

Susan Sontag's ILLNESS AS METAPHOR has the side-effect of warning us, warning us up to, alerting us to language's potential for seducing us into metaphorical leaps away from reality--the negative side of language's potential for enabling us to expand ourselves into such transcendence as is not only legitimate but also for us necessary to health, peace, joy, usefulness as human beings under God and among our fellow-creatures....This thinksheet is about all this vis-a-vis one metaphor common among us, viz. "wholeness."

6. Jung as healer helps folks get well: Jung as atheist sickentheology, which (Jewish and Christian) sees "shalom" (health, prosperity, "wholness," peace) not as end but as means to "the glory of God."

1. Yesterday (10Feb82), Loree and I visited a 94-year-old Cape Codder who's in his 61st year in his 17th-c. house and has never thrown anything out. Said he, "I'm supposed to sit on the bed twenty minutes before standing up, and I fall over if I don't wait that long; but I don't really fall over, for the reason you can see." The reason: the massive house provides only very narrow passageways through the archeological strata. Yet he continues to print on his four presses, and claims to be the last living man with the skills to maintain and drive a horse-drawn steam-powered-hose fire-wagon (he having been Barstable's first fireman). Master mechanic, his presses make no more noise than does a fine sewing-machine. The oldest of them, pre-1895, is footpowered and kept "whole" by his skill; and he described the welding of a difficult-to-weld part. WHOLENESS! Even more fascinating is how he keeps himself whole, body and soul and society. You can't visit him without receiving gifts, and he's determined to print stationery for Loree. Of course he won't take government handouts in any form: that would violate his Yankee independent, make-do, integrity, "wholeness." A real character, with (I'd say) real character. ~~Hi~~ Himself a happy metaphor for humanity. In spite of the fact that the midwife-MD who delivered him said to the nurse, "This one (of the twins) won't live."

2. Back to Harry Kerr's 1895 printingpress. That century was mesmerized by mechanism, the philosophy based on the metaphor of the machine as reality-model ("paradigm"). Since a machine is physical, mechanism was often wedded to materialism: what Confucius/Lao-tzu were in China to life (respectively) outer/inner, based on the yin/yang paradigm, Marx/Freud were in the West to life (respectively) outer/inner, based on the paradigm of mechanistic materialism.

3. As Mao sought to wed Marx to China's spiritual heritage (especially in history poetry, then in his politics), so Jung sought to wed Freud to the West's spiritual heritage. Both weddings led to, at most, ho-hum marriages of the dominant/submissive kind. "Marx" (collectivist mechanistic-materialism) demanded submission from China, and "Freud" (individualist mechanistic-materialism) demanded submission from the Bible (i.e., the West's spiritual heritage).

4. The rest of this thinksheet is cautionary about "wholeness" (and synonyms)--not vis-a-vis Marxian totalitarianism, though that's well worth pursuing, but vis-a-vis psychotherapy, especially Jung, justly the greatest name on the bridge between our religious heritage and modern psychology.

5. Jung uses "wholeness" not as a metaphor, not as a holophrase for God, but as reality-statement--precisely as a theist uses "God" as reality-statement. As far as I have been able to ascertain, nowhere does he state that "wholeness" is merely a metaphor drawn from 19th-c. mechanism--Harry's 19th-c. printing-press being "whole" both in the arithmetic sense (i.e., having all its parts) and in the functional sense (i.e., being able to print). (Modern linguistics, especially Noam Chomsky's structuralism, was yet to come, and could have helped deliver Jung from the metaphor fallacy, viz. treating a metaphor as a reality [thing=word=thing].) In Jung, "God" and "wholeness" exchange their traditional places: "God" becomes a metaphor for "wholeness" (which amounts to *machina tanquam deus*, not even *deus ex machina*)....E.g., when 86 (his last year), Jung wrote a letter to a founder of AA (pp.30f, AA GRAPEVINE, Nov/78), explaining (1) why he'd been less than candid in dealing with an alcoholic in 1931 (viz., self-protection against "misunderstanding") and (2) expressing "God" as "medieval language" for "wholeness."



Carl Gustav Jung  
1875-1961

Kusnacht-Zurich  
Seestrasse 228  
January 30, 1961

Mr. William G. W.—  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
Box 459 Grand Central Station  
New York 17, New York  
Dear Mr. W.:

Your letter has been very welcome indeed.

I had no news from Roland H. any more and often wondered what has been his fate. Our conversation which he has adequately reported to

you had an aspect of which he did not know. The reason that I could not tell him everything was that those days I had to be exceedingly careful of what I said. I had found out that I was misunderstood in every possible way. Thus I was very careful when I talked to Roland H. But what I really thought about was the result of many experiences with men of his kind.

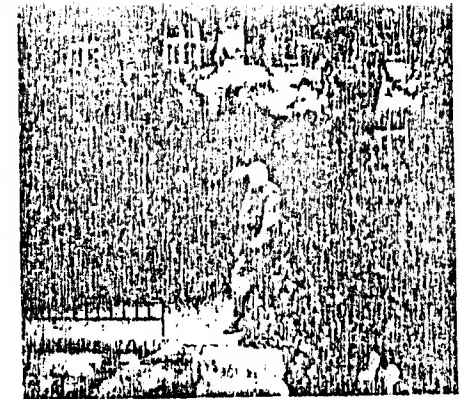
His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God.

How could one formulate such an insight in a language that is not misunderstood in our days?

The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality, and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding. You might be led to that goal by an act of grace or through a personal and honest contact with friends or through a higher education of the mind beyond the confines of mere rationalism. I see from your letter that Roland H. has chosen the second way, which was, under the circumstances, obviously the best one.

I am strongly convinced that the evil principle prevailing in this world leads the unrecognized spiritual need into perdition if it is not counteracted either by real religious insight

*“As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”  
(Psaln 42,1)*



or by the protective wall of human community. An ordinary man, not protected by an action from above and isolated in society, cannot resist the power of evil, which is called very aptly the Devil. But the use of such words arouses so many mistakes that one can only keep aloof from them as much as possible.

These are the reasons why I could not give a full and sufficient explanation to Roland H., but I am risking it with you because I conclude from your very decent and honest letter that you have acquired a point of view above the misleading platitudes one usually hears about alcoholism.

You see, “alcohol” in Latin is *spiritus*, and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: *spiritus contra spiritum*.

Thanking you again for your kind letter

I remain  
yours sincerely  
C. G. Jung

Send

**GOD** grant me the **SERENITY**  
to accept the things I cannot change  
**COURAGE** to change the things  
I can and **WISDOM**  
to know the difference

**BOX 1980**

### Classic Grapevine

The Bill W. - Carl Jung correspondence,  
William D. Silkworth, Samuel Shoemaker,  
and others selected from the best  
of the Grapevine over the years.

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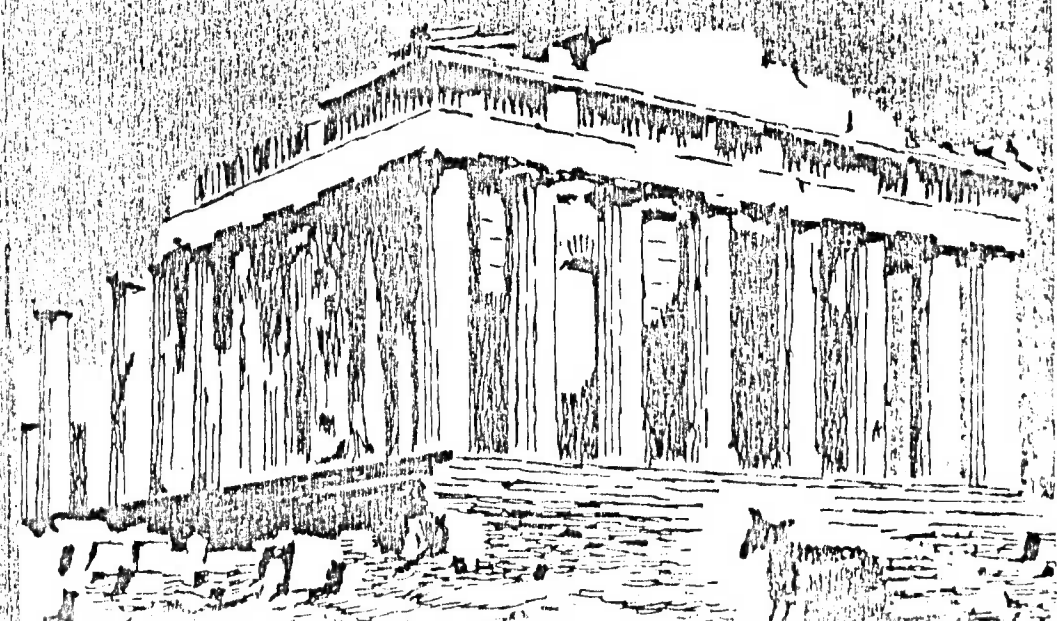
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# The Bill W. ~ Carl Jung Letters

HERE IS a vital chapter of AA's early history, first published in the Grapevine in January 1963, and reprinted in January 1968 and November 1974. (Copies of all three issues have been entirely sold out, and because of the continuing demand, we are reprinting these letters again.)

This extraordinary exchange of letters revealed for the first time, not only the direct historical ancestry of AA, but the bizarre situation wherein Jung, deeply involved with scientists and with a scientific reputation at stake, felt he had to be cautious about revealing his profound and lasting belief that the ultimate sources of recovery are spiritual sources. Permission to publish Dr. Jung's letter was granted to the Grapevine by the Jung estate.

January 23, 1961

Professor, Dr. C. G. Jung  
Kusnacht-Zurich  
Seestrasse 228  
Switzerland

My dear Dr. Jung:

This letter of great appreciation has been very long overdue.

May I first introduce myself as Bill W., a co-founder of the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous. Though you have surely heard of us, I doubt if you are aware that a certain conversation you once had with one of your patients, a Mr. Roland H., back in the early 1930's, did play a critical role in the founding of our Fellowship.

Though Roland H. has long since passed away, the recollection of his

remarkable experience while under treatment by you has definitely become part of AA history. Our remembrance of Roland H.'s statements about his experience with you is as follows:

Having exhausted other means of recovery from his alcoholism, it was about 1931 that he became your patient. I believe he remained under your care for perhaps a year. His admiration for you was boundless, and he left you with a feeling of much confidence.

To his great consternation, he soon relapsed into intoxication. Certain that you were his "court of last resort," he again returned to your care. Then followed the conversation between you that was to become

the first link in the chain of events that led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous.

My recollection of his account of that conversation is this: First of all, you frankly told him of his hopelessness, so far as any further medical or psychiatric treatment might be concerned. This candid and humble statement of yours was beyond doubt the first foundation stone upon which our Society has since been built.

Coming from you, one he so trusted and admired, the impact upon him was immense.

When he then asked you if there was any other hope, you told him that there might be, provided he could become the subject of a spiritual or religious experience—in short, a genuine conversion. You pointed out how such an experience, if brought about, might remotivate him when nothing else could. But you did caution, though, that while such experiences had sometimes brought recovery to alcoholics, they were, nevertheless, comparatively rare. You recommended that he place himself in a religious atmosphere and hope for the best. This I believe was the substance of your advice.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. H. joined the Oxford Group, an evangelical

movement then at the height of its success in Europe, and one with which you are doubtless familiar. You will remember their large emphasis upon the principles of self-survey, confession, restitution, and the giving of oneself in service to others. They strongly stressed meditation and prayer. In these surroundings, Roland H. did find a conversion experience that released him for the time being from his compulsion to drink.

Returning to New York, he became very active with the "O.G." here, then led by an Episcopal clergyman, Dr. Samuel Shoemaker. Dr. Shoemaker had been one of the founders of that movement, and his was a powerful personality that carried immense sincerity and conviction.

At this time (1932-34), the Oxford Group had already sobered a number of alcoholics, and Roland, feeling that he could especially identify with these sufferers, addressed himself to the help of still others. One of these chanced to be an old schoolmate of mine, named Edwin T. ["Ebby"]. He had been threatened with commitment to an institution, but Mr. H. and another ex-alcoholic "O.G." member procured his parole, and helped to bring about his sobriety.

Meanwhile, I had run the course of alcoholism and was threatened with commitment myself. Fortunately, I had fallen under the care of a physician—a Dr. William D. Silkworth—who was wonderfully capable of understanding alcoholics. But just as you had given up on Roland, so had he given me up. It was his theory that alcoholism had two components—an obsession that compelled the sufferer to drink against his will and interest, and some sort of metabolism difficulty which he then called an allergy. The alcoholic's compulsion guaranteed that the alcoholic's drinking would go on, and the allergy made sure that the sufferer would finally deteriorate, go insane, or die. Though I had been one of the few he had thought it possible to help, he was finally obliged to tell me of my hopelessness; I, too, would have to be locked up. To me, this was a shattering blow. Just as Roland had been made ready for his conversion experience by you, so had my wonderful friend Dr. Silkworth prepared me.

Hearing of my plight, my friend Edwin T. came to see me at my home, where I was drinking. By then, it was November 1934. I had long marked my friend Edwin for a hopeless case. Yet here he was in a very evident state of release, which could by no means be accounted for by his mere association for a very short time with the Oxford Group. Yet this obvious state of release, as distinguished from the

*"The helpful formula*

usual depression, was tremendously convincing. Because he was a kindred sufferer, he could unquestionably communicate with me at great depth. I knew at once I must find an experience like his, or die.

Again I returned to Dr. Silkworth's care, where I could be once more sobered and so gain a clearer view of my friend's experience of release, and of Roland H.'s approach to him.

Clear once more of alcohol, I found myself terribly depressed. This seemed to be caused by my inability to gain the slightest faith. Edwin T. again visited me and repeated the simple Oxford Group formulas. Soon after he left me, I became even more depressed. In utter despair, I cried out, "If there be a God, will He show Himself." There immediately came to me an illumination of enormous impact and dimension, something which I have since tried to describe in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and also in *AA Comes of Age*, basic texts which I am sending to you.

My release from the alcohol obsession was immediate. At once, I knew I was a free man.

Shortly following my experience, my friend Edwin came to the hospital, bringing me a copy of William James's Varieties of Religious Experience. This book gave me the realization that most conversion ex-

*therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum."*

periences, whatever their variety, do have a common denominator of ego collapse at depth. The individual faces an impossible dilemma. In my case, the dilemma had been created by my compulsive drinking, and the deep feeling of hopelessness had been vastly deepened still more by my alcoholic friend when he acquainted me with your verdict of hopelessness respecting Roland H.

In the wake of my spiritual experience, there came a vision of a society of alcoholics, each identifying with and transmitting his experience to the next—chain-style. If each sufferer were to carry the news of the scientific hopelessness of alcoholism to each new prospect, he might be able to lay every newcomer wide open to a transforming spiritual experience. This concept proved to be the foundation of such success as Alcoholics Anonymous has since achieved. This has made conversion experience—nearly every variety reported by James—available on almost wholesale basis. Our sustained recoveries over the last quarter-century number about 300,000. In America and through the world, there are today 8,000 AA groups. [In 1978, worldwide membership is estimated to be over 1,000,000; number of groups, over 30,000.]

So to you, to Dr. Shoemaker of the Oxford Group, to William James, and to my own physician,

Dr. Silkworth, we of AA owe this tremendous benefaction. As you will now clearly see, this astonishing chain of events actually started long ago in your consulting room, and it was directly founded upon your own humility and deep perception.

Very many thoughtful AAs are students of your writings. Because of your conviction that man is something more than intellect, emotion, and two dollars' worth of chemicals, you have especially endeared yourself to us.

How our Society grew, developed its Traditions for unity, and structured its functioning, will be seen in the texts and pamphlet material that I am sending you.

You will also be interested to learn that, in addition to the "spiritual experience," many AAs report a great variety of psychic phenomena, the cumulative weight of which is very considerable. Other members have—following their recovery in AA—been much helped by your practitioners. A few have been intrigued by the *I Ching* and your remarkable introduction to that work.

Please be certain that your place in the affection, and in the history, of our Fellowship is like no other.

Gratefully yours,  
William G. W.—

*Dr. Jung's reply is on the next two pages.*