

C. G. Jung's katabasis: from ancient myths to modern visionary experiences

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Abstract

This article aimed to revisit C.G. Jung experiences of katabasis, or in other words the experiences of descending to the underworld, or world of the dead, followed by the return to the world of the living, the anabasis. In psychological terms, these experiences mean confronting the unconscious and the subsequent expansion of consciousness. To revisit C.G. Jung's experiences of katabasis, it

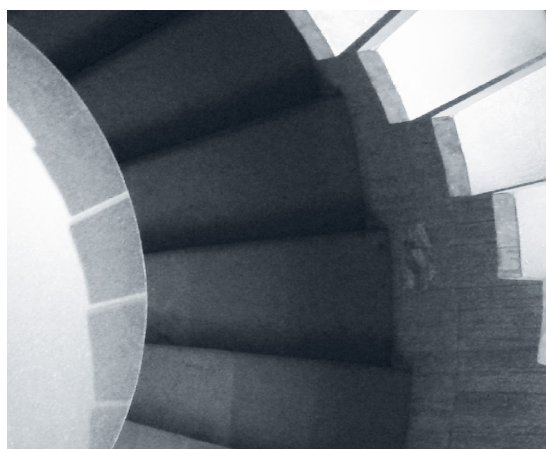
was rescued historically (1) in classical antiquity through greek mythology, (2) in the medieval and modern period, through the works of Dante Alighieri, Emmanuel Swedenborg and William Blake, and (3) finally in Jung's own life with an emphasis on the constitution of *The Red Book*. The katabasis experiences were of vital importance to Jung and culminated in the genesis of analytical psychology. ■

Keywords

Katabasis and anabasis, C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*, history of psychology, life and work.

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1. Introduction

The term katabasis was commonly used in ancient literature to designate a descent into the underworld, or the home of the dead (DANTAS; CORNELLI, 2019). Several heroes made their descents in search of different elements. For instance, Heracles went down to Hades to fulfill one of his 12 tasks. Theseus and Pheritoos made a journey through the underworld to conquer Persephone and Orpheus went down to Hades in an attempt to rescue Eurydice, inaugurating the katabasis proposal in the orphic-Pythagorean initiation rites. In *Odyssey*, this path made by Odysseus was associated with nekylia, that is, the rite in which the spirits of the deceased are called to reveal the future (BRANDÃO, 1987a). Later, in the medieval and renaissance period, the descent was associated with the Christian hell, with classics such as Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* describing various plans of hell and paradise (ALIGHIERI, 2006). Likewise, the anabasis, or the return from the mansion of the dead, was associated with resurrection in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Modern visionaries like Emanuel Swedenborg and William Blake also made their descents to hell through visions and dreams, writing their stories in works like *Heaven and Hell* (SWEDENBORG, 1987) and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (BLAKE, 2004). Shamdassani (2014) suggests that C. G. Jung's visionary experiences from 1913 and his production of *The Red Book* represent a continuation of this tradition. Jung also reportedly performed his own katabasis, which began in a period of personal crisis. In this sense, when reflecting on this period of his life, from 1913 to 1915, "Jung described those years in which he pursued 'the inner images' as the most important time in his life" (BAIR, 2003, p. 330), because, as he himself says:

Everything that I accomplished in later life was already contained in them [...]. My science was the only way I had of extricating myself from that chaos [...]. I took great care to try to understand every single image, every item of my psychic inventory, and to classify them scientifically - so far as this was possible - and, above all, to realize them in actual life (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 198).

It can be understood, therefore, that, as a way of integrating and making meaning to all this "material" and his own existence, in a kind of anabasis, Jung developed a scientific project and therapeutic proposal, the analytical psychology.

2. The katabasis in classical antiquity

Regardless of the ontological existence, the Jungian symbolic perspective is considered the epistemological bridge between the material and immaterial realms (PENNA, 2013, p. 140). Thus, the concept of katabasis may be associated, symbolically, with the comprehension of the existence of a double nature in man, which would involve two dimensions: on the one hand, a material one, and on the other, a spiritual one. Taking into consideration body aging changes and the possibility of death, it is quite fair to question/inquire/ponder if the limits and purposes of human existence are genuine when one realizes about the human body aging changes and the possibility of death. In this context, religions seek to provide answers and rituals to deal with these questions about the ultimate reality. The transition from a material to a spiritual realm, embodied by death, would then represent an experience of katabasis and anabasis, or vice-versa.

Since the most remote antiquity, worshiping the dead has been practiced due to hygienic needs, to respect for the deceased and even to the belief that if the living revere those who have left,

this attention and care could assuage their bad influences on the physical world. The religious experience related in this possible contact with another realm can also be understood through the concept of numinous formulated by Rudolf Otto (2011), a set of emotional reactions that generate both rapture and strangeness. Being close to a *Nume*, as described by Hesiod (1995), in his *Theogony*, promotes awe and reverence, on the one hand, as well as terror and fear, on the other. The numinous is, therefore, “a somewhat singular event, which, due to its depth, escapes intelligent interpretation” (OTTO, 2011, p. 97).

Likewise, the reflection on the whereabouts of the beings that preceded us in the passage to the other domain of life, be those who present good feelings and behaviors, such as kindness, wisdom, courage, etc., or those who were ungodly and corrupt, fed the belief in specific places or spaces to shelter the different disembodied human types. Good souls would be sent to gardens and spaces of bliss, for instance: in Sumer, the land of Dilmun was believed a kind of Mesopotamian Eden; in Egyptian mythology, there was the Sekhet-Aaru, or reed fields, for those who passed the trial of Osiris; in Ancient Greece the Champs Elysees; and in the Christian religion, paradise is situated in heaven. In contrast, the dark and sinister places are destined for the souls of evil men, in the deepest parts of the earth, from which the condemned cannot leave. It is interesting to note how the ancients were convinced that the righteous and the unfair would not occupy the same space after death (SERRANO, 1999).

It is also found in many cultures the belief that the deceased who suffered and fought had knowledge acquired from experience and that they could bring clarification to those who ventured to meet them, descending into the underworld. However, not all people agreed on this point. For example, among the orphic cults of Ancient Greece, the soul of the common man was nothing more than a shadow, who would forget everything when reborn, because he would

drink from the waters of the river Lethe, while the one initiated into the rites and knowledge of Orpheus, could move more safely in the other realm, having access to the source of memory, he could retain clarifications to be used in his future birth (BRANDÃO, 1987a).

Some of the main gods and heroes of antiquity also took the journey of descending into the underworld and returning to the world of the living in katabasis and anabasis that reflected the cycles of nature. This was the case of Inanna in Sumeria, Marduk in Babylon, Ra and Osiris in Egypt, the Cretan Megistos Kouros, the Syrian Adonis, the Phrygian Atig and agrarian gods Dionysus and Persephone celebrated in Eleusis. Among the heroes related to the classical period, Heracles, Theseus, Perithoos, Orpheus and Odysseus performed the katabasis with different objectives. In Christianity, Lazarus and Christ himself descended to the mansion of the dead. In the Renaissance world, Dante was taken by Virgilio to the different abodes of souls (SERRANO, 1999).

The joining of the natural cycles, the changing of the seasons in a continuous process of death and rebirth was associated the katabasis with several initiation cults. For Edmonds (2004, p. 113) “the initiatory interpretation is attractive, primarily due to the common equation in the history of the katabasis with a process of death and rebirth”. Agreeing with this view Eliade states that “the descent to Hades means going through an initiatory death, the experience of this type establishes a new way of being” (ELIADE, 1972, p. 27). In the initiation process, man was integrated with nature, participating in its renewal cycles, at the same time, from the point of view of reflection, he was offered the opportunity to transform his conceptions of the world and emerge as a “new man” (BRANDÃO, 1987a).

From all these elements, we try to focus on the analysis of the history of some heroes of the Greek mythology, as a way to clarify the different aspects presented in the experience of katabasis. Even before this assessment, we aim to des-

cribe in the case of Hades how the ancients conceived the structuring of the world of dead.

According to Hesiod (1995), in his *Theogony*, the transition between the physical world and the underworld could happen through the Charon's barge over the waters of the river Stige and Acheron, although Hades could also be reached through crevices and caves in specific geographical spaces. Heracles, for instance, went down via cape Taenarum, in Laconia, one of the classic entrances that gave direct access to the world of the dead (BRANDÃO, 1987b).

The Hades entrance was from a cave that worked as a portico, where Cerberus was. This fierce guardian prevented the exit of the dead and the entry of the living. He was represented as a monstrous dog with three heads and its back also had several heads of serpents, whose tail was a snake. Past this cave, there was the dwelling of children who died at a young age. The shadows of innocent, condemned and killed on false charges lived on a contiguous space. The souls of the suicides and of those who became disgusted with life wandered further. The continuation of this space extended through the so-called field of sighs and tears, where all those consumed by Eros and corroded by their sentences were concentrated. In a deeper space, passing through a forest of myrtle, was the place destined for the warriors. From that point on, there was a forked path. The right led to the palace of Hades, which had to be passed in order to reach the Champs Elysees, and the path on the left led to Tartarus, a place where the souls of the wicked would receive terrible torments. This bifurcation also included the underworld court, chaired by three judges: Rada-manto, Eaco and Minos. They were severe but fair judges and made the dead go through the examination of their acts, even forcing criminals to confess their crimes (HESÍODO, 1995; SERRANO, 1999).

The Elysian Fields on the right and the island of the fortunate were conceived as green havens, full of forests and located in the west of the world,

surrounded by the Ocean River. The souls of the righteous delighted themselves in these places. On the left, there was the Phlegethon a river of fire in constant flux of flames. In a spacious room with columns, there was also a space for the murderers who were punished by Tisiphone, the avenger of the murder, one of the Erinias, who flogged the guilty until they went crazy. Immediately afterwards, there was the abyss of Tartarus, the depth of which is described as the double distance of the one between the earth and the sky. At its bottom, imprisoned by Zeus, the Titans were to be found.

In the descent made by some heroes to Hades, Martínez (2000) makes an interesting distinction between the characteristics and the objectives involved. He highlights three types of *katábasis*, 1) *Hybristiké katabasis*, present in the myths of Heracles, Theseus and Pirítoos, 2) the romantic *katabasis* of Orpheus and 3) the named necromancer Odisseu's *Katabasis*.

The first type of *katábasis* is defined by *hybris*, an expression understood by the Greeks as a counterpoint to the good order, an attitude that ignores the limits in the relationship with others. The term ends up having different facets, while Plato understands that *hybris* exists whenever one overcomes the measure of what is just. Aristotle defines it as the free offense for the pleasure of feeling superior (ABBAGNANO, 2007). Heracles' *katabasis* is found in his eleventh work, the search for the dog Cerberus by king Euristeu's imposition. In the presence of the god Hades, Heracles asked for permission to take the monstrous dog to the surface. Hades agreed as long as Heracles controlled the animal without using a weapon or injuring him. This mythologema is highlighted by Brandão as follows:

Regarding Heracles' *katábasis*, it is known that it constitutes the supreme initiation rite, the symbolic death, it is the indispensable condition for an *anabasis*, an ascent, a definite climb in the search for self-knowledge for changing of what re-

mains from the old man in the new man (BRANDÃO, 1987b, p. 114).

In this case, within an analytical perspective, the encounter with monstrous creatures, such as Cerberus, concerns the recognition of inhibiting psychic residues and their overcoming. Breaking the limits, which in this case, requires physical effort.

In the Theseus and Pirithus katabasis, there are also *hybris* elements. The two heroes had gone down to Hades to capture Persephone, so that she could marry Pirithus. Theseus, in this case, is just a companion, who returns a favor to his friend, because together they had captured Helena for Theseus. At Hades, the two heroes are invited to a banquet and make two mistakes, sit at the table and eat the food offered. The two friends end up trapped in their chairs. Theseus is later rescued by Heracles. Pirithus, however, remains forever in the underworld. For Brandão (1987b), this descent also has ritualistic characteristics. In ancient cultures, the male element should descend into the earth to fertilize it and thus bring new life to the surface. From the point of view of analytical psychology, we find in this myth the search for the feminine element in the depths of the unconscious, the rescue of the anima from the devouring maternal aspect.

In the second type of katabasis, the romantic element, in its most general sense, stands out as a central theme. We have this image in the myth of Orpheus, the poet son of the muse Calliope and Apollo. Eurydice, Orpheus's wife, had died after being bitten by a serpent and the poet, whose own name means obscure (*orphnós*), was destined to descend the darkness of the underworld. Orpheus' proof of love moved Hades and Persephone who allowed Eurydice to return, but with one condition: the poet should go ahead without looking back and his wife would follow him from behind. On the way up, Orpheus, feeling hesitant whether his beloved was really following him, looked back and then she was gone forever in a shadow. According to Brandão (1987a), after

returning from Hades, Orpheus instituted a set of ritualistic mysteries, which were forbidden to women. In one version of the myth, because of this prohibition, the Menades would have killed Orpheus and his followers. The symbolic element of this katabasis would be represented by the need for detachment. Orpheus' mistake in Hades was to have looked back, to have gone back to the past, holding on to the matter symbolized by Eurydice. "An authentic orphic never returns. It detaches completely, from the viscous, from the concrete and leaves to never return" (BRANDÃO, 1987a, p. 144). Orpheus would not yet be ready for his harmonious and definitive union with his anima, only through his death, the supreme sacrifice, he attains liberation.

For Martínez (2000), the most complete katabasis is found in the myth of Odysseus. In the episode of Nekya, which occupies a central part of the Odyssey, Martínez calls Odysseus katabasis as a necromancer katabasis, which is its very essence. After the Trojan War, Odysseus confronts the gods and because of his *hybris* begins a painful journey back home. In the process he will be depleted of all his possessions and will lose the company of all of his crew, even his feelings of pride and power will be sacrificed in the end. His descent to Hades represents the death of the old and natural man so to give birth to an enlightened man who no longer guides his life by the glories of the world.

Even before descending to Hades, the encounter with Calypso and Circe represents contact with another domain. These two goddesses inhabited paradisiacal places similar to the Elysian Fields. However, both Calypso and Circe represent a life of illusion. Pleasure without knowledge that intoxicates reason in the first, and domination by the senses that turns man into irrational in the second. In Nekya's episode, Martínez (2000) identifies a necromancy. Odysseus should offer the blood of animals to the souls of the dead, so that the hero could access the Hades and obtain clarification. The contact with the dead, especially the sage Tiresias, brings the

expansion of Odysseus' consciousness. By the knowledge acquired in this encounter, the hero connects his entire past journey to the present, and still has his future foreseen.

In these three types of *katábasis* we find the essential elements of the descent into the underworld, or the search for contact with the spirits and the *Numes*. In the first, the aspect of terror, facing and overcoming the limits established by the physical realm. In the second, the detachment of matter for an encounter with beings that have already left. And finally, in the third, the integration of individuality through the enlightenment brought by the *Numes* from the other world.

3. The katabasis in the medieval and modern period

In the medieval period, the same process linked to the *katabasis* of the ancient Greeks is revived in the famous work of Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321), *The Divine Comedy*. The work, written at different times during the author's life, started to be written in 1306 in the castle of Val di Magra, with the writing of a collection of poems about hell. Dante finished it in 1321 with the narrative of Paradise, the same year of his death. The work presents a complex worldview, and reveals not only a historical analysis of the medieval man, but also Dante's internal experiences in the time and his beliefs about afterlife.

Shamdasani (2014) highlights the word as a milestone in the visionary tradition, descent into hell has its introduction in the prominence placed on the portico of the entrance to the underworld, which has the same, deep kinship with Jung's Red Book. "All hope abandon, ye [you] who enter in!" (ALIGHIERI, 2006, p. 95). The words recorded on a dark sign baffled Dante himself, who asked his guide, the poet Virgil, to clarify them "Here all the suspicion needs to be abandoned, all cowardice must here be extinct" (ALIGHIERI, 2006, p. 95), that is, it was necessary to arm themselves with strength of spirit and abandon all expectations, as they would confront the darkest facets of human experience.

In the apocryphal apocalypse of Peter, we can find some descriptions of the Christian hell. In this work, Christ shows Peter that after death souls are punished for their sins in life. In this place in the underworld, the apostle sees people hanging by their tongues, others with flaming tongues, mud lakes, worm clouds and so on. Albrecht Dieterich in 1839 argued that these apocryphal descriptions were inspired in the source of the orphic Pythagorean traditions (SHAMDASANI, 2014). The fusion of ancient traditions about the underworld and Christian propositions reaches its peak in *The Divine Comedy*. Alighieri himself, in a letter to Cangrande I della Scala, a politician from Verona, says that the work could be read in two ways. The first way, literal, that is, an indicative of a different layer or places to which souls might go after death. The second way, allegorical, in a sense that the focus is on man walking his inner journey. We can evaluate, following the second proposal, that, before the court of his own conscience, the man who acts would be freer and more confident to exercise his will, while the one who chooses the error or evil, would feel embarrassed and disturbed. The various images presented by Dante in Hell would be, in this case, metaphorical representations of a state of mind of internal weakness, suffering and misery. As a hermetic work, *The Divine Comedy* would have different interpretative stratum (ALIGHIERI, 2006, SHAMDASANI, 2014).

Two figures who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries also contributed to the expansion of ideas about the state of the soul in hell and paradise: Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 - 1772) and William Blake (1757 - 1827). The hell described by Swedenborg has characteristics similar to Dante's. Swedenborg was a Swedish scientist and mystic, and one of the known facts of his life was a personal crisis that he went through around 1740, which culminated in a visionary experience in 1745. On one day of that year, Swedenborg was sitting in a tavern in London and he heard a stranger tell him not to eat so much. He returned home and dreamed of the

same individual from the tavern who revealed himself as Christ himself, and said that he would take him through heaven and hell, that he would talk to the dead, angels and demons, and that upon his return he should reveal to people about true faith. He was told to write down everything that was seen and heard in order to reveal the symbolic meaning of the Bible. In Swedenborg's work, heaven and hell are strictly dichotomous. The two, basically, would be in a rudimentary state within each human being. And after death, the opening of the door to one of these places would be determined according to the choices and actions in this world. Love for God and neighbor would be the key to paradise, while all vices and errors in relation to God and other men would be the key to hell (SHAMDASANI, 2014; SWEDENBORG, 1987).

In *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg (1987) describes what he experienced in his visions. There would be several hells, which could be accessed by cracks in the rocks, holes, pits and caves. In some, the appearance was like that of cities destroyed by war; in others, the aspects were of ruins of historical monuments, others still presented themselves as deserts. The diversity of hells was proportional to the diversity of human vices and failures. In these places, souls would meet with regard to their similarities, and in the same way it would happen in different paradises.

William Blake was a reader of Swedenborg's works and since his youth, he claimed going through visionary experiences. For a certain time he attended Swedenborg's church in London. However, he later criticized the institutionalization of Swedenborg's ideas. In 1790 he published the book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (BLAKE, 2004). In this work, Blake (2004) presents a critique of Swedenborg's interpretation of heaven and hell; for him the two spaces were not radically irreconcilable. The problem for Blake is that Swedenborg has become too attached to heaven and his conversations with angels. For a comprehensive view of the totality, it would be necessary to give the same weight to

hell, dialoguing with its inhabitants. The devil and the demons should be interviewed.

In his works, Blake presents the attempt to articulate the opposites between heaven and hell, as two polarities of human life, also represented by forces such as attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate. These oppositions would be necessary for the completeness of human experience. Blake also presents his critique of organized religion. At the end of his life, Blake became increasingly interested in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, producing a series of images that illustrates different moments of the passage through hell and the plans of paradise (BLAKE, 2004; SHAMDASANI, 2014).

Just as Eugene Taylor (1997) placed Jung's anomalous experiences within the visionary tradition, Shamdasani (2014) sought to locate *The Red Book* in direct correspondence with the lineage of the treatises of Dante, Swedenborg and Blake. From a personal crisis that began in 1913, Jung also experienced his katabasis, descending into hell, experiencing in this process a series of the so-called anomalous events. The account of these experiences contained in *The Red Book* can be interpreted in the same way that Dante evaluated his work, that is, in two ways: an objective one, in which it is considered the possibility of parapsychological experiences, and a subjective one, his confrontation with the unconscious and the subsequent assimilation of its images.

4. The C. G. Jung's katabasis

Between 1913 and 1914, Jung went through a period of self-experimentation inducing waking fantasies, his first descent into hell. For Shamdasani (2014), the chronological reading of the events makes clear a religious experience of recovering certain lost aspects of Jung's life. The contact with psychoanalysis and its subsequent disconnection from Freud becomes secondary in this process. The author suggests that Jung's period of obscurantism would be his psychoanalytic phase, properly. His crisis from 1913 onwards would mean the recovery of his authenticity and,

therefore, the structuring of his experiences in a new scientific perspective, the analytical psychology.

At that time, a fantasy was constantly repeated to Jung: the idea that there was something dead that continued to live. For instance, there were visionary experiences related to corpses that were placed in crematoriums, but then it was discovered that they were still alive. These fantasies culminated in a dream. Jung points out:

I was in a region like Alyscomps near Arles. There, they have a lane of sarcophagi, which go back to Merovingian times. In the dream, I was coming from the city and saw before me a similar lane with a long row of tombs. They were pedestals with stone slabs, on which the dead lay. They reminded me of old church burial vaults where knights in armors lie out-stretched. Thus, the dead lay in my dream, with their antique clothing and hands clasped. The only difference was that they were not hewn out of stone, but mummified in a curious fashion (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 178 -179).

In the dream described above, Jung passes in front of the first grave of a deceased person from the 1830s, observes his clothes when the person begins to move, returning to life. Jung claims that this would have happened because he had looked at him. Feeling uneasy, he continues his journey and approaches another dead man pertaining to the 18th century, and, hence, the same happens, the body starts to move and the individual comes back to life. Jung goes through a row arriving in front of a deceased of the 12th century, dressed in a chainmail with the hands on his chest; he was a knight templar, who also returns to life after being seen by Jung (JAFFÉ, 2016).

For Freud, unconscious contents were interpreted as repressed residues of conscious activity (LAPLANCHE, 2010), or as corpses from a

forgotten past, while for Jung, the unconscious, such as the kingdom of the dead, presented its own dynamics and was full of vitality. This dream was followed by a Jung's will of rescuing something in the past, so his childhood games were revived in the process of building small houses, castles and churches on the banks of the lake, close to his home in Zurich. "The building game was only a beginning. It released a stream of fantasize which I later carefully wrote down." (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 181). According to Jaffé, Jung reveals that it was in 1913 that he decided to try something more extreme:

I was sitting at my desk once more, thinking over my fears. Then I let myself drop. Suddenly, it was as though the ground literally gave way at my feet, and I plunged down into dark depths. I could not fend off a feeling of panic. But then, abruptly, at not to great a depth, I landed my feet in a soft, sticky mass. I felt great relief, although I was apparently in complete darkness. After a while, my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, which was rather like a deep twilight. Before me was the entrance to a dark cave (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 185).

In other dreams of the same time, Jung presents this descent into his abyss in similar ways: "First came the image of a crater, and I had the feeling that I was in the land of the dead" (JAFFÉ, 2016, p.185). The descent into hell in the 1913 experiments is a search for lost contents, in the same way the ancient heroes did: Heracles, Theseus, Perithoos, Orpheus, and Odysseus. Jung sought to rescue significant aspects only accessed in this descent to the deepest of himself, which does not rule out the possibility of parapsychic events involved in the process. In this sense, Jung himself considers some of his views of the period to be precognitive, for example his view of 1913, described in his Memories and in the author's biographies.

For Shamdasani (2009) *The Red Book* presents two main moments. The first is Jung's acceptance of his inner chaos, and the stimulation of images that would allow a closer dialogue with the unconscious. The second is an accommodation of his visionary experiences in psychology, elaborating and interpreting the visions. Following the historical line composed by Alighieri, Swedenborg and Blake, Jung established how the work should be read. For a long time he had pursued science, in the way it was developed in its time, in which many contents of human experience were relegated to the margins of the vast majority of studies. However, for Jung, it was necessary to encompass the totality of human experiences, what he called madness or irrationality. In fact, something closer to divine madness, as listed by Plato in *Phaedrus* (PLATÃO, 2000) when mentioning the altered states of the pythons in Delphi.

In these experiences, Jung meets the dead. For instance, on January 12 of 1914, he was faced with an entanglement of human bodies. On February 2, in dialogues with his soul, this one states that he had arrived in hell. However, it is on January 14-16 of 1914, that Jung reports a greater sequence of experiences. He found himself in a library, looking for the book *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas Kempis, where he talked to the librarian about Christianity, Nietzsche and Goethe. Then he found himself talking to a woman who asked him if he was a spiritual being. Shortly after, dark forms appeared. These were men who claimed to be Anabaptists, dead 300 years ago. Their leader claimed that his name was Ezekiel and that he and his group were going to Jerusalem to visit the holy sites. Jung asked if he could go with them, but his request was denied. Ezekiel said that he could not go along, because he still had a body.

At that time, Jung expresses that in the midst of his own darkness, nothing was more desirable than having a guru, gifted with the knowledge to guide him through his visionary experiences. He says: "This task, undertaken by the figure of Philemon, whom in this respect I was unwilling

and reluctant to recognize as my psychagogue [psichopompo]. And the fact was that he referred me to several internal enlightenments" (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 189 - 190). Upon returning from the Anabaptists' shadow crowd, Jung writes the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*.

Boechat (2014) affirms that, among all the apparitions and interferences of the dead of *The Red Book*, the main one is found in the third part of the book, *Scrutinies*, when Philemon pronounces the seven sermons to the dead. The crowd of dead who came from Jerusalem did not find what they were looking for. Thus, they are as indoctrinated by Philemon, about the nature of God, man and destiny. In *The Red Book*, it is clear that the author of *Septem Sermones* is Philemon. Jung mentions:

Philemon came up to me, dressed in the white robe of a priest, and lay his hand on my shoulder. Then I said to the dark ones, So speak, you dead. And immediately they cried in many voices. We have come back from Jerusalem, where we did not find what we sought. We implore you to let us in. You have what we desire. Not your blood, but your light. That is it. Then Philemon lifted his voice and taught them, saying [and this is the first sermon to the dead] (2009, p. 447 - 448).

For Boechat (2014), the dead are a fundamental key on the comprehension of *The Red Book*. There is a suggestion that they need to be clarified. "The multitude of the unsaved dead has become greater than the number of living Christians, so it is time that we intervene in favor of the dead" (JUNG, 2009, p. 297). Boechat formulates two psychological hypotheses to explain the role of the dead in the dialogues of the Red Book.

At first, he speculates that we ourselves are the dead, that we have not found adequate answers for our spiritual needs in official religions, which seems to have lost themselves in excessive ritualism, forgetting the essential role

of individual experience in the search for the sacred and its meaning. For the author, it would be necessary that religion, especially Christianity, recovers its gnostic aspect, that is, to recover the human aspect of the relationship with the divine. "A truth that makes sense to our souls again and has not been worn out due to the automatic ritual" (BOECHAT, 2014, p. 1782). The essential truths of Christianity were plagued by an excess of philosophical speculations, the essential and beneficial background had been lost by centuries of conflict. The interpretation of this first hypothesis is that man, in general, needs a way back to himself, not the way of the outer Jerusalem, but of the sacred that is found within. The dead would be the contents of the psychological shadow that return asking for the integration of consciousness. Therefore, they would be devitalized parts of the psyche, forgotten about the past, despised or repressed, asking for help.

The second hypothesis is of historical aspect. Jung started writing *The Red Book* in the period of the First World War. In the European crisis, thousands of young people were sent to their deaths on the battlefield. Death is a daily issue in Europe's collective unconscious and, probably, in the world's unconscious too. "The unimaginable number of deaths across Europe invades the collective imagination" (BOECHAT, 2014, p. 1790). The war's cruelty question, in which the great world powers manipulated the masses' lives as if they were pawns in a game of chess, impacted the population.

Boechat, however, also points out that "all of these approaches are, in a way, convincing. But are they sufficiently comprehensive?" (BOECHAT, 2014, p. 1793). To which himself replies: "We must not forget that the dead, specifically, have interested Jung since his earliest childhood [...] it is known that Jung's maternal ancestors have always had great intimacy with spiritualist manifestations" (BOECHAT, 2014, p. 1800 - 1801). In our view, it is essential to consider the parapsychological perspective in the approach of the events in question.

Jung states that so much imagination needed solid ground and that he should return to hu-

man reality. His anabasis, marked by the scientific understanding was, then, a psychological necessity. In that sense, he felt the urgency to draw strong conclusions from the unconscious insights, and that task was to become a life work (JAFFÉ, 2016). Jung still adds: "It all began then; the later details are only supplements and clarifications of the material that burst forth from the unconscious, and at first overwhelmed me. It was the primary material for a lifetime's work" (JAFFÉ, 2016, p. 204).

The process of katabasis experienced by Jung led him to understand the psychotherapeutic process itself. The exploration of images in *The Red Book* is an attempt to reconcile the science of his time and the internal transformations of his confrontation with the unconscious. A dialogue between the spirit of the time and the spirit of the depths. From these experiences, Jung would guide his patients through the steps he had taken, transforming the practice of psychotherapy into a kind of initiation rite of descent into the underworld. As indicated in *Aion* (JUNG, 1979), this descent is part of the fundamental process of individuation, represented in the Christian tradition by the descent of Jesus to the mansion of the dead and his subsequent ascent to heaven on the third day of his resurrection. Shamdasani (2014) points out that in Jung's 1934 work presented in Eranos, *Archetypes of the collective unconscious*, he argued that the symbolic process is only possible when the ego is in close relationship with the image, whatever it may be, when no obstacle is encountered, which would correspond to a temporary renounce of conscious individuality to unconscious forces. This process, however, poses risks to consciousness, especially if it succumbs entirely to the unconscious forces' pressure. However, when it is well-succeed, a close dialogue between the ego and the image is established, there is an opening for the development of the personality, or in other words, for the individuation process, the modification of the psyche, of its dispositions and attitudes towards the world (JUNG, 1975).

5. Conclusion

The term katabasis was used in classical literature in reference to the descent into the underworld that several heroes made. In this article, we addressed some examples to clarify the symbolic meaning of the term. In its different forms, *hybristiké*, romantic and necromancer, the concept of katabasis, followed by anabasis, has in common with psychical research the process of expanding consciousness. In this descent, or entry into the other world, we find several possible layers of interpretation. From the point of view of analytical psychology, they mean facing personal impediments, acquiring knowledge and assimilating deep emotions, finally, restructuring individuality. Jung highlights:

The Nekyia is no aimless and purely destructive fall into the abyss, but a meaningful *katabasis eis antron*, a descent into the cave of initiation and secret knowledge. The journey through the psychic history of mankind has as its object the restoration of the whole man, by awakening the memories in the blood (1971, par. 213).

In the same way, we rescue experiences of descent into the realm of the dead carried out by writers and visionaries such as Alighieri, Swedenborg and Blake. All of these experiences ser-

ve as a parameter for Jung's experiences from the period 1913 - 1930, which is also called confrontation with the unconscious. At that time, we had the production of *The Red Book*, a work of inestimable value for depth psychology, which must also be understood as belonging to a visionary tradition.

The Red Book can be clarified as the description of an initiatory process. As Hillman and Shamdasani express:

Descending into his own depths, [Jung] found images that, somehow, had preceded him. [It was] a descent to human ancestry. [...] This is not a mere metaphor [...] When he speaks of the dead, he means the dead. They are present in images. They still continue to live (HILLMAN; SHAMDASANI, 2015, p. 12).

In conclusion, Jung made his descent into the underworld and returned, elaborating the material collected in a rich theory of explanations about the psyche. Complex psychology establishes the individual's plunge in search of himself, which is more than a figurative language. The descent to the underworld represents the encounter with ancestry, the home of the dead. ■

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Resumo

A katábasis de C. G. Jung: dos mitos antigos às experiências visionárias modernas

Este artigo buscou revisitar as experiências de katábasis de C.G. Jung, ou, em outras palavras, as experiências de descida ao submundo, ou mundo dos mortos, seguidas pelo retorno ao mundo dos vivos, a anábasis. Em termos psicológicos, essas experiências significam o confronto com o inconsciente e a subsequente ampliação da consciência. Para revisitar as experiências de katábasis de C.G. Jung resgatou,

historicamente, a katábasis (1) na antiguidade clássica através da mitologia grega, (2) no período medieval e moderno, por meio das obras de Dante Alighieri, Emmanuel Swedenborg e William Blake, e, finalmente, (3) na própria vida de Jung, com ênfase na constituição de O Livro Vermelho. As experiências de katábasis foram de vital importância para Jung e culminaram na gênese da psicologia analítica. ■

Palavras-chave: Katábasis, C.G. Jung, O Livro Vermelho, história da psicologia, vida e obra.

Resumen

La catábasis de C. G. Jung: de los mitos antiguos a las experiencias visionarias modernas

Este artículo buscó volver a examinar las experiencias de catábasis de C.G. Jung, o, en otras palabras, las experiencias de descender al inframundo, el mundo de los muertos, seguido por el retorno al mundo de los vivos, la anábasis. En términos psicológicos, estas experiencias suponen la confrontación con el inconsciente y la posterior expansión de la conciencia. Para volver a examinar las experiencias de catábasis de C.G. Jung, fue res-

catada, históricamente, la catábasis (1) en la antigüedad clásica a través de la mitología griega, (2) en el período medieval y moderno, a través de las obras de Dante Alighieri, Emmanuel Swedenborg y William Blake, y (3) finalmente, en la propia vida de Jung, con énfasis en la constitución del Libro Rojo. Las experiencias de catábasis fueron de vital importancia para Jung y culminaron en la génesis de la psicología analítica. ■

Palabras clave: Catábasis, C. G. Jung, El Libro Rojo, historia de la psicología, vida y obra.

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