

# Jung and Phenomenology

Roger Brooke

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*Jung and Phenomenology* is a classic text in the field of Jungian scholarship. Originally published in 1991, it continues to be essential to conversations regarding the foundations of Jungian thought. This Classic Edition of the book includes a new introduction by the author.

Jung described his own approach as phenomenological, particularly as it contrasted with Freud's psychoanalysis and with medical psychiatry. However, Jung's understanding of phenomenology was inconsistent, and he writes with an epistemological eclecticism that leaves him often at cross purposes with himself. In *Jung and Phenomenology*, Brooke systematically addresses the central ideas of Jung's thought. The major developments in the post-Jungian tradition are extensively integrated into the conversation, as are clinical issues, meaning that the book marks a synthesis of insights in the contemporary Jungian field. His reading and interpretation of Jung are guided by the question of what it is that Jung is trying to show but which tends to be obscured by his formulations.

Examining the meaning of Jung's theoretical ideas in concrete existential terms, *Jung and Phenomenology* is essential reading for psychoanalysts, psychologists, and students interested in the Jungian tradition and existential phenomenology.

**Roger Brooke** is Professor of Psychology at Duquesne University, USA, where he has also been Director of Clinical Training. His theoretical and clinical work draws deeply from the Jungian, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological traditions. He is also the editor of *Pathways into the Jungian World* (Routledge, 1999).

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Classic Edition

Roger Brooke

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For Robert, Sebastian, and Nicola

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# Introduction to the Classic Edition

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The response to this book since it appeared has been deeply gratifying, especially since it is not an easy read but a scholarly and doggedly systematic reading of Jung's work and of his most significant followers up to that time. I decided that we would not revise this book or rewrite it as a second edition. It has its place in the history of the conversations regarding the foundations of Jungian thought and Jung's claim that he should be understood as a phenomenologist. Surprisingly for me, there is nothing in it with which I now disagree over twenty years later. Certainly I would approach some areas, or chapters, differently, and there are some themes that I would have developed much more thoroughly, but I am satisfied that the book still stands.

I have made many changes throughout the text, but they have only been words or phrases that I think could have been more clearly written. I deleted one or two sentences and even a short paragraph from the original text because they seemed to me to be confusing and unnecessary. Where I have written papers that have developed ideas that were germinating here I have added a few endnotes to that effect.

I want to thank my editor, Kate Hawes, for her support and thoughtfulness.

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# Foreword

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In the seventeenth century when Galileo described his experiments with falling objects, he said that he thought in his mind of movable things left entirely to themselves and that such things fall equally quickly. Whether or not Galileo was describing here an actual experiment, the one which supposedly was performed at Pisa, what is decisive about his remark was its invitation not to look at what occurred. Thinking about things in advance of and even in spite of their appearance, Galileo, with others, inaugurated a new style of vision. The vision of a thinking mind displaced the vision of the living, incarnated eye, and in that displacement the appearance of things precisely as they appear for an embodied perceiver became deceptive. Said in another way, Galileo's invitation allowed the world as object of mind to eclipse the body as ground of experience.

Galileo, of course, was not the sole inventor of this style of vision called modern science, and to be sure it did not come into being in one decisive moment in history. If I cite the Galileo example, it is only because it illustrates how this style of vision as an attitude or posture toward the world involves at least three radical transformations in the psychological history of humanity. First, it illustrates how modern science establishes a new ideal of knowledge according to which the best way to know the world is, so to speak, to turn one's back upon it. Second, it illustrates how in this posture toward the world, the person is transformed into a thinking subject and the world into an object of thought. And third, it illustrates how in this separation between subject and object the sensuous body is no longer trusted to make sense of a world whose sensible appearances have become deceptive.

Although the Cartesian foundation of modern science is all too obvious in these remarks, what is not so obvious is the fact that this foundation itself rests upon, and indeed was made possible by, an earlier and even more radical shift in humanity's psychological life. I am referring here to the fifteenth-century invention of linear perspective vision by the Florentine artist Brunelleschi. His artistic intention to create the illusion of three-dimensional depth on the two-dimensional plane of the canvas was later codified by Alberti as a system of laws for geometrizing the space of the world. As a consequence of this achievement, what began as an artistic invention became a cultural convention, a habit of mind,

which Galileo, among others, was able to practice some two hundred years later. First in the imaginative eye of the fifteenth-century artist and then second, only later, in the speculative thinking mind of the seventeenth-century philosopher-scientist was the modern world of science born.

To read Alberti's treatise, *De Pictura*, which was published in 1435–6, is to be present at the creation of many of the unexamined certainties of modern life. Within the text, linear perspective vision transforms the canvas into a window on the world. Moreover, this window, which separates the embodied perceiver and the world perceived, not only transforms the former into a subject who is essentially a see-er and the latter into an object which is essentially seen, but also ideally projects the world at an infinite distance from the see-er. That ideal of knowledge according to which the best way to know the world is to turn one's back upon it is nestled within this earlier, more radical ideal, according to which the best way to know the world is to distance oneself as far as possible from it. Gaston Bachelard once described science as a creative refusal of the world and that aptly fits Galileo's posture. Linear perspective vision, however, indicates that the act of refusal rests upon the act of withdrawal or distancing, an act which is more radical because it is within that retreat into distance that the world can most purely be made into a matter for the eye and for the eye alone. Turning one's back upon the world is still a bodily involvement in and presence to the world. As such it can signal how very much one *distrusts* the body's way of making the world a sensible place. Withdrawing behind a window away from the world so that ideally it lies over there at an infinite distance signals, however, the much more radical claim that the body does not matter when the world can be made into a light matter, that is a matter of light for the eye and for the eye alone. Linear perspective vision as the cultural–historical context of the Cartesian foundation of modern science indicates, therefore, that Galileo's thinking in his mind of falling objects left to themselves is not simply a methodologically motivated distrust of bodily experience but, more radically, a cultural–historical psychological disposition against embodied sensuous life. Indeed, it is only within this context of an antipathy toward and not just a mistrust of the flesh that the window of linear vision transformed into a geometric grid mapped upon the world makes sense. The window-as-grid allows the mathematization of nature which in quantifying the world purifies it of its qualities. To achieve that quantification, an achievement which as Husserl has noted has led to the crisis of the sciences, requires more than an expedient distrust of embodied life. It requires a psychological belief that the body does not matter, that, indeed, to know the world as it really is in itself objectively requires an abandonment of the body.

Linear perspective vision is and has been precisely that abandonment of the body. In placing a window between the embodied perceiver and the world perceived, this style of vision has transformed the person into a spectator, the world into a spectacle, and the body into a specimen. Newton's transformation of the rainbow into the spectrum illustrates these points. Withdrawing into a darkened room to study the light, Newton drew a shade over his window, and cutting a

small hole in it admitted a ray of light. Placing a prism between this shaded window and the opposite wall, Newton unwove the rainbow. His experimental arrangements were the ‘incarnation’ of this linear style of vision: looking through a prismatic eye, that is, an eye which is a specimen, the spectator Newton observed a world of light, including the rainbow, which had become a spectacle. But the rainbow is never the spectrum. Or it is more accurate to say that it is the spectrum only when we practice this way of looking, only when out of this psychological distance we remove the rainbow from its place within the world and look upon it with a detached, prismatic eye. Moreover, then and only then can we agree with Newton that color belongs not to things but to the light. Keeping an eye upon the world, an invitation which lies at the very core of linear perspective vision, we lose touch with it, however, and the body which the spectator subject abandons translates into an objective world not only drained of its color and with which we are out of touch, but also a world without sound, smell, and without taste.

I am, of course, speaking metaphorically here, and yet it is a rough measure of how much linear perspective vision has become a habit of mind that I must not only confess to this way of speaking but also defend it. In his text Alberti makes it very clear that linear perspective vision situates all that is seen and the see-er on the same horizontal plane. This requirement means that depth as a matter of levels is eclipsed by depth as a matter of spatial distance, and that the size of things is a function of their spatial distance from the see-er, that the further away they are the smaller they appear to be. This law of perception is now part of the unexamined geometry of our vision. Ensnared behind a window with our vision fixed upon the world, we have become accustomed to taking the world’s measure by reducing everything to the same level or place of existence, by explaining it. Opening the world on that side of the window as a manifold of empirical facts for an ego consciousness of clear and distinct ideas on this side, we have become accustomed to this enlightenment of this world, to this way of flooding it with the lights of ego consciousness thereby making it a matter of light, and, we should add, a light matter, that is a world which without quality has been thinned of its substance into a number.

The custom of this vision, however, exacts its price, since its obvious success in creating the modern world of scientific–technological rationality invites us to forget the minimal character of its truth. Locating the things of the world as objects in a measured, homogeneous space for a detached, dis-incarnate, fixed, and stationary eye, this way of being in the world eclipses the more primordial truths of incarnate life. For creatures of flesh the things of the world are not in space. They are, on the contrary, always a place, and as such their size matters in relation to the desires, intentions, motives, and interest of an embodied perceiver who in living in the world moves about within it. Moreover, for creatures of flesh, which we are, these things of the world are never just objects over there which we face in a kind of confrontational ontology. On the contrary, they are things which solicit our gaze, or invite our touch, or appeal to us with their sensuous seductions, depending upon us, as the poet Rilke says, just as we depend upon them, for our

mutual realization. These things are never just clear and distinct ideas in our minds or facts to be measured in the world. Rather these things of the world always are something of a mystery, a hiddenness which is perhaps our *other* face, the portals, if you will, to the depths which lie above and below our lives, things, finally, which we never fully conquer with our facts and ideas but which we always are in the process of coming to know as we move with them over time, experiencing them now in this way and later in that way, metaphorical realities, then, which in remaining elusive continuously invite a seeing and a speaking which alludes to them, a way of being with them which is provocative and suggestive, a matter of inspiration first and always, and only later, under more minimal conditions a matter of measure. One does not have to be a poet to acknowledge the world in this fashion, but it is the poet who, like Blake in warning us against ‘the single vision of Newton’s sleep’, helps us to remember what we would otherwise forget: that linear vision becomes the literal mind, the eye which fixes the letter of the law, and that this eye of mind in transforming the world into a visible surface robs it of its invisible depths. Again, one does not need to be a poet to recover all this, but it is the soul’s poetic voice which restores to the spectator behind the window the thickness of the flesh, the metaphorical mystery of the world, and the chiasm, to use a phrase of Merleau-Ponty; which perpetually enfolds the body of the perceiver and that of the world in the erotic embrace of emotional desire.

But now we should ask what all this has to do with Jung and phenomenology, with this text by Roger Brooke which awaits the reader. The answer, I believe, is quite simple. Phenomenology and the depth psychology of Freud and Jung were all called into being by the cultural–historical psychology of this spectator consciousness, which, in abandoning the body, lost touch with the world. It is this historical–cultural context which made their appearances necessary and which makes sense of their achievements. As fidelity to appearances and as a resurrection of the animate flesh of body and world, phenomenology and depth psychology are therapeutics of humanity’s modern psychological life, remembering what is otherwise forgotten in our world of explanation, holding a place for those invisible depths of the world. If nothing else phenomenology, in its attunement to the things themselves and in its recovery of the lived body, and depth psychology, in its recognition of the unconscious, a reality created directly out of linear vision’s abandonment of the body and its leveling of the world’s qualitative depths, have been and continue to be the moment of return, an enantiadromia which reverses humanity’s flight from incarnation. And if nothing else, the times seem propitious for such a turn, since we stand today on the verge of transforming that psychological distance of withdrawal behind a window into the technological event of departure from earth with its attendant shadows of holocaust and destruction. We need the praxis of phenomenology and depth psychology. We need to cultivate its habits of mind, its way of mindfully inhabiting the world.

Roger Brooke’s book goes a long way toward this work of cultivation. It is, moreover, especially important because it does for Jung’s psychology what others,

like Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur, have done for Freudian psychology. Brooke is a knowledgeable and informed phenomenologist and through a sensitive, careful, and respectful reading of Jung's work, he frees this psychology from the unacknowledged remnants of its Cartesian heritage and fulfills the latent phenomenological significance of Jung's work. In doing so, phenomenology is deepened and enriched by this contact with Jungian psychology no less than Jungian psychology is amplified and fulfilled by this contact with phenomenology. It is no small achievement, and readers who belong to either tradition, as well as the general reader interested in the cultural–historical psychology of Ideas, will be richly rewarded.

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# Preface

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In the years following his break with Freud, Jung consolidated his own fundamental ideas about his method of psychological enquiry, his assumptions, and his claims concerning the unconscious, psychological life, and personal development. Not surprisingly, he frequently consolidated his position as a contrast to Freud's (and to a lesser extent Adler's). This is well known. What is less often recognised is that he criticised Freud and established his own position in the name of phenomenology. That his relation to phenomenology was fairly unsophisticated, and certainly inconsistent, is true.

Nevertheless, it did exist, and I think that despite its inconsistency, this relation to phenomenology is central to an understanding of Jung's work. But if one turns to other phenomenologists in order to gain a better understanding of Jung's position the result is more likely to be confusion than clarity.

The classical phenomenologists write very differently from Jung, certainly in terms of style, and if they ever refer to Jung at all, as Binswanger, Boss and Spiegelberg do, they tend to be polemically dismissive. What is particularly confusing for the uninitiated is that phenomenologists tend to criticise Freud and Jung for the same reasons, but these reasons are the very ones for which Jung criticised Freud. In fact much of the existential phenomenological critique of Freud was anticipated by Jung. That phenomenologists have seriously misunderstood Jung is clear. The problem does not end there, however, for it must be admitted that the phenomenological criticisms of Jung, cursory as they usually are, do have a point.

What emerges out of these issues are the concerns of this book:

- a understanding Jung as a phenomenologist is central to understanding Jung;
- b Jung's phenomenology was inconsistent and poorly disciplined, and he often tended to conceal his insights as much as reveal them, especially when he retreated from his declared phenomenological assumptions into the empiricist fantasies of his nineteenth-century mentors or his natural-scientific colleagues;

- c existential phenomenologists have generally taken Jung at his philosophical worst and have failed to reap the tremendously rich harvest of psychological insight he has to offer;
- d to understand Jung's psychology in phenomenological terms, therefore, we shall need to return repeatedly to his writings, to his struggle with words, and to the tensions between lived experience and conceptual thought which he seldom seemed to reconcile.

It also seems to me that, as excellent as many secondary sources in analytical psychology are, they tend to have missed these issues, thereby falling into the same epistemological eclecticism and difficulties as Jung himself did. However, a metatheoretical enquiry into Jung's writings does not concern only his epistemology (what do we know and how do we know what we know?) and ontology (what is the nature of human being, the work, and the relation between them?). Answers to these questions give shape to particular theoretical questions concerning *inter alia*, the self, the unconscious, the archetypes, and psychotherapy. If Jung's contribution to psychology concerns these phenomena, then most of our thinking concerns this 'ontic' level of analysis.

Phenomenology is guided by the call to return to the things themselves. Our concern is not to 'compare' analytical psychology and existential phenomenology but to return to Jung's texts and the phenomena they reveal. It is to enter analytical psychology's experiential world with the thinking of the phenomenologist, so that if this book is successful as phenomenology, then it should bring to light some of these phenomena in a fresh way. Since post-Jungian analytical psychology has developed and sometimes shifted this experiential world which Jung opened up, we shall not limit our reflections to Jung's own views. My concern is not only historical scholarship regarding Jung but, more generally, the fundamentals of analytical psychology. However, my hope is that the reflections that follow will be of interest not only to analytical psychologists but to psychotherapists, phenomenologists, and others concerned with the development of psychology conceived of as an intrinsically human science.

It should be mentioned that over the last few years there has been a growing spirit of reconciliation between phenomenology and analytical psychology. It is being increasingly recognised by phenomenologists that Jung's thinking cannot easily be pitched into the same positivist refuse bag as Freud's topographical metapsychology. Or perhaps, if, as Ricoeur in particular has shown, Freud's metapsychology can (and should) be understood with more subtlety than the classical phenomenologists suggested, then this is even more the case with Jung. It is not denied that Jung's theorizing usually contained an implicit ontology and epistemology that remained caught in the Cartesian and realist heritage of the nineteenth century, and to this extent the early critiques, by Boss for example, are still relevant. However, several phenomenologists, such as Casey, Romanyshyn, Sardello, de Koning, and Scott have been inspired by Jung's psychological insights, and from the field of analytical psychology authors such as Abenheimer,

Carlton, Hillman, Hobson, Holt, and Schenk have been touched by phenomenology. For both fields the association between Hillman and Romanyshyn at the University of Dallas in the early 1980s was particularly fortunate. It is very much in this spirit of reconciliation that this book has been written.

Roger Brooke  
Grahamstown  
June 1990

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Chapter 4 is a modified version of a chapter that appeared under the title, 'Reflections on Jung's experience in Africa', in G. Saayman (ed.), *Modern South Africa in Search of a Soul*, Boston: Sigo Press, 1990. Thanks and acknowledgements to Sigo Press for permission to publish this chapter again here.

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# Towards a phenomenological analytical psychology

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This book is an attempt to understand and articulate the psychological insights of C. G. Jung in the light of existential phenomenology. It is an attempt to see through Jung's writings to the phenomena he saw, or, to use a different metaphor, to hear through his words to what he was trying to say, and to express this in a phenomenologically accurate way.

It is not a question of trying to find points of comparison or contact between Jung's psychology and phenomenology. We need to go deeper than that, and ask what Jung sees and understands that makes any point of contact with existential phenomenology possible. Similarly it is not a question of merely 'translating' Jung's language into 'existential' language, for it is necessary to understand clearly what it is in human existence that holds the different languages together – in other words, the psychological insights that would make translation possible. I do take the view that it is not the words themselves that speak, but the phenomena revealed therein (which is not to adopt a naïve phenomenology that is insensitive to the constitutive power of language). To read Jung hermeneutically, therefore, is to do more than merely read his writings in a different way. It is to encounter them, to hold them in a dialogue that is both respectful and critical at the same time (Sardello 1975). Out of this dialogue it is hoped, and expected, that a way will be found to read Jung with an existential depth and significance that is often lost in his struggle with words and his own metatheoretical foundations.

A complementary aim is to offer existential phenomenological psychology something of the psychological depth and richness that Jung can provide. Primarily this means making Jung's insights phenomenologically accessible, so that some of the themes of existential phenomenology can be fleshed out psychologically. It is too easy, for example, to speak of hiddenness without ever fully recognising the structure and constitutive power that this term implies, and there is much that Jung can offer here.

It will be necessary to evaluate critically Jung's theoretical formulations, particularly in terms of the metatheoretical assumptions on which they are based. It will be found that many of these formulations will have to be bypassed if the insights contained in them are to be revealed. Significantly, although the criteria for doing so will come from phenomenology, clues and guidelines will be found

in the writings of Jung himself. Perhaps the central theme of this book is that many of Jung's own writings lead beyond the confines of his theoretical thinking and indicate an understanding of human being that lies at the heart of existential phenomenology. But this means that Jung has been much closer to phenomenology than phenomenologists have generally recognised, and that the transition from Jung's understanding of his own work (various as it was) to an existential phenomenological understanding of it is given within Jung's work itself. In other words, I want to argue more than that Jung's psychology can be reworked phenomenologically, or even merely that Jung and phenomenology are intimately compatible. I want to explore the more daring claim that Jung saw and understood as an existential phenomenologist, but that he lacked the conceptual tools to express his insights in a phenomenologically rigorous way. If this idea can be successfully sustained, then it means that our hermeneutic critique and interpretation has its ground in phenomenology, yet more centrally revolves around a kind of dialogue within Jung himself. Our intention throughout is to remain as close as possible to this inner dialogue and to what Jung was trying to say. The strength of this claim is founded on the belief that phenomenology has provided the conceptual tools necessary to understand and articulate the experience and insight which is both revealed and concealed in the movement from experience to theoretical formulation. These tools are an explicit and coherent existential anthropology, an ontology of the world as a network of meaningful relations, and a methodology that is consistent with this ontology and anthropology.

Jung's scientific endeavours were guided primarily by inner experience and personal need (Jung 1961), and his difficulty in meeting the academic needs of the moment reflects this. At an Eranos seminar in 1940 he remarked, 'I can formulate my thoughts only as they break out of me. It is like a geyser. Those who come after me will have to put them in order' (quoted in Jaffe 1971, p. 8).

Jung is acknowledging here a tension between his experience and the ways in which he tries to talk about that experience. For one thing, Jung always struggled with the problems of writing. Anthony Storr has commented that he has known 'of no creative person who was more hamstrung by the inability to write' (1973, pp. 37–8). But the issue is more than this. In the above quotation Jung is pointing to the fact that his speaking and writing occur with an immediacy that is not transparent to itself. When Jung says 'that the pioneer only knows afterwards what he should have known before' (1949c, p. 521), and that even then knowledge is incomplete, he is making a personal statement that reflects for the phenomenologist an epistemological truth. That is, consciousness is embodied and lived as action before it is reflectively appropriated as 'knowledge', and even the 'knowledge' that is written continues to participate in the opacity of the lived ground. To what extent Jung's conceptual knowledge accurately reflects the intuitive awareness that was given in his acts of perception is precisely the question that opens our study.