

HILL, SCOTT J. (2013). *Confrontation with the unconscious: Jungian depth psychology and psychedelic experience*. London, UK: Muswell Hill Press. xiii + 252 pp. ISBN: 978-1908995070, Paperback, \$24.95. *Reviewed by Stephen A. Martin.*

While at training at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, I was on the staff at the Klinik am Zürichberg, an in-patient Jungian psychiatric hospital housed in an elegant Beaux Arts villa on the Dolderberg, the patrician quarter of Zurich. At a staff meeting one morning in 1978, Dr. Heinrich Fierz, medical director and student of Jung, was presented with a request from a colleague to have access to some of the remaining LSD in the clinic's pharmacy and to use the comfortable clinic facilities for a controlled psychedelic experience. Rather than take the request seriously, Fierz and his senior staff dismissed the idea by making light of it and declaring that they "didn't need artificial means to explore *their* unconscious!" Nothing of any value would come of it, they opined. I was and am still dismayed at their reaction.

It was that dismay that prompted me to agree to review Dr. Scott J. Hill's comprehensive volume, the first significant reconsideration of psychedelics in light of Jungian psychology since the 1950s. In fact, what Dr. Hill has created is a sourcebook for those interested in such a natural interface for the compelling reason that Jung's work is a psychology of inner exploration and, understood properly, psychedelics or entheogens can be an ideal tool in this endeavor. Moreover, its publication coincides with a renewed interest in psychedelics in terms of research and their clinical utility and the revaluation of something culturally long forbidden.

Influenced by a traumatic psychedelic experience as a young adult and by his doctoral work into the nature of Jungian psychology, a significant portion of this book focuses on those two areas with such chapters as *Basic Jungian Concepts and Principles*, *Psychedelic Experience and Trauma*, *Psychedelic Experience and the Shadow*, *Psychedelic Experience and Psychosis*, *Psychosis in Jung's Psychology* and the like. While informative, the text can read at times like a dissertation or primer in Jungian psychology. For an introductory reader such information is invaluable; but for anyone moderately familiar with Jung and his work it can be slow going. Therefore, I would like to highlight what I believe to be the valuable core of Dr. Hill's effort; namely, his distillation of what links both Jungian depth work with psychedelic experience and the dilemma of their integration.

The core of the Jungian endeavor that is undertaken intentionally is to experience the unconscious with its vital imagery, affective power, and numinous or larger than life felt sense while maintaining a reflective or conscious standpoint in relation to it. In so doing, Jung teaches us, consciousness comes into a dynamic working relationship with the unknown parts of the psyche called the unconscious. This dynamic relationship is the engine that drives individuation, or becoming who we are intended to be. In order to engage this process, the threshold of consciousness, or how strongly the ego maintains its sense of order and control, must be explicitly forsaken to some extent, or “lowered,” in order to allow the contents of the unknown parts of the psyche to “rise to the surface of consciousness” and be known. This lowering can be accomplished by way of entering the symbolic space of dream analysis, visual imagery that Jung called “active imagination,” and also by way of certain types of automatic writing, art making and various yoga or relaxation techniques. Another pathway to lowering the threshold of consciousness, and this is to my mind a pearl of great price in this text, is of course the use of mind-altering substances such as psychedelics. Dr. Hill makes this point clear and by elaborating on it, he links Jungian inner work to inner work potentiated by the use of psychedelics. This is Dr. Hill’s singular contribution to the subject at hand.

For Jungian readers a second and more challenging point that Dr. Hill fields is whether or not the psychedelically mediated encounter with the unconscious, even under therapeutic or controlled circumstances, is authentically transformative. Can it be integrated? Can it be deeply worked and understood in the most conscious manner? Or, is it effectively bypassing the hard fought work of depth introspection on the one hand, and positively too dangerous on the other? This was the central dilemma for Jung himself and eminent students such as Michael Fordham and Heinrich Fierz. Focusing on the passivity of the psychedelic experience, they felt that the psychedelic agent “diminishes” the capacity of consciousness to engage in the transformative process. The diminution of this capacity to be present consciously, and with agency in the experience, can only have a negative impact on the meaningful integration of what the unconscious brings forth under such circumstances. Though the “doors of perception” might be opened wide, they thought, it does not guarantee what is perceived will be truly “seen.”

Dr. Hill once again marshals his considerable research base and in a skillful and balanced manner discusses these issues by calling to our attention, on the one hand, to the work of early Jungian advocates and practitioners of psychedelically assisted analytic work such as Ronald Sandison and Margot Cutner and, on the other, to the significant contributions of Stanislav Grof, Myron Stolaroff and, most recently, the researchers at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine among many others. All are favorably inclined toward and are convinced that the psychedelically assisted encounters with the unconscious hold tremendous potential for personal transformation or, as Jung called it, “individuation.”

Dr. Scott Hill has written a big book about a thorny subject and I, for one, am extremely grateful, though my few words scarcely do it justice. Speaking as a seeker after consciousness, it is about time that someone called our attention back to the potential value of the psychedelic experience as a bona fide agent in personal transformation. And speaking as a Jungian analyst, it is about time that serious consideration of and openness to it should replace the quick judgment and summary dismissal I witnessed so long ago.

The Author

Scott J. Hill, Ph. D., lives in Sweden, where he conducts scholarly research on the intersection between psychedelic studies and Jungian psychology. He holds degrees in psychology from the University of Minnesota and in philosophy and religion from the California Institute of Integral Studies.

The Reviewer

Stephen A. Martin, Psy.D., is a licensed psychologist and a certified Jungian analyst who has been in practice for over thirty years just west of Philadelphia in Ardmore, Pennsylvania. He is the President Emeritus and Co-Founder of the Philemon Foundation that funded the publication of C. G. Jung's *Red Book*. He is the editor of two books: *Archibald Knox* (1995, 2001) and *Lingering Shadows: Jungian, Freudians and Anti-Semitism* (1991), the latter with Aryeh Maidenbaum, Ph.D. More information about Dr. Martin can be found at: www.drstephenmartin.com.