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Mystical Experience Registry



Mystical Experiences of Carl Jung (1875 - 1961)

Swiss psychologist and major contributor to psychotherapy, [Carl Jung](#) cultivated the ability to have visions from deep imagination. Some would label these explorations as mystical experiences while others would say they are more akin to the sort creative thinking artists do.

In addition to these experiences, Jung had several spontaneous visions when he was recovering from a heart attack when he was 69. All of his visions are described in detail in his book [Memories, Dreams, Reflections](#).

Sick Bed Visions (1944)

"It seemed to me that I was high up in space. Far below I saw the globe of the earth, bathed in a gloriously blue light. I saw the deep blue sea and the continents. Far below my feet lay Ceylon, and in the distance ahead of me the subcontinent of India. My field of vision did not include the whole earth, but its global shape was plainly distinguishable and its outlines shone with a silvery gleam through that wonderful blue light...the sight of earth from this height was the most glorious thing I had ever seen...

Something new entered my field of vision. A short distance away I saw in space a tremendous dark block of stone, like a meteorite. It was about the size of my house, or even bigger. It was floating in space, and I myself was floating in space.

An entrance led into a small antechamber. To the right of the entrance, a black Hindu sat silently in lotus posture upon a stone bench...I knew that he expected me. Two steps led up to this antechamber, and inside...was the gate to the temple. As I approached the steps leading up to the entrance into the rock, a strange thing happened: I had the feeling that everything was being sloughed away; everything I aimed at or wished for or thought, the whole phantasmagoria of earthly existence, fell away or was stripped from me---an extremely painful process. Nevertheless something remained; it was

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as if I now carried along with me everything I had ever experienced or done, everything that had happened around me. I might also say: it was with me, and I was it. I consisted of all that, so to speak. I consisted of my own history, and I felt with great certainty: this is what I am. I am this bundle of what has been, and what has been accomplished.

This experience gave me a feeling of extreme poverty, but at the same time of great fullness."

Over the next few weeks, Jung would feel gloomy by day, sleep the early evening to midnight and then awaken to a feeling of ecstasy. "It was as if I were in an ecstasy. I felt as though I were floating in space, as though I were safe in the womb of the universe--- in a tremendous void, but filled with the highest possible feeling of happiness. Everything around me seemed enchanted...Night after night I floated in a state of purest bliss, thronged round with images of all creation."

During this time, Jung has visions of several images of "mystical marriage." Mystical marriage is a complex concept that has been expressed in the writings and artwork of alchemy, kabbala, Gnosticism, and some major religions. The marriage occurs when two powers, such as the Chinese yin (the feminine) and yang (the masculine) are brought into harmony; in this case to form the Tao. Since yin and yang represent many different attitudes and ways of comporting ourselves in the world, a marriage indicates that we have the power to be in balance with these two powerful forces. We are the "whole" person, not limited to one side of the coin but instead enlightened enough to be able to employ whatever attitude or behavior is appropriate in the moment. To Jung and Jungians, this was a vision of tremendous importance and of a high achievement.

(For a full retelling of these visions, see chapter 10 of Jung's, Memories, Dreams, Reflections.)

Cultivated Visions

Memories, Dreams, Reflections pulled together Jung's autobiographical recollections from his lectures, letters, and conversations. Published after his death, this book provides an inside view of Jung's own experience with [Active Imagination](#). In Chapter 6, "Confrontation With The Unconscious," we learn how Jung is thrown into his inner world when he finds himself out of his mentors world. In his mid-thirties, he has a falling out with Freud and finds himself out on his own without the professional connections he enjoyed through Freud's connections. With time on his hands and with enough understanding of the inner world, Jung decides to go as deeply as possible. Here, in very summary format, is what he experiences.

First Recorded Active Imagination Experience - December 12, 1913

Jung sits at his desk and decides to "just let himself drop." He finds having the sensation that the ground has literally given out under his feet. He plunges into the dark depths. Not too long in his fall he lands on soft ground, actually a "sticky mass." Once his eyes adjust he begins to see some details in the near darkness. Before him is an entrance to a cave, in which stood a dwarf with leathery skin. Jung squeezes past this person and soon begins to wade through icy water which is knee deep. At the other end of the cave he sees, on a projecting rock, a glowing red crystal.

Lifting the crystal he sees that there is a hole in the ground allowing him to see down to a river. He soon sees a corpse floating by (a boy with blonde hair). He is followed by a gigantic black scarab and then by a red, newborn sun, rising up out of the depths of the water. Blinded by the sun, Jung wants to replace the crystal in the hole to block the sun's rays but a fluid starts to pour out of the whole. It is blood. Blood pours out and Jung feels nauseated. On it pours until finally, it comes to an end. Jung's Active Imagination ends.

(p. 179, Vintage edition of Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

Second Recorded Active Imagination Experience - No Date Given

Jung uses a visual technique that he has found helps him go deeper into Active Imagination. This technique is a realistic visualization of descending a great distance. In this experience he figures that he has descended about a 1000 feet. There he discovers a "cosmic abyss." Next he sees something like a moon crater and then he has the feeling that he is in the land of the dead. Near the steep slope of a rock he catches the sight of two people, one an old man and the other, a beautiful young girl. He summons up his courage and approaches them. He listens carefully to what they say. The old man turns out to be the biblical figure Elijah and the girl, Salome. "What a strange couple," he muses. But Elijah tells Jung that he and Salome belong together for all eternity. Along with the two is a third, a large black snake. Jung sticks

close to Elijah and keeps his distance from Salome.

(p. 181-182, Vintage edition of Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

Over time, Jung holds conversation with Elijah who eventually changes into another figure, Philemon. Philemon teaches Jung about the nature of human consciousness. Jung begins to see how autonomous inner figures can act. It is the inner figure that seems to hold this knowledge, not Jung. (p.183). Again, Jung's inner figure changes. This time it alters to take on the form of the Egyptian notion of spirit, Ka. (p.184-185, Vintage edition of Memories, Dreams, Reflections)

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