

ARAS

The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism



Dear Professors, Students, and all others interested in symbolic imagery,

This is an invitation to participate in the ARAS Image and Cultural Complex Research Project

Every day we are bombarded with potent symbolic images. Artists often create or draw upon images that reflect the social, political, and religious conflicts of their times--and these conflicts are often the expression of cultural complexes in the collective psyche. [Click here](#) for explanation of the cultural complex concept.

This research project invites professors and students of art, art history, history, psychology and other related disciplines to contribute their research projects on symbolic imagery related to cultural complexes to ARAS Online (submit to info@aras.org). Submissions will be added to our [ARAS Image and Cultural Complex research site](#) on ARAS Online. Professors might consider building such a research project into their curriculum and students might consider submitting such a project for course credit.

Stunning examples of the relationship between symbolic imagery and cultural complexes can be found in C.G. Jung's recently published *The Red Book* which was written at a time of Jung's own personal and professional crisis in the early 1900's. One of the more compelling parts of that crisis was the fact that Jung was in great fear for his own mental health and the possible eruption of a psychosis as signaled by his unbidden, waking visions of blood flowing over much of Europe. Jung later remarked that he greeted the outbreak of World War One with some relief in that it indicated his visions were more about destructive forces in the collective psyche than the threat of a personal psychosis. Jung's relief at realizing that his own psyche had been invaded by material from the cultural and archetypal level of the collective psyche indicates an important area of concern for ARAS. The interpenetration of personal, cultural, and archetypal material often makes it difficult to differentiate what is personal, what is cultural, and what is archetypal.

The ARAS Image and Cultural Complex Research Project is particularly focused on the cultural or social level of the psyche and how it expresses itself in symbolic imagery. There is no doubt that the imagery of the collective psyche often provides the conscious and unconscious material of artists. Such imagery may have archetypal roots, but it takes a good deal of its psychic charge from activated complexes at the level of the cultural

psyche.

The goal of this research project is to encourage original commentary about symbolic imagery related to cultural complexes from students and professors of multiple disciplines. Examples of such research can be found here: "[American Progress](#)" and here: "[The Image of the Crucifixion: An Exploration of the Relationship of Jewish Artists to the Passion of Christ](#)".

This research project is intended to stimulate students and professors alike to explore images in the context of cultural conflict that speak deeply and intuitively to the symbolic imagination. We encourage you to contact us with questions. We also encourage you to submit your research to us and we will consider each submission for inclusion in the ARAS Online site. Please send questions and submissions to us at info@aras.org.

Thomas Singer, M.D.

For the ARAS Image and Cultural Complex Research Project