

REVIEWS

Kingsley's Howl and the Open Secret of Jung's Life

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Review of: Peter Kingsley, *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*, London: Catafalque Press, 2018.

Conforming to the divine will I live for mankind, not only for myself, and whosoever understands this message contained in and conveyed by my writing will also live with me.

C. G. Jung, *The Jung-White Letters* (Lammers and Cunningham 2009, 71)

Let me state at the outset that I think Kingsley's latest work, *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*, is masterful and worth the time of analysts and students alike to read this challenging two-volume set. I have long admired Kingsley and a theme that runs throughout his five books—we ignore the past to our detriment. The title of his latest book makes it clear what is at stake and even why Kingsley wrote this provocative book. A *catafalque* is “a raised structure on which the body of a deceased person lies or is carried in state.”¹ We are left to wonder who, or what, is lying on this scaffold—Jung, or humanity itself? Are we to celebrate the dead, or is this a device intended for us to see more clearly what has died? Might Kingsley have us raise up Jung's corpse and his corpus of work so that we might take

another look at who this man really was, and what he was trying to tell us about the soul and our future?

Kingsley sadly reminds us that Jung felt misunderstood throughout his life. Just before his death, Jung wrote a letter on November 13, 1960, in which he tells a member of the London Analytical Psychology Club that he had failed to “open people's eyes to the fact that man has a soul ... and that religion and philosophy are in a lamentable state. Why indeed should I continue to exist?” (Shamdasani 2005).² For his part, Kingsley does not share Jung's resignation. Rather than utilizing persuasion or innuendo, Kingsley lets loose shap, cutting criticism. He also makes a very bold claim: Jung was a prophet, a savior of the world, and his work was destined to become the new religion for the next millennium, one where God resides in the psyche. According to Kingsley, a prophet is one who doesn't so much predict the future but rather is called on to speak for the divine. If Jung hadn't said as much in his *Red Book*, these pronouncements would seem to have been made purely for shock value.

In Kingsley's opinion, most Jungian scholars focus their attention on Jung's more pedestrian, exoteric personality No. 1, as described in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and they virtually ignore the more mystical personality No. 2. It is this latter personality that not only contains the esoteric essence of Jung's work but also aims to connect us with the eternal. In Chapter XI, “On Life After Death,” Jung states, “the decisive question for

man is: Is he related to something infinite or not? . . . In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted” (Jung 1973, 325). These words seemed to come from Jung’s personality No. 2. In identifying two personalities, Jung himself bears some of the responsibility for people not heeding this prophetic statement.

Jung was, according to Kingsley, mercurial, appearing in his public persona as an empirical scientist and in a less obvious way a thinly disguised mystic. Throughout his life, Jung insisted that he was a serious researcher, describing his work in cold, hard, simple, and scientific terms: “I observe, I classify, I establish relations and sequences between the observed data” (Kingsley 2018, 510). It is not easy to draw a clear line between his two so-called personalities.

Catafalque is iconoclastic, provocative, and, at times, explosive. It tears down much of the fluff, myths, projections, and idealizations that have accrued over the nearly sixty years since Jung’s death. Volume 1 is written in a casual, almost conversational tone, with an obvious incantatory style that repeats a singular theme in slightly different ways. However redundant, the theme is sharp and to the point—we are dangerously disconnected from past wisdom, a danger so significant that it will result in humanity’s collapse. Despite his casual, direct way of repeating this theme, don’t be fooled; there is not only a barb in every remark but also a personal anecdote. Just when you think Kingsley’s told the whole story, he adds a persistent refrain, reminiscent of “and that’s not all folks!”—a pattern that wears thin after a while. He often uses phrases such as “But

that’s not all he has to say here” like a stage whisper intended to elevate suspense. Despite the anecdotal tone, Volume 1 is anything but breezy; the vitriol is acidic and the criticism sharp—punctuating every other paragraph. In one personal anecdote about his time at Bollingen, Kingsley takes aim at others “who would go on to explain how thoroughly and fully they understood him [Jung] along with the most demanding of his writings, or congratulate each other on their complete and expert grasp of his ideas, it’s only logical to [wait for it!] consider them the biggest fools” (2018, 105). This sort of twist in storytelling is done intentionally—he gets your attention and then repeats his main message: Jung is a prophet who, like Kingsley’s all-time favorite pre-Socratic philosophers, Parmenides and Empedocles, gives voice to eternal truths. To these prophets, he adds less familiar figures like Khidr, Mani, and Joachim of Fiore that offer important historical context.

Even more striking than *what* Kingsley wrote is the caustic tone he uses throughout both volumes. *Vitriol* and *diatribe* are two words that come to mind. His acerbic criticisms are sharp and pointed at virtually everyone in the Jungian community. Kingsley takes no prisoners! No one escapes his criticisms, which are mostly directed at scholars and analysts alike, who in his view fail to truly understand Jung and his dire concern for the future of humanity. Among those caught in Kingsley’s crosshairs are Edward Edinger, James Hillman, Sonu Shamdasani, and “cheerleader-in-chief” Aniela Jaffé. Even Toni Wolff, with all her “bird-fluttering,” is said to be “unable to guide or reassure him [Jung] in any meaningful way” (Kingsley 2018, 519). He takes particular aim at scholars of every

stripe. Perhaps the most virulent criticism is aimed at Richard Noll's work, which Kingsley describes as "cesspits of sensationalism and sloppy scholarship" (552).

As one who treasures Jung's work and deeply admires the work of his colleagues, I couldn't help but groan as I paged through *Catafalque*, especially volume 2. It isn't so much that I disagree with every criticism; rather it's that I, like many others, find enormous value in the work of *some* of these men and women—without their cogent elaboration of Jung's work, whether right or wrong, much of Jung would remain inaccessible.

This raises the obvious question, "Why does Kingsley seem to be so angry and at times even hostile?" The simple answer is he fears humanity is on the verge of collapse, if indeed, it hasn't already reached the point of no return. This may be too generous an explanation, for Kingsley, no less than any of us, has a shadow, one that in this case seems to smugly say, "I alone know who the real Carl Jung is!" In terms of his concern for humanity, I rather think we are at a tipping point, and unless we heed Kingsley's warning—that we recall the wisdom of past traditions—it may indeed be too late. His fear, I want to believe, comes from love, a deep caring for our future as well as our past. To get this message across, he focuses our attention on Jung, who also has a dim view of the future. With so many threats facing humanity, climate change and nuclear proliferation being just two environmental examples, we don't have the six-hundred years Jung felt were needed for people to awaken to the dangers ahead. Kingsley expresses his fear like a three-alarm fire, whereas Jung, for his part, lamented humanity's fate.

I agree with Kingsley that we have been disconnected from our ancient wisdom

traditions, and even, as he suggests, look at the past through the lens of empiricism. The past is meant to include a host of things: ancestors, the soul, and the dead. Furthermore, Kingsley maintains that the past, much like the archetypes, possesses agency and impulse, with its own design for what is to come. This is why there is no need to concoct a future. Jung's whole mission was to mediate this process by translating "the language of prophecy into the language of science" (Kingsley 2018, 696). On a personal intrapsychic level, "It's a question," wrote Henri Corbin, "of preparing inside oneself a home for the future of that past" (683).

Many people, especially those in the West, rush headlong into the future without recalling the wisdom of past experience. The past isn't extinct but is, in reality, a living force. And so are, according to Kingsley, our ancestors who are not only lifeless bodies abandoned in cemeteries, but rather exist as psychic forces within the unconscious. The dead are, in his view, ancestral spirits—active agents—who, like it or not, play a vital role in our everyday affairs. The dead, he says, have lost their physical form, but not their connection to the living. In fact, they need us as much as we need them.

In "On Life After Death," Jung reports a fascinating dream he experienced just months before his mother's death, in which his father asks him for marital advice. Jung explains the dream's meaning in the context of his parents' lives:

My dream was a forecast of my mother's death, for here was my father who, after an absence of twenty-six years, wished to ask a psychologist about the newest insights and information on marital problems, since he would soon have to resume this relationship again. Evidently, he

had acquired no better understanding in his timeless state and therefore had to appeal to someone among the living who, enjoying the benefits of changed times, might have a fresh approach to the whole thing. (1973, 315–316)

While the dead exist in a timeless dimension, they apparently still look to the living for earthly advice. Jung's deep insight into the unconscious enabled him to see connections with future events as well as those of the past. In 1913, he had a terrifying vision where he foresaw the deaths of thousands of people in what would become World War I. "I saw," said Jung, "a monstrous flood covering all the northern and low-lying lands between the North Sea and the Alps . . . I realized that a frightful catastrophe was in progress. I saw the mighty yellow waves, the floating rubble of civilization, and the drowned bodies of uncounted thousands" (1973, 175). Jung, Kingsley says, had "no problem whatsoever . . . admitting quite unashamedly that he had the ability to forecast the future because there was something inside him which just knew some things" (Kingsley 2018, 510, 670). Paraphrasing Jung, "we can predict the future, when we know how the present moment evolved from the past."

With such stark clarity, it is hard to believe that the voice of Jung's prophetic personality No. 2 falls on deaf ears. Surprisingly, it wasn't Emma Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz, or Toni Wolff who recognized Jung as a prophet, but rather his translators R. F. C. Hull and Cary F. Baynes and the Persian scholar Henri Corbin.

Volume 2 is just as sobering, despite its 335 pages of citations, criticisms, and commentary. Kingsley, like Jung, also appears to have two personalities, one a wry critic and another, a forensic researcher. Where the first volume presents his case, the second

provides voluminous evidence to support every claim. But, more than support, this volume gives us a real sense of Kingsley's frustration with inaccuracies and misinterpretations on the part of scholars who fail to represent Jung's work accurately because of protectiveness, idealization, or just outright "laziness." Kingsley goes further in this heavy volume by taking up old battles, countering his critics' criticisms, and correcting their errors. I never thought I'd enjoy reading endnotes as much as I did in this second volume. His criticisms are just as sharp, and his prolific, revelatory research is daunting. "Performing some rites" with Ruth Bailey conjures up a magical image of Jung that often escapes mention by other writers, and there are plenty more from where this came from! For me, the mention of many personal details is alone worth the price of both volumes.

Now, what about howling?

Kingsley is at his best when he describes howling, his own as well as prophets in general. Drawing from nature, he describes in vivid terms what howling is: "It's the shrieking of animals, the wailing and crying of birds, shockingly articulated through a human. It's the sound of the sacred shouting to itself; the voice of life welling up inside us that denies the rightness of everything wrong outside us" (Kingsley 2018, 234). Kingsley's howl reminds me of Howard Beal's prophetic words from the 1976 movie *Network*, "I am as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!" Such howling echoes through the millennia, right back to the first time humans forgot their divine origin. In Kingsley's words, here is what howling—the discontent of modern men and women—is really about:

It may seem strange, very strange, that to return to the beginnings of western philosophy could bring us not to the beauties and clarities of abstract thinking. It brings us to this: to the sheer horror of what we have forgotten and collectively agree to go on forgetting for the common good. (237)

The prophets howled “to give voice to the sadnesses and depressions of a whole culture that everyone else has been left either to suffer or exploit in silence” (237).

Suddenly, Kingsley’s criticisms strike a chord that is hard to deny and really don’t require an additional volume of citations to substantiate. This howl is visceral, something we all innately know, an “inarticulate yet definite blast of truth” (Kingsley 2018, 632–633). It is the open secret that few talk or write about for fear of losing their jobs, their minds, or their lives.

Prophets know why they howl—that it serves to awaken us. Sadly, few wake up, and instead of their message being heard the prophet is silenced. The howl comes from a natural impulse; like a calling, one doesn’t choose to howl, but rather one is chosen. As a result, prophets suffer from the disparity between the “spirit of the times” and the “spirit of the depths.” Here is how Jung describes the suffering that came with his calling:

It is the truth, a force of nature that expresses itself through me—am only a channel—I can imagine in many instances where I would become sinister to you.

For instance, if life had led you to take up an artificial attitude, then you wouldn’t be able to stand me, because I am a natural being.

By my very presence I crystallize; I am a ferment.

The unconscious of people who live in an artificial manner senses me as a danger.

Everything about me irritates them, my way of speaking, my way of laughing.

They sense nature.

(Jensen and Mullen 1982, 51–52)

In this light, we can understand why Jung concealed personality No. 2, insisting that he was just a scientist doing his job. But the bigger question is whether Jung’s howl was heard. There is no easy way to know how deep an impression Jung’s message has made, much less if it has, or will have, any positive effect. If, however, we look to the condition of the external world, with all its existential threats (climate change, vanishing rain forests, dying species, and so on), we sadly must admit that at the minimum his words have fallen on deaf ears. But, as a psychotherapist, I often find myself speaking to a patient’s unconscious, not knowing if my words will ever bubble up into conscious awareness, or whether their effect is somehow matched by outer circumstances that help garner eventual realization.

As Kingsley sees it, Jung suffered in much the same way that Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, and like Him, Jung wasn’t heard. Until his dying day, Jung lamented the fact that he was not only misunderstood, but also failed to put in place a new religion that might save the world. Not only did he predict a “frightful catastrophe,” but if Kingsley is right, he foresaw the “end of humanity.” Because virtually everyone fails to pay attention to Jung’s personality No. 2, there is little hope, Kingsley claims, in saving the world from its relentless descent into a soulless future. What Kingsley does not make clear are the reasons for this lacuna in the collective psyche. Murray Stein, in an interview with Kingsley, acknowledges (without apology) the fact that Jung Institutes pay little or no

attention to Jung's personality No. 2.³ But, we might ask, why? And what if they did?

Perhaps, it is not so much that personality No. 2 hasn't received the attention it deserves, but rather that it is best left in the unconscious where it continues to fertilize our conscious imaginings. Maybe, just maybe, the collective psyche knows precisely what's best. Not everything needs to be brought out into the open; an open secret exists for a reason—it exists as a living symbol, something that defies words, and continues to generate myriad meanings. Toward the end of the second volume, Kingsley paraphrases Jung to describe “the crucial need to keep the transcendent reality a mystery even from oneself so as to stop the human intellect getting inflated by greedily grabbing hold of what doesn't belong to it” (2018, 757). What then flows from personality No. 2 is very much like the alchemist's *prima materia*, something dark, hidden, but ubiquitous and yet mysterious. And from it grows the Philosopher's Stone. Indeed, Jung considered *The Red Book* the *prima materia*—the humus—for all his future works (2009).

Questions of whether Kingsley is idealizing (or literalizing!) Jung, even deifying him, are far less important than asking whether we have six-hundred years to see a revolution in consciousness, one that might save the world. Kingsley stops short of recognizing the enormous contributions made by the work that flowed out of Jung's personality No. 1. Just think where any responsible person might be without Jung's scientific model, one that provides a structure and methodology for doing the arduous work of individuating ourselves and, by extension, the world. Ultimately, Jung's writing gives us a praxis that may help us discover our connection with “the

infinite.” It represents his existential effort to “increase consciousness.” Even though Jung didn't think much of analysts, institutes, or Jungians in general, he did nonetheless lay down a template that can give rise to more conscious human beings. Had the emphasis been placed on personality No. 2, Jung may have had devotees instead of intelligent men and women who elaborated and built on his many insights. Instead of a church, personality No. 1 gave us a depth psychology that has saved many lives from despair and meaninglessness. We might even imagine that it has forestalled the end of humanity!

Kingsley's howl is warranted given the madness of today's world. We owe him a debt of gratitude for reminding us of Jung's personality No. 2 and especially that the *sine qua non* of his entire opus was to connect us with the eternal. Odd, how we forget the most essential aspect of human being and becoming. Kingsley is intent on shaking things up and, agree with him or not, reading *Catafalque* will not leave you indifferent. It's a wake-up call to all of us who languish in tired themes, rely too heavily on so-called experts, and worse, lack the daring it takes to individuate.

On a personal note, I empathize with Kingsley's need to howl, for like him I agree that Gnosticism and alchemy were foundational to all Jung's work, and that these great systems have not been given the attention they deserve. That said, I believe that Jung, admittedly an alchemist, is as important as a role model as are the “fruits of his labor.” Each, the man and his works, touch us deeply in different ways. But just as an archetype cannot be directly observed, personality No. 1, like an archetypal reflection, is necessary to bear written evidence of personality No. 2. (We can

touch water, but not a wave.) Ironically, in emphasizing the prophetic Jung, the hard-working scientist is diminished. Kingsley gives short shrift to the necessary material products that emerged from the “spirit of the times” that drove Jung to spend many a sleepless night searching for the right words to represent the ineffable (2018, 686).⁴

Jung set up a dichotomy not only in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by calling attention to two personalities but also in *The Red Book* where he drew a distinction between the “spirit of the times” and “the spirit of the depths.” We must, however, put both in context, the first division is a method he used for self-analysis, and the second was an extraordinary active imagination. In *The Red Book*, Jung personifies these different spirits as a means of representing the zeitgeist and the spiritual dimension of human beings. Methods aside, we should not forget that there is only one Jung who while “one and many” remains a single individual. Alchemically, we must at first separate the elements, but then reform them to bring forth a new, more perfect union.

The common element in the “spirit of the times” and “the spirit of the depths” is *spiritus*. We should not get so caught up in Jung’s inner dialogue that we miss this point. Keep in mind also that *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* was recorded and heavily edited, and *The Red Book*, not to be read nor published at least in his lifetime, drew from earlier material in his Black Books. “This living spirit,” wrote Jung, “is eternally renewed and pursues its goal in manifold and inconceivable ways through the history of humankind” (Jung 1933, 244). It is the rational mind that divides spirit in order to understand it, but in reality, these “two” impersonal spirits are part of the *unus mundus*. They

are not always in opposition either, by virtue of nature or our efforts to integrate them. Beyond mind, it is *spiritus* that exists in all nature as a *lumen naturae*; however shrouded it may be by runaway logic and a soulless science, it is here ever-present. Spirit is not restricted to personalities, but exists and is available to every person as a whole and pure presence. If only we are able to wipe away the thousand and one things that distract us from its living reality. As Jung liked to say, using Lao-Tzu’s words, “All is clear, I alone am clouded.” It is this indomitable spirit that raises the dead and is the light in the darkness.

ENDNOTES

1. Dictionary.com, s.v. “Catafalque,” accessed October 1, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/catafalque?s=t>.
2. Michael Fordham identified Eugene Rolfe as the recipient of this letter. See Shamdasani (2005).
3. “Murray Stein in Conversation with Peter Kingsley about Jung’s *Red Book*,” YouTube, February 1, 2018, <https://youtu.be/uWaeqli82g>.
4. See 686 about Jung’s “severe insomnia” during the writing of *The Red Book*, *Aion*, and *Answer to Job*.

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ABSTRACT

In his latest book, *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*, Peter Kingsley suggests that not only do most in the Jungian community misunderstand Jung the person, but they also fail to comprehend the true basis of his psychology. He further maintains, despite Jung's protests to the contrary, that Jung was a prophet. Kingsley's book confronts us with sharp criticism and exhaustive research to support these claims. The tone, often angry and derogatory, nevertheless makes for compelling reading and serious consideration. Kingsley gives fresh insight into Jung's maverick persona, which, at times, presented him as an empirical scientist and, at other times, a mystic. For those familiar with Kingsley, this provocative book echoes a persistent theme throughout his work: we ignore the past to our peril. This handsome two-volume hardback set delivers a power punch, intended to wake us up. Whether we agree or not, it reveals an open secret of Jung, the man and his message, that is either spoken about in idealistic terms or not mentioned at all. This review explicates what Kingsley means by calling Jung a prophet, why prophets howl, and whether focusing on any one of Jung's personae is helpful. Given the dire spiritual condition of our world today, *Catafalque* is a timely reminder of Jung's prophetic vision, even offering, perhaps, a way to save humanity.

KEY WORDS

alchemy, howling, humanity, Jung, Jung's personality No. 1 and No. 2, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, open secret, prophet, *The Red Book*, spirit of the depths, spirit of the times

A Freudian's Journey into Jung's World

GIOVANNI COLACICCHI

Review of: Dan Merkur *Jung's Ethics: Moral Psychology and His Cure of Souls*, edited by Jon Mills, London: Routledge, 2017.

In the final days of his life, before his death from pancreatic cancer in 2016, Dan Merkur handed the manuscript of *Jung's Ethics: Moral Psychology and His Cure of Souls* to Jon Mills, with whom he had been discussing his belief in God and the innate mysticism of every human being as well as his deep concern with ethical matters (2017, xi). Merkur held a doctorate in comparative religion from Stockholm University, was a faculty member at the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Living Institute, and a visiting scholar in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. In the second half of his life he had trained as a psychoanalyst and worked in private practice. Prior to his clinical training, he had taught religious studies at five universities in the United States and Canada. In the final years of his life, he devoted himself to the study of Jung. He is the author of many books on a variety of subjects, including shamanism, Gnosticism, mysticism, psychedelics, the superego, psychoanalytic approaches to myth and religion, medieval meditation, and the psychoanalytic mystics. A closer look at the titles of his books, including *Unconscious Wisdom: A Superego Function in Dreams, Conscience and Inspiration* (2001) and *Crucified with Christ: Meditations on the Passions, Mystical*