

## Victor White OP: War and the Narrative of Human Flourishing

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Victor White OP, onetime editor of the Dominican journal *Blackfriars*, is known for his collaboration with Carl Jung, the founder of Analytical Psychology. What is not generally known is how White's perspective on war contributes to the narrative of human flourishing. In his final book, *Soul and Psyche*, White commends the findings of Jung's analytical psychology to the attention of believers and unbelievers because it provides a psychological understanding and a deep appreciation of the healing potential of classical theology as understood by Aquinas.

The legacy of the collaborative work between these two pioneering men lies in the impasse that occurred between them about how evil is understood as a privation of good: *malum est privatio boni*. In working from two different methodologies, the collaboration between Jung and White enabled conflicts in understanding to come to light that otherwise may never have been identified. White's work demonstrates how vital clear critical thinking is to interdisciplinary dialogue. Although he questioned and challenged Jung at length on his interpretation of particular data, his questions and criticisms do not alter Jung's empirical findings that speak to the practical functioning or malfunctioning of religion. If psychological discourse had been grounded in a narrative of human flourishing as comprehensive as that bequeathed to us by White, the general attitude to mental health would likely be very different today. White's rigorous interdisciplinary engagement with the human condition can thus reasonably be argued to be of considerable contemporary significance.

This article will begin by considering why White focussed on Jung in preference to Freud in arguing the case for collaboration between psychology and theology. The subsequent analysis of White's perspective on war will examine White's thoughts on why a moral theology of war presupposes a dogmatic theology of war. The consideration of White's thoughts on war will illustrate his harmony with Jung on the need for each person to look within and face whatever is found. This is a vital component of human flourishing, according to how White understands theology and human psychology.

## Why Jung?

White chose Jung in preference to Freud because ‘for Freud religion is a symptom of psychological disease,’ whereas ‘for Jung the absence of religion is at the root of all adult psychological disease.’<sup>1</sup> Some background is useful to contextualise this statement.

Jung was a colleague and friend of Freud from 1907 to 1912. The relationship deteriorated when Jung began to develop ideas which differed from those of Freud. Jung appreciated Freud’s work on the unconscious, but he came to think there were sufficient indications to suggest that there was far more to it than the personal unconscious, understood as a sort of storage facility for forgotten or denied personal experiences and memories. Jung went on to develop the concept of the collective unconscious, which he summarises thus:

This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.<sup>2</sup>

Although the term ‘archetype’ is often used as if it originated with Jung, he did not invent it. What is specific to Jung is that he used the concept of the archetype to account for psychological phenomena. The uniqueness of Jung’s thinking on the collective unconscious marks his departure from Freud’s. Prior to Freud, the unconscious psyche existed only as a philosophical postulate in the work of Carus and von Hartmann.<sup>3</sup> Freud’s greatest achievement was in empirically demonstrating the existence of an unconscious psyche. He did this by examining dreams as the most important source of data to substantiate the existence of the unconscious.<sup>4</sup> Freud held that pleasurable physical/sexual energy – libido – was the motivational force in human life. Over time, Jung could no longer accept that human motivation was solely sexual, or that the human unconscious was absolutely the product of the individual. Jung thought it was preferable to view human psychic energy – libido – as a dynamic life force of which sexuality was a part, but never the whole.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Victor White, ‘Freud, Jung and God,’ *God and the Unconscious: An Encounter between Psychology and Religion*, (London: The Harvill Press, 1952), pp. 41-59:47.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Volume 9i. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Editors Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler, (hereafter noted as *CW*), (Oxon, Routledge, 1959/1990), paragraph 90.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Gustav Carus, *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul*, Dunquin Series of rare monographs, (Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1846/1989). Eduard Von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, (London: Routledge, 1931/2000).

<sup>4</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, ‘Sigmund Freud,’ *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (London: Fontana, 1989), pp. 169-193:192-3.

<sup>5</sup> Jung, ‘The Role of the Unconscious,’ *Civilisation in Transition*, *CW* 10, 6.

Freud could not entertain such ideas from Jung and dismissed them without serious consideration. The inevitable rift occurred when Jung began to publish his thinking about the libido, which he knew would cost him his friendship with Freud and with most of his friends and acquaintances. Jung recounts the irony of the situation in his autobiography, since it was Freud's thought on the phenomenon of sexuality that had inspired him to research the matter in the first instance.<sup>6</sup>

Jung's prospect of continuing to develop a depth psychology, inclusive of the unconscious aspect of the psyche, faced him with considerable challenges. Since his line of thought was contrary to the mainstream of psychological thinking, he needed to find some sound methodology that could scientifically substantiate his postulates. He ultimately chose what he called an empirical methodology, which he described as follows:

The "reality of the psyche" is my working hypothesis, and my principal activity consists in collecting factual material to describe and explain it. I have set up neither a system nor a general theory, but have merely formulated auxiliary concepts to serve me as tools, as is customary in every branch of science. . . . One should not misconstrue the findings of empiricism as philosophical premises, for they are not obtained by deduction but from clinical and factual material.<sup>7</sup>

Jung found encouragement in looking back to ancient teachings on the soul. He valued 'the ancient view which held that the soul was essentially the life of the body, the life-breath, or a kind of life force.'<sup>8</sup> He intended to test this notion of the soul to see if this could be empirically justified.<sup>9</sup> Jung's empirical methodology was an essential cornerstone of the impasse that occurred with White on how evil is understood. It is vital to appreciate, and to remember throughout, that Jung's empirical methodology was based on actual data from his clinical work with patients. Jung was emphatic that he did not engage in metaphysics. In a letter to White, he wrote:

You accuse me of repudiating the divine Transcendence altogether. That is not quite correct. I merely omit it, since I am unable to prove it. I don't preach, I try to establish psychological facts. I can confirm and prove the interrelation of the God image with other parts of the psyche,

<sup>6</sup> Jung, 'Sigmund Freud,' *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, pp. 169-193:193.

<sup>7</sup> Jung, 'Religion and Psychology: A Reply to Martin Buber,' *The Symbolic Life: Miscellaneous Writings*, CW, 18, 1507, 1510.

<sup>8</sup> Jung, *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, 661-662.

<sup>9</sup> Jung, *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, 662.

but I can go no further without committing the error of metaphysical assertion which is far beyond my scope.<sup>10</sup>

When this point is overlooked, as is often the case, Jung's work is gravely misrepresented. That White understood Jung's empirical standpoint from the beginning was much appreciated by Jung. In Jung's first comprehensive letter to White, dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 1945, he commends White's academic abilities with the following statement:

You have rendered justice to my empirical and practical standpoint throughout. I consider this a very meritorious act, since most of my philosophically or theologically minded readers overlook my empiricism completely.<sup>11</sup>

Jung's praxis is significant on ethical grounds. His is a practical approach that can equip people with the skills to live as psychologically mature and ethical a life as humanly possible. Jung does not defend any psychological theories which he suspects may be harmful to patients:

If I recognize only naturalistic values, and explain everything in physical terms, I shall depreciate, hinder, or even destroy the spiritual development of my patients. And if I hold exclusively to a spiritual interpretation, then I shall misunderstand and do violence to the natural man in his right to exist as a physical being.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever scientific position is favoured the fact remains that Jung's work is significant in that it factors in the moral attitude. Jung and White agreed that psychological treatment that does not consider this aspect is destined to make mistakes.

The moral attitude is a real factor with which the psychologist must reckon if he is not to commit the gravest errors. He must also remember that certain religious convictions not founded on reason are a vital necessity for many people.<sup>13</sup>

Jung's extensive work, which is only briefly outlined here, is a testament to his grave concern about the despiritualisation of humanity. Jung thought, 'our intellect has achieved the most tremendous things, but in the meantime our spiritual indwelling has fallen into disrepair.'<sup>14</sup> Defining psyche as soul allowed him to include historical and religious traditions not taken into account in other psychological

<sup>10</sup> Jung's letter to White dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 1945, Ann Conrad Lammers, Adrian Cunningham and Murray Stein eds., *The Jung-White Letters*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Lammers *et al.*, eds., *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Jung, *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, 678.

<sup>13</sup> Jung, *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW 8, 686.

<sup>14</sup> Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, CW 9i, 31.

theories. The aim was not to devalue scientific developments or the role of the intellect, but to find a methodology that did not disregard what was already known. Jung went so far as to say:

Whenever the spirit of God is excluded from human consideration, an unconscious substitute takes its place. When God is not recognised selfish desires develop, and out of this selfishness comes illness.<sup>15</sup>

Two key points are foundational to Jung's methodology. Firstly, the boundaries of his empirical methodology permit factual psychological data only. Thus, any commentary and analysis must be restricted to things as they appear. Jung had no difficulty with *privatio boni* until it appeared as a problem in his work with one specific patient.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, when he speaks of god, he is referring to the god image.<sup>17</sup> The third point is of vital importance: when Jung is critical of god, he is referring to the god image in the Western psyche.<sup>18</sup>

White was an independent scholar of Jung, who built and maintained close contact with a network of people also interested in Jung.<sup>19</sup> What is particular to Jung's paradigm is that it can rationally accommodate human experience that, to the rational mind, seems irrational. This characteristic is in common with what White particularly liked about Aquinas' work: 'what I find so refreshing is St. Thomas's rationality about the irrational.'<sup>20</sup> White's interest in Jung was theological. He believed that Jung's differences with Freud were seminal in leading to a reevaluation of religion (Christianity in particular) that was more radical than even Jung could see.

Jung's work held a forward-looking viewpoint. In Freudian thinking, the principles of mechanistic cause and effect were thought to be adequate. To Jung, 'the important thing is not the acorn but the oak; the important thing for the patient to know is not what he had been but what he could and should become.'<sup>21</sup> The change in viewpoint

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Victor White, *God and the Unconscious*, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, CW 11, 457.

<sup>17</sup> Lower case 'g' is used deliberately here to underscore this distinction. 'The empirical psychologist *as such* is unconcerned with the affirmation or negation of a metaphysical God; he is concerned only with the 'god-*imago*' and its observable functioning in the psyche.' Victor White, 'The Frontiers of Theology and Psychology,' *Guild of Pastoral Psychology Lecture No. 19*, (1942), p. 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> Clodagh Weldon, 'God on the couch: Teaching Jung's *Answer to Job*,' in Clodagh Weldon & Kelly Bulkeley eds., *Teaching Jung*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 111-127:118-119.

<sup>19</sup> White was later invited by Jung to be a founder member and patron of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, founded on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1948. His name is listed along with fellow patrons: Herbert Read, Wolfgang Pauli, Hans Schaer, Gerhard Frei and others on the inaugural pamphlet.

<sup>20</sup> White's letter to Jung dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 1947, Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> White, 'Freud, Jung and God,' *God and the Unconscious*, pp. 41-59:54.

led White to suggest that religion could be viewed from a totally different standpoint, wherefrom:

It becomes possible to view religion no more as a tolerated but regressive substitute for forbidden incest, but as the fine flower and fruit of psychic energy liberated from its confinement to infantile incestuous channels.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in White's thinking, the distinctiveness of Jung's analytical psychology heralds a return to what is familiar territory for the Christian Church.<sup>23</sup>

Jung's research demonstrated the need in the human psyche for rebirth. This finding gave rise to White's argument, in *Soul and Psyche*, on the need for collaboration between psychology and theology. Since his approach is not that of mainstream psychological intervention, then or now, the theologian is presented with a problem when psychological intervention explicitly excludes the possibility of transformation by grace.<sup>24</sup> White was concerned when psychological analysis and sacramental confession were presumed to be one and the same. He argues that there can never be sufficient grounds to justify disregarding the effects of grace:

There are similarities in both in their mode and in their results, of the healing factors and experiences in analysis with what religious belief holds to be the effects of the operations of divine grace. That they are such in fact we can never have sufficient grounds to affirm with certitude; but neither can we *a priori* deny the possibility.<sup>25</sup>

White's consideration of the common ground between the psychologist and the theologian/priest acknowledges the different frames of reference for the same reality. In addition to his academic contributions, White worked therapeutically with patients at the More Clinic in London, from 1957 to 1959: a voluntary enterprise that took referrals from the Tavistock Clinic to treat patients suffering from psychological difficulties in a Catholic atmosphere. White's clinical experience enabled him to highlight specific areas of concern. One such example is where what is theologically considered sinful is psychologically understood as the symptoms of neurosis. White concludes that it is questionable whether 'widening the split between religion and personal life is either pastorally or therapeutically

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56; White, 'The Frontiers of Theology and Psychology', p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Victor White, 'The Common Ground of Religion and Psychology,' in *Soul and Psyche: An Enquiry into the Relationship of Psychotherapy and Religion*, (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1960), pp. 11-31:16.

<sup>25</sup> White, 'The Analyst and the Confessor,' in *God and the Unconscious*, pp. 163-173:172.

effective in the long run.’<sup>26</sup> Since answers to metaphysical or moral questions lie outside the remit of empirical science, the psychological practitioner cannot be expected to provide them. This dilemma raises questions about the practical difficulty of separating psychological treatment from a narrative of human flourishing.

The responses to this perennial problem, which psychological therapists have yet to fully face, range from ignoring or repressing the difficulty to trying to work it out in lonely isolation, or looking for light from those who specialise in these concerns – professional theologians, philosophers, or ministers of religion. The vulnerability for the patient in this precarious position is that there is a danger of being ‘cut down to the measure of the psychologist’s yardstick, perhaps his defence mechanisms.’<sup>27</sup>

White was accused by Agostino Gemelli, the editor of *Vita e Pensiero*, of being ‘not very watchful of orthodoxy,’ and advised ‘that there was no need to seek support from psychology.’<sup>28</sup> White replied publicly to his critic, in September 1957, as a contributor at the International Catholic Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology in Madrid. His paper was a considered analysis on the topic of ‘Dogma and Mental Health’, wherein he said:

In an article in *Vita e Pensiero* our President of Honour has rebuked me for asserting that these rediscoveries of depth-psychology open up “enormous possibilities for mutual aid and enrichment” to both professions. Such an assertion would indeed be outrageous if it were taken in the sense (which the context of the incriminated passage was at some pains to repudiate) that empirical psychology could add one jot to the faith. Nor is it to be supposed that the most precise theological exposition will cure a chronic neurosis, however much it may be embedded in heretical notions. But, for my part, I cannot doubt that depth-psychology, and especially the work of C. G. Jung, can immensely aid and enrich a theologian’s work by offering him a means whereby he may better understand - not indeed the intrinsic truth, authority or content of dogma - but its relevance to the needs of the human soul.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> White, ‘The Common Ground of Religion and Psychology,’ *Soul and Psyche*, pp. 11-31:17.

<sup>27</sup> From White’s undated and unpublished letter to Michael Fordham, *circa* 1958. VW Papers: 213-215.

<sup>28</sup> Adrian Cunningham, ‘Victor White, A Memoir,’ in Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, pp. 307-334:326-327.

<sup>29</sup> Victor White, ‘Dogma and Mental Health,’ *Conducta religiosa y salud mental*, VII congresso interacional de psicoterapia y psicologia clinica, Madrid, 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> September 1957. (Barcelona: Antibioticos, S.A. 1959), p. 100. The article subsequently appeared in *Life of the Spirit*, Vol. XII, No. 142, and (April 1958), pp. 436-442.

Here, White once again asserts the value of interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology and theology – a stance which arguably has considerable contemporary significance.

One of White's Jungian contacts, Gerhard Adler, encouraged him to write to Jung.<sup>30</sup> White's initial letter, of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1945, enclosed three of his key published papers about Jung's analytical psychology, written from a Catholic point of view.<sup>31</sup> He was interested to know whether he had accurately understood Jung's work and asked if he (Jung) was willing to read his published articles about analytical psychology and to offer his comments.<sup>32</sup> Jung was delighted to receive White's letter and it emerged that he had, for some time, been seeking to collaborate with a Catholic theologian who understood his work. In White, he found both.

Jung and White lived through both world wars and shared a great concern and interest in contributing somewhat towards the future narrative of human flourishing. Although grounded in diverse cultures and disciplines, they were both enthusiastic about the prospect of collaborating on a project aimed at establishing the common ground between psychology and theology – disciplines they mutually respected for the value they contributed to humanity. Against this backdrop, there is possibly no perspective more challenging than that of war from which to consider the human condition.

### White's Perspective on War

The onset of World War II reminded White of the declaration of World War I in July 1914. White's teenage experience of the Anglican Church is characterised by the dissemination of World War I propaganda, and he later became one of the few clerical voices on the morality of war.<sup>33</sup> In his theology, the works of Aquinas are his main point of reference and he retrospectively writes:

<sup>30</sup> White went to Adler for personal analysis after he finished a period of analysis with John Layard. Adler and White met at Layard's Jungian society and became good friends, sharing an interest in philosophy, psychology and theology. See Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 12, n. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> The four following essays were enclosed with the letter: 'The Frontiers of Theology and Psychology', 'St. Thomas Aquinas and Jung's Psychology' (1944), 'Psychotherapy and Ethics,' and a 'Postscript' to the latter (both 1945). Apart from the one on Aquinas, all the articles were later republished as chapters in White's first book, *God and the Unconscious* (1952), to which Jung wrote the foreword. See letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1942, Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> White's close friend and colleague, Fr. Gerald Vann OP, was another. He published *Morality and War* in 1939 and various articles in *Blackfriars*.



What could be more challenging than to be a person in the midst of impersonality? To be creative in the midst of destruction? To keep a mind of one's own in the midst of propaganda? To keep true in the midst of lies? To keep one's heart warm in the midst of cold steel and cold calculation? To keep cool in the heat of passion? To keep confident in the midst of cynicism? To be peace-loving in the midst of conflict? To be Christ like in the midst of devilry?<sup>34</sup>

White looks to Christianity for a framework to contain all aspects of the human condition, especially the depth of fear that can prevail amidst the darkness and violence of war.

### The Morality of War: The Christian Meta-narrative

The Christian way of life is, according to White, a call to live the teaching of Christ. The theoretical principles for thinking about the morality of war call firstly for a recall to reason. It is White's crucial insistence that the recourse to reason be used together with the resources that come from sacred scripture and Christian Revelation. Against that backdrop, White's analysis of the specific call of a Christian suggests that:

All that reason can show to be wrong for me as a man is wrong for me as a Christian; but not all that is legitimate for me in accordance with the general principles of natural ethics is legitimate for me in view of my specific vocation as a Christian.<sup>35</sup>

Natural law on its own, without divine revelation, is seen by White as an imperfect moral guide because it is based on the limited capacity of the human mind. The limitations of natural law constitute, in White's mind, a reasonable argument in favour of the need for God as teacher.<sup>36</sup> This is not to suggest that natural law is unimportant. Quite the contrary: since human law stems from natural law, White considered that natural law is an important vehicle to enable the mind of God to be reflected in civil law.

The human capacity for evil and its devastating effects concerned White. Of particular concern to him in the aftermath of the World War II was how people are so easily seduced by illusions and arguments that are contrary to truth. 'The argument from historical precedent is

<sup>34</sup> Victor White, *The Morality of War*, (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1949), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Victor White, 'War and rumours of War,' *Blackfriars*, 20:231, (June 1939), pp. 403-413:403.

<sup>36</sup> Victor White, 'Word of God and Natural Law,' in *God the Unknown*, (London: The Harvill Press, 1956), pp. 116-132:129.

a perilous one unless conducted with logical rigour.<sup>37</sup> Throughout his teaching, White tries to promote an attitude of openness towards emerging trends. This is not to suggest a disposition of blind acceptance, but a willingness to apply reason and to critically engage with the facts of any issue.<sup>38</sup> White uses the precarious situation of war to convey his concern for humanity by an analysis and a synthesis of emerging wartime trends against the Christian narrative.

White's stance on war calls for a recall to reason in tandem with an understanding of the specific call of a Christian. His thinking draws on Christian ethical principles which he believes are fundamental to any reasonable deliberation. White argued, in 1935, 'that the ethical aspect of Italy's attack on Abyssinia has received insufficient attention,' and asked, 'what is to be said of the conflict in the light of Catholic teaching?'<sup>39</sup> He answered his own question by concluding that it was a, 'manifestly unjust war' on the part of Italy, 'and an unjust war is wholesale organised murder.'<sup>40</sup>

Arriving at such a conclusion provided little ease for White's frustration. The recall to reason which he advocated was notably absent in the general discourse of the time. White's anxiety was explicit, as seen from the following remark: 'the spectacle of thousands of Catholics carried away by mass hysteria with enthusiasm for this undertaking is a matter of the gravest anxiety.'<sup>41</sup>

White was hopeful that Catholics might show some sanity by following Pope Benedict XV in the 'magnificent lead' he set in 'recalling a mad world to a sense of sanity and justice.'<sup>42</sup> The Anglican sermons and Church responses to war that White heard during his formative years did not amount, in his view, to what deserved to be considered as a serious Christian response:

The gravity of the scandal lay, not only in the fact that the 'Churches' were led by the current of popular emotion and hysteria instead of resisting and directing it, but that they excelled all others in the propagation of self-righteous cant . . . Christians had succumbed to propaganda instead of bearing witness to the truth.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Victor White, 'War and the Early Church,' *Blackfriars*, 20:234, (September 1939), pp. 643-654:643. The basis for White's thinking here cautions against taking scripture literally.

<sup>38</sup> Here we see White's encouragement to nurture the cardinal intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, or *prudentia* as understood in the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas.

<sup>39</sup> Victor White, 'The Case for Italy,' *Blackfriars*, 16:188, (November 1935), pp. 807-811:807.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 811.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 811.

<sup>42</sup> White, 'War and the Early Church,' p. 643; White, 'Wars and Rumours of War,' p. 404.

<sup>43</sup> Victor White, 'Wars and Rumours of War,' p. 405.

The ‘national and imperial Christianity’ of the Anglican tradition in which White was brought up had no place, he thought, in Catholicism.<sup>44</sup> The absence of evidence of Christian ethical principles in daily life during wartime infuriated him and motivated him to speak out:

CATHOLIC ATROCITY-PROPAGANDA. The vilest feature of modern warfare – viler than poison-gas which kills only the body – is the *spiritual* poisoning of the masses.<sup>45</sup>

White’s methodology would seem to show that ethical thinking is the only way to navigate one’s passage towards truth, particularly when confronted with a tide of propaganda. If a case for peace is made by careful, reasoned and ethical deliberation based on the facts, the outcome is seen as testament to the life and challenge of a Christian. White’s stance presents an altogether different approach from that of simply donning the mantle of ‘pacifist’ or ‘conscientious objector’ in response to propaganda, generated by mass hysteria. The use of the human gift of reason is as vital in the midst of war as at any other time.

On analysing the circumstances of war, White thinks that the complex moral choice is sometimes between evils.<sup>46</sup> When faced with rumours of the prospect of World War II, White reflects deeply about what happened in earlier times, and asks:

What is the truth? How are we to judge, with *Christian* eyes the catastrophic events which threaten us today? We must first decide what war *is* and how it is and how it is to be regarded with *Christian* eyes. A moral theology of war presupposes a dogmatic theology of war.<sup>47</sup>

### ‘A Moral Theology of War Presupposes a Dogmatic Theology of War’

White speaks about the link between dogma and faith: ‘Dogmas – doctrinal statements – are necessary because knowledge of God is necessary, and that such knowledge can be conveyed to us only by words.’<sup>48</sup> Dogma is the way essential truth is conveyed in a form that

<sup>44</sup> Phrase used by Canon Vernon F. Storr, cited in *ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>45</sup> Victor White as Penguin, ‘Extracts and Comments,’ *Blackfriars*, 17:188 (September 1936), pp. 704-712:704. White wrote short political articles in *Blackfriars* under the pseudonym ‘Penguin’ from 1935-1939, see Cunningham, ‘Victor White: A Memoir,’ p. 311.

<sup>46</sup> White, ‘The Case for Italy,’ p. 807, 810.

<sup>47</sup> White, ‘Wars and Rumours of War,’ p. 407.

<sup>48</sup> Victor White, ‘Plain Talks of Fundamentals V – The Growth of Dogma,’ *Blackfriars*, 18:205, (April, 1937), pp. 273-278:273.

the human mind can digest. The complexities of life are meaningless and unintelligible unless we know something of our destiny. Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, the more we know God, the more we can know ourselves.

Notwithstanding the fact that God is unknown, White tells us how the knowledge that we do have, although imperfect in nature, may lead us to truth.<sup>49</sup> He presumes that a dogmatic theology of war underpins a moral theology of war. How, then, does he specifically define a dogmatic theology of war? Troubled at the prospect of a repeat of the Christian militarism he saw during World War I, he attempts to articulate a dogmatic method to help Christians to determine the truth of anything claiming to be a genuine Christian attitude to war. The litmus test, according to him, must reflect fundamental Christian principles and be capable of answering:

What in the light of divine revelation and divine teaching is the meaning of war in general? For to ask, 'What is to be the Christian's view of a war?' is to ask 'What is God's view of a war?'<sup>50</sup>

The search for answers to these questions ultimately leads the Christian to the teachings of God in Scripture, wherein are found doctrinal formulas, God's message to humanity.<sup>51</sup> Discerning the truth of God's message from Scripture presents a further challenge: the misuse of the Bible. White cautions that:

We shall search in vain in the Scripture for any consistent philosophy or ethic at all and find very little concern for the 'ethics of a just war.'<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the just war concept must be understood against the human and historical context that gave rise to it. The truth White is directing Christians to seek is one that is attainable only by God's authority.<sup>53</sup> It would seem that White is leading us to the conclusion that a dogmatic theology of war is no different from dogmatic theology *per se*. There are no special circumstances or instructions relating to war. God is not, in fact, sending us any specific message about war other than to assent to God because God has spoken. To this end, the distinction between what humans, lay or clerical, have been known to proclaim and what is theologically sound is paramount:

<sup>49</sup> White, 'The Unknown God,' in *God the Unknown*, pp. 16-25.

<sup>50</sup> White, 'Wars and Rumours of War,' p. 406.

<sup>51</sup> Victor White as O.P., 'Plain Talks of Fundamentals III – Revelation,' *Blackfriars*, 17:200, (November 1936), pp. 837-842:840.

<sup>52</sup> White, 'Wars and Rumours of War,' p. 407.

<sup>53</sup> Victor White, 'Plain Talks of Fundamentals IV – Faith,' *Blackfriars*, 18:202, (January 1937), pp. 34-41:38, 40.

Can we speak of a Catholic doctrine regarding Peace and War? Honesty compels you to distinguish the Church - which we say is a supernatural entity, at once spiritual and visible, in direct physical continuity with Jesus Christ - from Christians lay or clerical, who mix up the doctrine of the Church with a whole heap of passions, prejudices, and stupidities which is the common lot of man. Christians, Catholics not excepted, are accustomed to talk all sorts of nonsense, even about Christianity itself. If you want to know what that teaching is, you will not find it in the discordant voices of those with nationalistic or pacifistic passions.<sup>54</sup>

Critical of the Church's stance on war, White is noted as being a pacifist. Yet, to call White a pacifist appears to miss the trajectory of his thought, deliberation and method.

It is clear from White's *corpus* that he was not one to subscribe to anything without careful and reasoned analysis. He thought that since the nature of war had changed so dramatically, since the just war concept came into being, that the same logic no longer applied. Against the backdrop of the Catholic Church, that apparently endorsed the just war tradition without question, his stance could be interpreted as unorthodox.

The presumption that White was a pacifist seems to have taken root simply because he questioned the approach to war. Although he was in contact with pacifists, and attended meetings of the *Pax* Association, it is inaccurate to infer his agreement with pacifist views, as seen from his personal correspondence wherein he states, 'I am not a pacifist... but some of my difficulties have been regarding the Catholic pacifists, and the various machinations to prevent them from stating their case.'<sup>55</sup>

White's experience and reflections on wartime seem to suggest it is incorrect to presume that being in favour of peace and being a pacifist are one and the same thing. He became concerned when Church support for the just war was interpreted by churchgoers to mean that those who disagreed must leave the Church. It seems that the conscientious objector stance was likewise not ecclesiastically supported. White was never in favour of any stance on any topic that required one to follow others blindly. In line with Catholic teaching, he was of the view that each person must make an informed choice on whatever matter confronts them, and was vehement that nobody should be penalised for so doing.<sup>56</sup>

White's letter, published in *The Catholic Herald* on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1939, entitled 'Catholics and War: The Principles Involved,' generated a significant response. He wrote about what he considered was the,

<sup>54</sup> Victor White as Penguin, 'Extracts and Comments,' *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> Cunningham, 'Victor White, A Memoir,' in Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, pp. 307-334:312.

<sup>56</sup> White, 'Wars and Rumours of War,' p. 406.

‘minimum Catholic position,’ concerning ‘the decision of free men to do *what is objectively the right thing to do*.’<sup>57</sup> In the same issue, *The Catholic Herald* devoted a lengthy editorial to White’s letter, entitled, ‘Catholic co-operation in concrete war, A Letter from Fr. Victor White O.P., Ecclesiastical Authority and the Catholic conscience.’ The last paragraph states the following:

We trust that the publication of Fr. White’s letter and this commentary may play some part in the formation of the Catholic mind which may have to express itself authoritatively at some future date through the decisions of those who derive their right to speak from the authority of Christ and His Church.<sup>58</sup>

The volume of letters received by the newspaper was such that the editor wrote to White requesting him to reply to the many comments and questions in one letter.<sup>59</sup> White’s reply referred readers to *Black-friars*, in which he proposed to continue the debate.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the letter in question, White declared it incorrect to interpret his stance as that of his fellow Dominicans:

May I add that in submitting these views to your consideration and that of your readers, I must not be understood in any way to implicate any of my fellow Dominicans, still less the Order as a whole.<sup>61</sup>

White’s argument, that ‘a moral theology of war presupposes a dogmatic theology of war,’ necessitates an understanding of the Christian theological narrative of human flourishing. The process by which the dynamic transformative potential of grace functions is described by him thus:

Grace perfects nature, indeed; justification effects an ontological transformation in the sense that it re-establishes man’s existential relationship with God, in whom and in whose call to divine life is alone to be found the ultimate and all-pervading meaning of human existence.<sup>62</sup>

The resulting emancipation of the human person is not intended for personal gain, but for the greater good, as White recounts:

<sup>57</sup> The quotation is taken from White’s letter to *The Catholic Herald*, issue of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1939. Italics are White’s.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> As seen in unpublished correspondence to Victor White from Michael de la Bedoyere, editor of *The Catholic Herald*, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1939.

<sup>60</sup> White, ‘War and rumours of War,’ pp. 403-413, and ‘War and the Early Church,’ pp. 643-654.

<sup>61</sup> *The Catholic Herald*, issue of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1939, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Victor White, ‘Western and Eastern Theology of Grace and Nature,’ in *God the Unknown*, pp. 145-153:148.

Christianity revealed that a human being was something more than a *homo politicus* or a *homo economicus*; that human destiny was something higher than temporal and civil well-being.<sup>63</sup>

Tracing White's engagement with the morality of war in the external world, we meet darkness and violence and various related human struggles. In parallel, there is a particular thread of thought about which White appears to be emphatic. He argues that to live well, the human person needs to be supported and encouraged to look deeper than the surface layer of the personality, to discover the depth of what it is to be human. This involves confronting whatever we tend to shy away from in order to uncover the truth about what motivates us. The first step in addressing violence, as we understand his thinking, is to face the brutality in ourselves, without acting in a way that allows the brutality to manifest itself in any overt or covert way.

Against the backdrop of the brutality of World War II, White delves further into human psychological functioning to learn what practically needs to take place to support humanity on this inner journey towards wholeness, as exemplified in the Christian narrative. In this context, Jung's work continues to provide a method to enable those who are willing to confront inner material. It is important to remember here that Jung's method is a *praxis* and not a theory.

Jung was likewise deeply concerned for the well-being of humanity prior to World War II and in its aftermath. He was emphatic that it is a moral issue to challenge any sort of denial of evil because, psychologically speaking, to lose consciousness of evil is to strengthen its power.

*The future of mankind very much depends upon recognition of the shadow. Evil is psychologically speaking – terribly real. It is a fatal mistake to diminish its power and reality even merely metaphysically.*<sup>64</sup>

Investigating the problem of evil in *Aion*, Jung met with the difficulty of reconciling evil with psychological data.<sup>65</sup> In this context Jung's methodology must be borne in mind. His intention is to speak only of psychological data which he clarifies thus: 'my criticism of the *privatio boni* holds only so far as psychological experience goes.'<sup>66</sup> Jung does not suggest that this difficult matter rests here. Quite the contrary: his is but one significant voice in the debate about the problem of evil. Thus, Jung says that *Aion*, 'far from being

<sup>63</sup> Victor White, 'The Christian Revolution,' *Blackfriars*, 15:167 (February 1934), pp. 138-149:142.

<sup>64</sup> Jung's letter to White dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1949. Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 143.

<sup>65</sup> Cunningham, editorial note, in Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 295, n. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, CW 9ii, 98.

complete, is a mere sketch showing how certain Christian ideas look when observed from the standpoint of psychological experience.<sup>67</sup>

The essence of White's argument is not just to commend the value of Aristotle and Aquinas' work, but to highlight that what they have to offer analytical psychology is far greater. White suggests: 'their contribution, as I see it, is to supplement and to complement, rather than to supplant, modern psychological findings and methods.'<sup>68</sup>

During their lifetime, Jung and White did not build a satisfactory bridge between their respective positions on evil. It is reasonable to regard this not as a failure, but as the work of two pioneers who are best seen to have challenged each other, from their respective areas of scholarship, on the need to recognise, understand, and respect the wholeness of the human person in psychological treatment – a challenge which is of extraordinary relevance in today's world (2018).

The question has been raised as to whether someone else could pick up the threads and finish the work that Jung and White started.<sup>69</sup> When it comes to issues relating to the human person, it is possibly misleading to speak of a finishing point.<sup>70</sup> To think in terms of continued dialogue and engagement is preferable. This suggestion mirrors how White approached Aquinas' theology: as an ongoing dynamic process of engagement intended 'to do for our age what Thomas did for his.'<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

Reading the correspondence between Jung and White, one could reasonably assume that the disagreement on evil emerged as part of their dialogue. That is not in fact the case. White had had concerns about aspects of Jung's work as early as December 1940.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, he thought Jung had been mistaken about evil years before he first

<sup>67</sup> C. G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, CW 9ii, 429.

<sup>68</sup> Victor White, 'Aristotle, Aquinas and Man,' Chapter VI, *God and the Unconscious*, pp. 100-125:103-104.

<sup>69</sup> Ann Conrad Lammers, 'Bridge, Amalgam, Paper Clip: A Brief Typology,' in Murray Stein & Raya A. Jones eds., *Cultures and Identities in Transition: Jungian Perspectives* (Sussex: Routledge, 2010), pp. 184-189:184.

<sup>70</sup> 'Jung considered his writings as experimental essays that were pushing his imaginative thinking ever further and in new directions, rather than expressing truths or declaring correct doctrines... a point which spelled disappointment to some of his would-be disciples. He would not play the role of pope.' Murray Stein, 'Teaching Jung in an Analytical Psychology Institute,' in Clodagh Weldon & Kelly Bulkeley eds., *Teaching Jung*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 61-72:66.

<sup>71</sup> Victor White, 'Scholasticism,' in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. by E. C. Messenger, Pamphlet No. R. 126 (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1934), p. 31.

<sup>72</sup> Cited from Cunningham's manuscript of VW papers in Adrian Cunningham, 'Victor White, John Layard, and C.G. Jung,' *Harvest*, 38, 1992, pp. 44-57:50.



contacted him, as is evident from the following passage, written by White in June 1942:

The mistake would seem to be largely due to a failure to grasp the real significance of the definition of evil, found in many Christian philosophers, as the “privation of good”. So far from implying, as Jung seems to suppose, a denial of the reality of evil, it precisely supposes it, and confirms his own conception of the opposites.<sup>73</sup>

White’s persistence in trying to establish a common understanding with Jung about evil was motivated by his desire to authoritatively commend Jung’s psychology to the Catholic world.<sup>74</sup> Although unsuccessful in this regard, he could say the following to Jung a fortnight before he died, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1960:

I am more convinced than ever of the importance of your pioneer work for humanity, even for those who cannot agree with every word you say but have to take part in the ‘dialectic discussion’ with you.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, at the end of his life, after twenty years of intense involvement with Jung’s work (many of which were accompanied by a close personal friendship with Jung), White remained steadfast about the value of Jung’s work for humanity. In analysing a dream, he wrote that: ‘it all suggests that there is a far deeper harmony between C.G. and myself, beyond our differences about “*privatio boni*”’<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-57:49. Elsewhere Cunningham notes that ‘two points are relevant: the very early date at which White had hit on a major problem in a rapprochement between analytical psychology and theology which became pivotal in his later relation to Jung, and rather puzzlingly, why he dropped this section after its first presentation.’ Cunningham, ‘Victor White, A Memoir,’ p. 318.

<sup>74</sup> At times for White Jung’s stance on evil was ‘particularly embarrassing to a Catholic theologian, who has made it his business to try and correlate theological and psychological findings and to commend Jungian psychology to the serious attention of his colleagues.’ Victor White, ‘Good and Evil,’ *Harvest*, 12 (London: Analytical Psychology Club, 1966), pp. 16-34:23.

<sup>75</sup> Victor White’s last letter to Jung dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 1960, Lammers *et al.*, *The Jung-White Letters*, p. 291.

<sup>76</sup> Extract from White’s letter from to Jung dated 4<sup>th</sup> May 1950, in *ibid.*, p. 151.

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