

# Sitting Across From Carl Jung

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*Digging into the history of psychological science, the Observer has retrieved classic interviews with historical figures in psychology for an ongoing series Psychology (Yesterday and) Today. Each interview is introduced by a contemporary psychological scientist, and the full text of the interview is available on the Observer website. We invite you to reflect on the words of these legendary individuals, and decide whether their voices still resonate with the science of today.*

I was teaching a graduate seminar called Approaches to Personality when it seemed like an interesting idea to have the graduate students in the seminar role-play in front of the class and pretend to interview the various personality theorists that I was presenting. Carl Jung was one of those theorists, and during that seminar, I learned that he had never agreed to an extensive recorded interview except for a brief exchange on the BBC.

I wrote a letter to Dr. Jung to request an interview because I believed that filmed interviews of eminent psychologists would encourage students to read their work.

My letter to Jung and his reply are published in *C. G. Jung: The Man and His Ideas*. In his reply, he agreed to schedule four days in August 1957 for me to interview him in Zurich. Funded with a grant from the Ford Foundation, and accompanied by a film crew, I conducted four interviews with Jung. I authorized *Psychology Today* to publish parts of the transcripts from my interviews with Jung as their initial interview in a regular feature involving interviews with eminent psychologists.

After arriving in Zurich to meet with Jung, who was 82 years of age at the time, I was invited to meet with him in his home. I soon learned that he had little admiration for American psychologists. As is evident in the interviews, he was quite perturbed that too many American psychologists did not fully understand his extraversion-introversion concepts, and he had created a typology that could be applied toward understanding most individuals. In his work, he actually contended that there is a subtle interplay between introversion, extraversion and four functions: sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition. He believed that introversion-extraversion varies by degrees among individuals. Thus, Jung believed these concepts were hardly stereotypes that could be applied to every individual.

He had been accused of being anti-Semitic based on his concept of archetypes in a “race unconscious.” He said to me, “How could anyone who really understood my work believe I was anti-Semitic?” In fact, he pointed out that most of his collaborators were Jewish.

Because of the spiritual dimension in many of his writings, he has generated a cult following over the years based on the aspects of Jung’s work that they believe contributed to the ultimate self-realization of the individual. Because of Claire Booth Luce (the wife of the publisher of *TIME* magazine, who was one

such Jungian), *TIME* sent a reporter to Zurich to cover my interview. This reporter happened to be seated in the backseat of Jung's car as he drove me around Zurich. Jung, in our interview that day, had discussed an interesting dream interpretation. The reporter asked Jung to discuss the dream further so that it could be included in his story. Jung turned around and said to the reporter, "Don't bother me with this stupid question, perhaps Dr. Evans may wish to explain it to you." This reporter's story, which appeared in *TIME*, is also included in the book cited earlier.

Over the years, as insistence for empirical evidence to support conceptualizations in psychological science grew, few psychological scientists began to support Jung's models of the behaviors and cognitions of individuals, including, for example, the concept of synchronicity, which Jung felt was supported by J.B. Rhine's work on extrasensory perception.

However, Jung's remarkable scholarship, particularly his knowledge of psychological, philosophical, archeological, theological, and medical writings, is reflected in his various books. His concepts of archetypes, for example, are related to the current interest in evolutionary psychology.

A question might be posed concerning the impact of these interviews. The interviews provided an opportunity for the interviewees to elaborate on many of their ideas and allowed them to respond to criticisms of their work. The interviews also provided an opportunity for my students and I to compare the ideas of various interviewees. These interviews with Jung provided an opportunity to learn more about how Freud and Jung, who disagreed on their fundamental beliefs about the understanding of the individual, yet, in fact, agreed on many issues. In my interview with Gordon Allport, it was interesting to learn how Allport (who at the time was one of the few psychologists who addressed the role of religion in an individual's life) addressed how Jung's conception of religion in at least some respects was similar to his.

One rationale for conducting the interviews with Jung was to determine whether students who watched Jung being interviewed and discussing his ideas, they would be stimulated to read more of his writings. But in a study, which was also reported in the book to which I referred earlier, a group of students who saw the interviews had a significantly greater likelihood of reading some of Jung's original writings compared to a matched group that did not watch the interviews. Certainly, this was a rather limited study, but interesting in its results.

Currently there appears to be an increased interest in Jung — even in popular culture as reflected in films, print media, and the Internet, not to mention the distribution of these interviews with Jung.