung penned and called *Seven Sermons to the Dead*—Jung’s address to the ghostly horde of Anabaptists returned from Jerusalem, who rang his doorbell in late January 1916.⁸⁸

The third supplement, Appendix C, again reproduces the Black Book 5; this entry is dated 16 January 1916. It is an astounding text in which the feminine voice of Jung’s soul reveals to him a story that will be recognized by every student of Gnosticism as the foundational myth of the tradition, the myth of Sophia and the demiurge.

In classic Gnostic mythology, Sophia (Wisdom) was a feminine aeon, a twin archetype or syzygy of the masculine Logos. She is the feminine aspect of divinity indwelling creation. Much like the *anima mundi* of alchemical myth, Sophia is present within the very tissue of cosmos and consciousness. In the Gnostic drama of creation, an abortive emanation had separated from Sophia soon after her entry into the depths of the coming cosmos. This defective child grew into a fiery cosmic force that falsely claimed to be the singular and supreme deity. As self-declared ruler of the material world, he sought to hold humanity in his thrall. This was the demiurge. Gnostic myths gave him many different names, such as Saklas and Yaldabaoth; Jung called him Abraxas. In this ancient and oft restated Gnostic myth, Sophia was the opponent of the demiurge. She was the higher power who awakened in humankind knowledge of their intrinsic inner light and origin, thereby liberating them from the deceitful worldly lordship of the demiurge.

Over the past century, several scholars of Gnosticism have argued that absent a myth of the demiurge, a mythology should not be properly categorized as Gnostic, at least in the classical sense.⁸⁹ This subject has colored some past interpretations of the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*. Occasional critics have contended that Jung’s Sermons do not explicitly include the story of the demiurge. Thus, it is suggested, Jung did not understand the core of Gnostic mythology, and the Sermons are not a true exemplar of a Gnostic mythologem.⁹⁰ However, it is now fully

manifest that this specious critique results from a misreading and misunderstanding of the complex figure of Abraxas, who appears in the second sermon of the *Septem Sermones*.

Jung's journal entry dated 16 January 1916, reproduced as Appendix C of *Liber Novus*, removes all questions about this issue: Abraxas was the demiurge in Jung's myth. In this journal entry, Jung records the following words spoken to him by the soul, who assumes the voice of Sophia. Her address is unarguably a rendition of the primal Gnostic myth of the demiurge, here named Abraxas:

You should worship only one God. The other Gods are unimportant. Abraxas is to be feared. Therefore it was a deliverance when he separated himself from me.

Note that the soul is taking the voice of Sophia. The separation of the demiurge from Sophia—"when he separated himself from me"—is a key part of the Gnostic myth. She continues,

You do not need to seek him. He will find you, just like Eros. He is the God of the cosmos, extremely powerful and fearful. He is the creative drive, he is form and formation, just as much as matter and force, therefore he is above all the light and dark Gods. He tears away souls and casts them into procreation. He is the creative and created. He is the God who always renews himself in days, in months, in years, in human life, in ages, in peoples, in the living, in heavenly bodies. He compels, he is unsparing. If you worship him, you increase his power over you. Thereby it becomes unbearable. You will have dreadful trouble getting clear of him. ... So remember him, do not worship him, but also do not imagine that you can flee him since he is all around you. You must be in the middle of life, surrounded by death on all sides. Stretched out, like one crucified, you hang in him, the fearful, the overpowering.

But you have in you the *one* God, the wonderfully beautiful and kind, the solitary, starlike, unmoving, he who is older and wiser than the father, he who has a safe hand, who leads you among all the darknesses and death scares of dreadful Abraxas. He gives joy

and peace, since he is beyond death and beyond what is subject to change. He is no servant and no friend of Abraxas.⁹¹

This journal entry unambiguously identifies the figure of Abraxas, who shortly thereafter appears in the Sermons, as the demiurge of classical Gnostic mythology. The identification of Abraxas with the demiurge is further established in the manuscript of *Liber Novus*, where in his transcription Jung substitutes the term “ruler of this world” for the name “Abraxas” original written in his Black Book journal.⁹²

Jung recognized the Gnostic provenance of this January 1916 apparition. A Sophianic voice had declared to him the fundamental Gnostic assertion: “You have in you the *one* God, the wonderfully beautiful and kind, the solitary, starlike, unmoving.” Jung turned to that star, and it became his life’s guide.

Two years after beginning the journey of *Liber Novus*, Jung was now placing his visionary experience into an interpretive form impregnated by his reading of Gnostic mythology. In his journal entry from January of 1916, the soul speaks to him in the vocabulary of Gnostic myth; two weeks later that same vocabulary enters into the initial journal formulation of the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*. In the summer of 1916, his guide Philemon is revealed to be Simon Magus. Jung’s myth had met its rhizome, and he knew it.

Of course, one should note that the basic declaration of the demiurge had already appeared in another form at the very beginning of *Liber Novus*. Jung finished this section of his manuscript text and its final calligraphic rendering into the Red Book earlier in 1915. In the preamble he penned on the first pages of *Liber Primus*, Jung confronts two powers: the “spirit of the time,” and the “spirit of the depths.” The “spirit of the time” unmistakably manifests as a demiurge, declaring—in a fashion typical of the Gnostic demiurge—that there is no other power before him.⁹³ The “spirit of the depths” rebuffs the demiurge’s claimed sovereignty, and entreats Jung to look beyond his fabrications. What Jung encounters and records two years later, in 1916, is not a new theme. Rather, it is a metamorphosis in voice, vocabulary, and the mythological identification of his guide: in 1916, Gnostic mythology had become a symbolic vessel for expression of his visions.

In 1916 Jung had seemingly found the root of his myth and it was the myth of Gnosis. I see no evidence that this ever changed. Over the next forty years, he would proceed to construct an interpretive reading of the Gnostic tradition's occult course across the Christian aeon: in Hermeticism, alchemy, Kabbalah, and Christian mysticism. In this vast hermeneutical enterprise, Jung was building a bridge across time, leading back to the foundation stone of classical Gnosticism. The bridge that led forward toward a new and coming aeon was footed on the stone rejected by the builders two thousand years ago.

Alchemy and Gnostic Studies

Jung began his focused study of alchemy in the mid-1930s. Over the ensuing decades his detailed, extensive and very complex writings concerning alchemy have left many readers completely bewildered. In light of *Liber Novus*, Jung's mission is finally evident. The interpretive key he used to unlock the mystery of alchemy was integrally connected to his own earlier visionary experience. He entered the alchemical retort himself in 1913, and from the alembic of personal experience, he extracted a stone. Those who have spent a few years studying *Liber Novus* find there many reasons why Jung discovered in the alchemical opus a reflection of his experience. After meeting *Liber Novus*, one reads Jung's writings on alchemy with eyes wide open.

Sonu Shamdasani proposes that in considering Jung's study of alchemy, we must now understand,

the real referent of his alchemical works to be not medieval alchemy per se but the symbolism of the individuation process. The hermeneutic key that Jung was using to read alchemical texts consisted of his own self-experimentation, as presented in *Liber Novus*....⁹⁴

This same hermeneutic key opens the door to understanding Jung's repetitive reference to ancient Gnostic texts, documents dating to the beginnings of the Christian age. His interpretive referent remained his own experience, the event crystalized in *Liber Novus*. Other than works from the alchemical tradition, there was no categorical source Jung turned to more frequently in his major writings to illustrate

the dynamics and contents of the collective unconscious and the constellation of the Self, than the ancient texts of the Gnosis. Jung is quoted in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* as saying:

When I began to understand alchemy I realized that it represented the historical link with Gnosticism, and that a continuity therefore existed between past and present... Alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious. ... The possibility of a comparison with alchemy, and the uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology.⁹⁵

At Yale University in 1937 Jung asserted, “The religious or philosophical views of ancient alchemy were clearly Gnostic;” he then listed keynotes of the Gnosis that had entered into alchemical tradition, highlighting alchemy’s recognition of the Sophianic “anima mundi,” and the opposing demiurge.⁹⁶

Jung saw his life’s work—or his psychology, if one wishes to use that narrower category to circumscribe his expansive vision—as organically connected to a tradition with roots in the experience of Gnosis. This connection back to the Gnosis manifest at the beginning of the Christian aeon was the deep soil and bedrock that rooted his life in history. Jung’s encounter with Gnostic literature—begun years before his study of the alchemical tradition—intimately entangled itself in the primary expression of his experiences in *Liber Novus*. Gnostic mythologems thereafter became for Jung a prototypical image of his individuation.

Gnosis and the New Aeon

Based on his readings of ancient texts, Jung judged that the Gnostics of the first centuries had essentially done what he had done, and seen what he also had seen. But there exists yet another, much deeper, perception behind Jung’s special relationship with the Gnosis of antiquity that has not yet received wide attention. I suggest it was the most important factor Jung identified as historically uniting his experience with classical Gnosticism. It placed the ancient Gnosis in a unique temporal situation

relative to all other later manifestations of the tradition, including those he recognized in alchemy, Kabbalah, and other “heretical” movements emerging during the second millennium of the current epoch.

Not only had the Gnostics met and engaged a psychic reality emerging from the depths, but they had undergone their experiences of this mythopoetic power at a uniquely transformative moment in the evolution of human consciousness: the threshold of a new aeon. And so, two thousand years later, had Carl Gustav Jung.

Jung composed the first page of his Red Book in 1915. On that introductory leaf he graphically intertwined a prophecy of the future, and the coming of a new age: an epochal turning point in human consciousness. It was, as he announced with the first words of *Liber Novus*, “The Way of What is to Come.” This was the keynote of his visionary journey, and it continued to be reflected throughout the text of *Liber Novus*. The two millennia long Christian age—coincident with the astrological aeon of Pisces—was coming to an end. A new God-image was seeking constellation in human consciousness.

Although this keynote was a foundational motivation to his subsequent work, for decades Jung did not feel free to publicly disclose it.⁹⁷ Perhaps he thought it, too, would not be understood. Then in February of 1944, at age sixty-eight, Jung slipped in the snow and broke his ankle. This modest injury and associated immobilization led to the development twelve days later of a life-threatening pulmonary embolism and heart attack. For three weeks he hung between life and death. And in that twilight, he was immersed in a prolonged series of visions. They seemed the end of his journey, the conclusion to the story he had lived. “It is impossible to convey the beauty and intensity of emotion during those visions. They were the most tremendous things I have ever experienced.”⁹⁸

I would never have imagined that any such experience was possible. It was not a product of imagination. The visions and experiences were utterly real; there was nothing subjective about them; they all had a quality of absolute objectivity.

We shy away from the word “eternal,” but I can describe the experience only as the ecstasy of a non-temporal state in which present, past, and future are one. Everything that happens in time had

been brought together into a concrete whole. Nothing was distributed over time, nothing could be measured by temporal concepts.⁹⁹

This illness, these visions, and a year of convalescence—soon followed by a second serious cardiac event in November of 1946—deeply affected Jung's perspective upon his life, his story, and the task remaining to him. They marked the summation of an experience foreshadowed by *Liber Novus* and motivated formation of his last four major works, the books I have called his "Last Quartet."¹⁰⁰ *Aion* was the initial work composed in this period. He explained:

Before my illness I had often asked myself if I were permitted to publish or even speak of my secret knowledge. I later set it all down in *Aion*. I realized it was my duty to communicate these thoughts, yet I doubted whether I was allowed to give expression to them. During my illness I received confirmation and I now knew that everything had meaning and that everything was perfect.¹⁰¹

The first manuscript page of *Liber Novus* penned by Jung in 1915—deeply considered, dense with verbal and pictorial imagery formed in response to the spirit of the depths—and the complexly crafted commentary in *Aion*, published in 1951, both declare the dawning of a new age.¹⁰² Shortly thereafter Jung feverishly wrote *Answer to Job*, his most personal and controversial confession. He said it had erupted unbidden, even against his will. It, too, was a declaration of visionary insights underlying *Liber Novus*.

Sonu Shamdasani has described Jung's *Answer to Job* as an articulation of the theology of *Liber Novus*.¹⁰³ But this is not theology in an orthodox sense. To the contrary, it is a bold statement of Gnostic myth, spoken in a new voice for a new time. Talking with Mircea Eliade in 1952, Jung explained his *Answer to Job*, which was then rousing wrath among the theologians. He said, "The book has always been on my mind, but I waited forty years to write it."¹⁰⁴ Almost four decades earlier, in January 1916, the soul had given to Jung the tale that he retold in *Answer to Job*: a story of the demiurge and Sophia. It had been on his mind ever after, awaiting, and then decisively demanding, contemporary declaration.

Jung saw humanity facing an epochal task. We stand before a pivotal moment in our story, and “we also need the Sophia that Job was seeking.”¹⁰⁵ The prior anamnesis (remembering) of Sophia had come at the threshold of the Christian aeon, as witnessed by the Gnostics who heard her tale two thousand years ago. However, over the succeeding millennia of the Christian epoch, the *experience of her* had almost been forgotten. Now Sophia was returning. In Pope Pius XII’s 1950 pronouncement of the Assumption of the Virgin,¹⁰⁶ Jung identified a modern dogmatic evolution that evidenced Sophia’s myth awakening to new life. For Jung, it was a sign of the times, and an independent confirmation of his own Sophianic encounter years before.¹⁰⁷

In *Aion*, Jung asserted, “For the Gnostics—and this is their real secret—the psyche existed as a source of knowledge.”¹⁰⁸ That statement succinctly summarizes Jung’s defining perception about the nature of Gnosis. His own experience was the foundation for his definition. Beginning in 1913, Jung turned to the soul seeking knowledge. It came. What he saw and heard was incredible; it stood beyond belief. He himself could not *believe* it:

I do not want to believe it, I do not need to believe it, nor could I believe it. How can one believe such? My mind would need to be totally confused to believe such things. Given their nature, they are most improbable.¹⁰⁹

But what could not be believed, he now *knew*:

not with reference to the opinions of the ancients or this or that authority, but because I have experienced it. It has happened thus in me. And it certainly happened in a way that I neither expected nor wished for.¹¹⁰

Jung did not use the writings of the Gnostics as sources for his psychology; he turned to Gnostic accounts seeking confirmatory *resources* that supported his observations about the mythopoetic depths underlying consciousness. Whatever his sympathies, Jung was simply not an ancient Gnostic, and he could not model himself in that archaic mold. He was a modern man, perhaps even the first truly modern man. Establishing the link between the Gnosis of old and his new praxis was,

however, an undertaking with a hidden significance for Jung. In *Liber Novus*, Carl Gustav Jung received a vocation that burdened him with an epochal task:

To give birth to the ancient in a new time is creation. This is the creation of the new, and that redeems me. Salvation is the resolution of the task. The task is to give birth to the old in a new time.¹¹¹

To understand more than “the this and that” of C. G. Jung, it is imperative we now ponder the way he worked the redemptive task of giving birth to the old in a new time. It is a complex enterprise; it demands the conjoint consideration of old traditions and of a New Book. In the labor, many prior assumptions and obscuring accretions will need to be stripped away; the nature of Jungian studies may even be fundamentally changed. Nonetheless, by delving into the depths of Jung’s relationship with Gnostic tradition, we will unearth a key that unlocks transformative perspectives on Jung’s hermeneutics of creative imagination and on his vision of a coming new chapter in our human story. In *The Search for Roots: C. G. Jung and the Tradition of Gnosis*, Dr. Alfred Ribi provides us with a place to begin that task of tasks.

Notes and Bibliography

Abbreviations used in citations

CW: *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966-1992).

GW: *Gesammelten Werke* (Patmos-Walter-Verlag, Düsseldorf); this is the German edition of Jung's Collected Works.

NHC: The Nag Hammadi Codices; texts from Nag Hammadi are cited by codex number and line. Several editions and translations of these texts are referenced, as listed in the bibliography. All of the Nag Hammadi texts cited are also available in: Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (HarperCollins, 2007). For a complete index of the texts by codex number and line, see pg. 799 of that volume.

MDR: C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Notes

Editorial Note: This English edition is based on a translation of the original work prepared by Don Reneau; it incorporates minor revisions to the German edition. The primary Gnostic texts cited by Dr. Ribí, including the Nag Hammadi Codices, and the writings of Irenaeus and Hippolytus, are all available online at: gnosis.org/library.

Foreword (by Lance S. Owens)

¹ Letter of Nov 13, 1960. Eugene Rolfe, *Encounter with Jung* (Boston: Sigo Press, 1989), 158.

² C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, tr. John Peck, Mark Kyburz, and Sonu Shamdasani (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009). (Hereafter, *Liber Novus*.)

³ Jung usually employed the German term *die Gnosis* in his references to the historical tradition; this term can be translated in English either as *Gnosis* or as *Gnosticism*. Following the usage common in European languages, I will preferentially employ the word *Gnosis* to designate the tradition. By “classical Gnostic tradition,” I refer to manifestations in the first three centuries CE. Specialists in Gnostic studies have recently questioned the generic term *Gnosticism*, arguing that the word did not exist anciently; it is a polemical term first coined in the seventeenth century by Protestant theology; over subsequent centuries the word became synonymous with “heresy”—a pervasive bias strongly rejected by most current scholarship. Historians point out that many second-century Gnostics simply considered themselves Christians; others were called (and called themselves) *gnostikoi*, “Gnostics.” See, Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15ff; Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51ff; and the balanced response to this terminological controversy in, Marvin W. Meyer & Willis Barnstone, eds., *The Gnostic Bible* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 8-16.

⁴ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe (Rev. ed., Pantheon, 1993), 201. (Hereafter, MDR.)

⁵ Ribí gives the first detailed summary of Jung’s alchemical notebooks, 138ff. The bibliography provides a catalog description of the notebooks. Several photographs of the notebooks appear in, Sonu Shamdasani, *C. G. Jung: A Biography in Books* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 172-88. (Hereafter, *Biography in Books*.)

⁶ As a result of this study, Dr. Ribí’s library contains a comprehensive collection of the manuscript facsimiles and translations of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts; it may

comprise one of the most extensive collections of Nag Hammadi related publications in private collection.

⁷ Stephan A. Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1982); Stephan A. Hoeller, *Jung and the Lost Gospels* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1989); Stephan A. Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 2002).

⁸ Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2007).

⁹ Marvin W. Meyer, *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), xxiv.

¹⁰ I can give here just a few short examples. In his first recorded seminar at Polzeath, Cornwall in 1923 Jung stated: "Since the world war, the collective unconscious has been constellated as it has not been since the beginning of our era when the world was in a similar state of flux. At that time Gnosticism arose. This came directly from the unconscious; and Christianity was one of the products of Gnosticism. The psychological condition of that time shows remarkable parallelism with our own times." Typescript notes by M. Esther Harding, "Cornwall Seminar given by Carl Gustav Jung, July 1923, Polzeath, Cornwall, England." Beinecke Library, Yale University. In the 1928 seminar he comments, "For the time being we are concerned with the understanding of the unconscious, because we cannot decently live any more without consciousness. That understanding is gnosis..." C. G. Jung, William McGuire, ed.; *Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). In 1933 Jung recommends to his seminar group a reading of G. R. S. Mead's classic compilation of Gnostic literature, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* – a work Jung had first studied around 1915. C. G. Jung, *Visions: Notes of the Seminars Given in 1930-1934* (Princeton, 1997), 237-8.

¹¹ Shamdasani, *Biography in Books*, 121.

¹² H. G. "Peter" Baynes knew well about Jung's Gnostic associations. After Baynes prepared the English translation of the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, Jung gave him a painting done in the artistic style used in his Red Book, titled "Septem Sermones ad Mortuos." Jung also presented Baynes with an ancient Gnostic gem ring similar to Jung's own; Baynes wore it for the rest of his life. Diana Baynes Jansen, *Jung's Apprentices: A Biography of Helton Godwin Baynes* (Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag, 2003). A 1943 picture of Baynes wearing the ring appears as frontispiece to the book.

¹³ The last disciples to work personally with Jung arrived in a period when his lectures and publications centered on alchemy, and this undoubtedly influenced perceptions about the foundation of his work. Perhaps the most important figure among that final generation was Marie-Louise von Franz, Jung's indispensable collaborator throughout his research into alchemical literature from the late-1930s onward. After Jung's death, Dr. von Franz naturally became a formative force in the perpetuation of his work; she

remained a major influence at the C. G. Jung Institute training program in Zurich up until her death in 1998. Her erudition and close association with Jung's alchemical studies also underscored the role of alchemy as an historical focal point for Jungian commentary, at least in its classical formation. Dr. Ribbi commented to me that while von Franz "of course knew everything Jung said about Gnosticism," she never independently studied the Gnostic texts. (Private communication.)

¹⁴ "The main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neurosis, but rather with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy, and in as much as you attain to the numinous experience, you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character." Aniela Jaffé, *Was C. G. Jung a Mystic? And Other Essays*. (Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag, 1989), 16.

¹⁵ Ferne Jensen, ed.; *C.G. Jung, Emma Jung Toni Wolff: A Collection of Remembrances* (The Analytical Psychology Club of San Francisco, 1982), 25.

¹⁶ Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, reprint 1988).

¹⁷ In his reply to Buber, Jung rejected the epithet of "Gnostic" as a theological categorization, denied any metaphysical or theological presumptions motivating his empirical psychology, and downplayed his private distribution of the *Seven Sermons* as a "sin of my youth." Of course, one notes Jung was forty-one years old in 1916 when he printed the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, and around forty-seven when he allowed H.G. "Peter" Baynes to translate and print the Sermons in English. Jung continued sharing copies with appropriate people into his old age. Though unknown in previous years, the Sermons formed a summary revelation to the mythopoetic experience recorded in *Liber Novus*. C. G. Jung, "Religion and psychology: A reply to Martin Buber" (1952), CW 18, 663-70. [All citations to *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (CW) are listed by volume and page number.]

¹⁸ Stephan A. Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1982).

¹⁹ "We are at war because that which we consider 'sacred' in our work is under attack *from within*. In this sense it is like a 'Holy War' ... the current third generation battle within the Jungian community is about who gets to tell the 'true' Jungian story and which clan passes on the legitimate Jungian lineage." Barbara D. Stephens, "The Martin Buber-Carl Jung disputations: protecting the sacred in the battle for the boundaries of analytical psychology." *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 2001, 46, 457.

²⁰ "Response to Barbara Stephens," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 2002, 47:481.

²¹ C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5, xxv. The introduction for this revised edition, published in 1956, is signed and dated September 1950.

²² Ibid.

²³ C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, CW 6, 169.

²⁴ MDR, 189.

²⁵ MDR, 192.

²⁶ 30 Jan 1948; Ann Conrad Lammers & Adrian Cunningham, eds., *The Jung-White Letters* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 117.

²⁷ C. G. Jung, *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology* (New York: Moffat Yard and Co., 1917), 443–4.

²⁸ *Liber Novus*, 222.

²⁹ *Liber Novus*, 230.

³⁰ MDR, 4.

³¹ *Liber Novus*, 252

³² *Liber Novus*, 305 n229.

³³ Kurt Plachte was a little-noted theologian and Protestant minister. After surviving four years as a German soldier in World War I, he studied philosophy with Ernst Cassirer in Hamburg; his thesis on Johann Gottlieb Fichte was published in 1922. Plachte's interests seem to have focused on the interplay of symbol and religion; he paraphrased portions of Jung's comment on the "symbol as sensuously perceptible expression" in an essay on Fichte published a few years after this letter. Due to his criticism of National Socialism he was arrested and barred from the ministry in 1936; he died in 1964. Christoph Asmuth, "Wie viele Welten braucht die Welt?: Goodman, Cassirer, Fichte," *Die Philosophie Fichtes im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 63-83.

³⁴ Gerhard Adler, ed., *C. G. Jung: Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), vol. 1, 61.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Psychology and Literature", CW 15, 98.

³⁷ MDR, 200.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ These dates correlate with other evidence presented here. Shamdasani, *Biography in Books*, 122; for dates of military service and Gnostic readings, see also *Liber Novus*, 206; 337 n22.

⁴¹ *Liber Novus*, vii.

⁴² These primary records include not only the text of *Liber Novus*, but also the Black Book journals and numerous other archival documents, as referenced and quoted by Sonu Shamdasani in the editorial apparatus to the published edition of *Liber Novus*.

⁴³ For a summary of the compositional chronology of the sections of *Liber Novus*, see Sonu Shamdasani's "Editorial Note", *Liber Novus*, 225ff.

⁴⁴ Barbara Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 114. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁵ In MDR Jung notes that he first read through the Gnostic texts available in 1911 while working on *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, but was then not able to make much sense of it all. MDR, 163; see also, CW 5, xiii-xxiv.

⁴⁶ *Liber Novus*, 232. In his journal, he wrote: "Meine Seele, meine Seele, wo bist du?" A photograph of this journal page appears in Shamdasani, *Biography in Books*, 65.

⁴⁷ *Liber Novus*, 207.

⁴⁸ A Latin edition appeared in 1859 and this was the edition commonly cited for the next fifty years: L. Duncker & F. G. Schneidewin, ed., *Refutatio Omnium Hæresium* (Göttingen, 1859). The first critical edition in German is: P. Wendland, *Hippolytus Werke III. Refutatio omnium hæresium* (Leipzig, 1916); Jung acquired this edition after 1916 and cited it in his later works. An early English edition appeared in: Macmahon, J. H., Salmond, S. D. F. Transl. *The Refutation of all Heresies by Hippolytus with Fragments from his Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture*. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868); Jung read a 1911 printing of this work around 1939, as indicated by notes made in his alchemical notebook (see Ribi's discussion, 138ff). The first critical English edition is: F. Legge, ed.; *Philosophumena or the Refutation of all Heresies* (London: Soc. for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921), and this volume is generally quoted in the English edition of Jung's Collected Works.

⁴⁹ Gérard Vallée; *A study in anti-Gnostic polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius* (Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1981), 41-2.

⁵⁰ Jung eventually read Hippolytus in primary editions; however it is likely his first encounter with Hippolytus came from excerpts in the secondary literature here cited. See supra, note 48.

⁵¹ Wolfgang Schultz, *Dokumente der Gnosis* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1910).

⁵² G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900, reprint 1906). Jung had the 1906 edition.

⁵³ G. R. S. Mead, *Simon Magus: An Essay on the Founder of Simonianism Based on the Ancient Sources With a Re-Evaluation of His Philosophy and Teachings* (London: The Theosophical Society, 1892). The copy in Jung's library contains the library stamp of the H.P.B. (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky) Theosophical Lodge in London, to which Mead belonged. It is unknown how Jung acquired a book from this elite English Theosophical lodge's library, nor what sum of overdue lending fees might now have accumulated.

⁵⁴ I offer my thanks to Andreas Jung for his hospitality and assistance – and for our hours of conversation – during my research in Jung's library collection.

⁵⁵ Several examples of Jung's marginalia are photographically illustrated in Shamdasani, *Biography in Books*.

⁵⁶ This comment is based entirely on anecdotal reports from individuals who are familiar with Jung's library and who have examined large numbers of the books in it. None of them had, however, noted the marginalia in this specific book. Private communications.

⁵⁷ Schultz quotes the 1859 edition of Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, ed. Duncker & Schneidewin (Göttingen 1859); this is the same edition used by G.R.S. Mead. Nine of the nineteen chapters in *Dokumente der Gnosis* are based principally on texts preserved by Hippolytus (chapters on Justinus, the Naasenes, the Perates, the Sethians, the Docetists, Simon Magus, Basilides, the School of Basilides, and Marcus). Three are based principally on material found in Irenaeus (on the Ophites, Carpocrates and the Valentinians), two on the *Acts of Thomas*, and one on the *Acts of John*. Chapters on Abraxas and Mithras are based on the work of A. Dieterich (Jung had already studied Dieterich prior to 1911, as cited in *Wandlungen*), and the chapter on Poimandres is based on R. Reitzenstein's work. One chapter is dedicated to Jewish Midrash, citing Jellinek. See, "Nachweis der Quellen", *Dokumente der Gnosis*, 231-41.

⁵⁸ Chapter 1 of *Psychological Types* (CW 6) is particularly indebted to material found in Schultz. *Psychological Types* was published in 1921; on the date of its composition, Shamdasani notes, "There is a gap between July 1919 and February 1920 in *Black Book 7*, during which time Jung was presumably writing *Psychological Types*." *Liber Novus*, 305 n230.

⁵⁹ The frontispiece art in Schultz's book is based on an engraved Gnostic gem reproduced in Charles King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains* (2nd edition, 1887), 41. Jung had this book in his library. Jung's "Gnostic ring" shows a similar motif, a serpent coiled in a "figure of 8," with a raised head that is surrounded by a crown of eight rays. This specific figure, known as the *Agathodaimon* was associated with Alexandria; a similar figure to the one on Jung's ring is found on examples of Roman imperial coinage minted at Alexandria in the mid-second century.

⁶⁰ The dated image of Izdubar appears on folio 36 in the Red Book.

⁶¹ Jung's first citations of Mead are in *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (1912), where he quotes Mead's *A Mithraic Ritual* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1907), and his translation of the Upanishads, G.R.S. Mead and J. C. Chattopadhyaya, *The Upanishads* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896).

⁶² Jung's debt to G.R.S. Mead deserves, and still awaits, a proper evaluation. Mead's writings on Gnosis, which often reflected an astute psychological understanding of the tradition, were uniquely valuable to Jung. Jung had some of Mead's book by 1911, and his library eventually contained a nearly complete collection of Mead's publications, including the several short books published under the series title *Echoes from the Gnosis* (1906-8), and Mead's journal *Quest*, published from 1909 until 1930. Jung quoted most of these works at one time or another in his publications and/or seminars; in addition, at several places in his writings he reflects insightful comments found in Mead's work without giving Mead a citation. An unpublished correspond-

ence between Mead and Jung is preserved in the Jung Archive, ETH. Perhaps indicative of his respect for Mead, around 1930 Jung made a special effort to visit him in London and personally thank him for his work; at the time Mead was both infirm and impoverished. Mead died in 1933. (An account of this visit was conveyed by Jung to Gilles Quispel, who related it to Stephan Hoeller in 1977. Personal communication, Stephan Hoeller.)

⁶³ C. G. Jung, *Visions: Notes of the Seminars Given in 1930-1934* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), 237-8.

⁶⁴ MDR, 184.

⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, I. xxiii. 1-4.

⁶⁶ In Greek the word ἐπινοία (epinoia) has feminine gender and implies both “what is on the mind” and “where it leads;” thus, the fact of thought and the result of conceiving thought.

⁶⁷ Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, I. xxiii. 2: “He took round with him a certain Helen, a hired prostitute from the Phoenician city Tyre, after he had purchased her freedom, saying that she was the first conception (or Thought) of his Mind, the Mother of All, by whom in the beginning he conceived in his Mind the making of the Angels and Archangels. That this Thought, leaping forth from him, and knowing what was the will of her Father, descended to the lower regions and generated the Angels and Powers, by whom also he said this world was made. And after she had generated them, she was detained by them through envy, for they did not wish to be thought to be the progeny of any other. As for himself, he was entirely unknown by them; and it was his Thought that was made prisoner by the Powers and Angels that has been emanated by her. And she suffered every kind of indignity at their hands, to prevent her reascending to her Father, even to being imprisoned in the human body and transmigrating into other female bodies, as from one vessel into another.”

⁶⁸ Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 168. Jung essentially quotes Mead on this point (without citation) in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, where Jung states the text, “describes a *coniunctio Solis et Lunae*.” CW 14, 136.

⁶⁹ *Liber Novus*, 236.

⁷⁰ *Liber Novus*, 248.

⁷¹ *Liber Novus*, 248, 251 n201, 254 n238. Much later he explained that, “by Eros I meant the placing into relation.” *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, 179.

⁷² *Liber Novus*, 368.

⁷³ *Liber Novus*, 233 n49.

⁷⁴ *Aion*, CW 9ii, 22. In 1930, Jung related how great poetic creations such as *Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Divine Comedy* and *Faust* all relate, “a preliminary love-episode which culminates in a visionary experience. ... We find the undisguised personal love-episode not only connected with the weightier visionary experience but actually subordinated

to it.” (“Psychology and Literature,” CW 15, 94.) In 1927 he stated, “Christian and Buddhist monastic ideals grappled with the same problem, but always the flesh was sacrificed. Goddesses and demigoddesses took the place of the personal, human woman who should carry the projection of the anima.” (“Mind and Earth,” CW 10, 40.) Such remarks may be a reference to Jung’s empirical observations about his own experience.

⁷⁵ He continues, “In the legend of Simon...anima symbols of complete maturity are found.” “Mind and Earth,” CW 10, 40. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis* Jung speaks of the alchemical workers, “who in the symbolical realm are Sol and Luna, in the human the adept and his soror mystica, and in the psychological realm the masculine consciousness and feminine unconscious (anima).” He notes first among the classic examples of this, “Simon Magus and Helen.” CW 14, 153 and n317.

⁷⁶ Jung’s commentary on this “remarkable” passage extends over the next pages. In commentary, Jung repeats without citation Mead’s 1900 interpretation of Simon as “Sun” and Helena as “Moon;” Jung claims that this text, “describes a *coniunctio Solis et Lunae*.” *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14, 136 (Greek terms have been transliterated.) For Mead’s translation and commentary, probably read by Jung in 1915, see *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, 123.

⁷⁷ Hippolytus, *Elenchos*, VI.12. Translation by Mead, *Simon Magus*.

⁷⁸ “But if it remain in potentiality only, and its imaging is not perfected, then it disappears and perishes, he says... For potentiality when it has obtained art becomes the light of generated things, but if it does not do so an absence of art and darkness ensues, exactly as if it had not existed at all; and on the death of the man it perishes with him.” Hippolytus, *Elenchos*, VI. 9. Translation by Mead, *Simon Magus*.

⁷⁹ See also the extended quotation of Simon’s writings in, “Transformation Symbolism in the Mass”, CW 11, 236f.

⁸⁰ *Liber Novus*, 264.

⁸¹ *Liber Novus*, 359. On first meeting, Jung had titled Philemon as “the Magician.” *Liber Novus*, 312.

⁸² In the version of the Sermons printed in 1916, Jung attributed the work to Basilides, a second century Alexandrian Gnostic teacher.

⁸³ *Liber Novus*, 346ff.

⁸⁴ *Liber Novus*, 317 n282.

⁸⁵ Images of Philemon and Sapientia (*Sophia*) appear on folio 154 on 155 of the Red Book. Painted in 1924, they are a thematic conclusion in the Red Book’s transcription; only approximately fifteen more pages would be transcribed into the folio volume over the next six years. At the top of Jung’s image of Sophia, Jung scribed a quotation from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: “The Wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: ...the Spirit

searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." On either side of the arch is an inscription from the Revelation of John, 22:17: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is a-thirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Above the arch is the inscription, "*Ave Virgo Virginum*"—"Praise, Virgin of Virgins." *Liber Novus* 317 n283.

⁸⁶ Jung began construction of the Tower in 1923. It is unknown when he painted the mural of Philemon, but it was probably before 1930. The Greek inscription on the Tower mural reads: "ΦΙΛΗΜΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΠΑΤΩΡ." (Private communication.) The final word, *Propator*, implies both "forefather" and "the very first" or primal father.

⁸⁷ See the "Gnostic aeonology" of Simon Magus, as sketched by G. R. S. Mead, *Simon Magus*, 63.

⁸⁸ The Sermons were apparently recorded in the Black Book journals 5 and 6 between about 30 January and 8 February 1916. *Liber Novus* 346 n77; 354 n121.

⁸⁹ On the centrality of the myth of the demiurge, see, Karen L. King *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and, Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁹⁰ These arguments are summarized in: Barry Jeromson, "Systema Mundi totius and Seven Sermons"; *Jung History* 1:2 (Philemon Foundation, 2005/6), 6-10; and "The sources of Systems Mundi totius: mandalas, myths and a misinterpretation"; *Jung History* 2:2 (Philemon Foundation, 2007), 20 - 22. (Online edition available.)

⁹¹ *Liber Novus*, 370.

⁹² These entries in Black Book 5 come on 18 January, two days after the 16 January 1916 commentary on Abraxas. Without an explanation about Abraxas, the name would have been meaningless to readers, thus Jung substituted the descriptive term "ruler of this world." *Liber Novus*, 245 n75.

⁹³ "The spirit of this time would want to make you believe that the depths are no world and no reality." *Liber Novus*, 242 n119.

⁹⁴ Shamdasani, *Biography in Books*, 207.

⁹⁵ MDR, 201.

⁹⁶ "Psychology and Religion," CW 11, 98.

⁹⁷ He did occasionally mention it in passing, notably in his first recorded seminar at Polzeath, Cornwall in 1923. See note 10, *supra*.

⁹⁸ MDR, 295ff. Also see Barbara Hannah's account, Barbara Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 277ff.

⁹⁹ MDR, 295-6.

¹⁰⁰ The "Last Quartet" is composed of: *Psychology of the Transference*; *Aion*; *Answer to Job*; and *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. *Aion* (CW 9ii) was begun in the fall of 1947 and is

the first book entirely written after Jung's illness; it was published in 1951. "The Psychology of the Transference," published in 1946 (CW 16, 163–323) was largely completed prior to the visions, but published in their reflection. Early sections of *Mysterium Coniunctionis* were written before 1945, the final sections and conclusion came after; speaking of this earliest work on the book, Jung said after the visions, "All I have written is correct.... I only realize its full reality now" (Hannah, 279). *Answer to Job* was first published in 1952 (CW 11, 355–470).

¹⁰¹ Margaret Ostrowski-Sachs, *From Conversations with C. G. Jung* (Zurich: Juris Druck & Verlag, 1971), 68.

¹⁰² For a detailed discussion of this material, see: Lance S. Owens, "Jung and *Aion*: Time, Vision and a Wayfaring Man"; *Psychological Perspectives* (Journal of the C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles, 2011) 54:253-89.

¹⁰³ Sonu Shamdasani, "Foreword to the 2010 Edition," *Answer to Job* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Reprint edition, 2010), ix.

¹⁰⁴ William McGuire & R.F.C. Hull, eds., *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 225.

¹⁰⁵ "All the Christian virtues are needed and something else besides, for the problem is not only moral: we also need the Sophia that Job was seeking. ... [The] higher and 'complete' man is begotten by the 'unknown' father and born from Sophia, and it is he who ... represents our totality, which transcends consciousness." C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2nd Edition 1969), 95. (Also, CW 11, 357-470.)

¹⁰⁶ Jung noted that in this proclamation, "Mary as the bride is united with the son in the heavenly bridal-chamber, and as Sophia, with the Godhead. ...It repeats the Old Testament anamnesis of Sophia." *Answer to Job*, 96-7.

¹⁰⁷ "It is psychologically significant for our day that in the year 1950 the heavenly bride was united with the bride-groom. In order to interpret this event, one has to consider ... the prefigurations in the apocalyptic marriage of the Lamb and in the Old Testament anamnesis of Sophia. The nuptial union in the *thalamus* (bridal-chamber) signifies the hieros gamos, and this in turn is the first step towards incarnation, towards the birth of the saviour who, since antiquity, was thought of as the *filius solis et lunae* [the son of the sun and moon], the *filius sapientiae*, [the son of Wisdom] and the equivalent of Christ. Although he is already born in the pleroma, his birth in time can only be accomplished when it is perceived, recognized, and declared by man." *Answer to Job*, 100.

¹⁰⁸ *Aion*, CW 9ii, 174.

¹⁰⁹ *Liber Novus*, 338.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Liber Novus*, 311.