Edward Edinger begins his masterful elucidation of Jung's *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (1959/1978) by saying that “Jung's magnitude” vastly surpasses our own and “to read Jung successfully we must begin by accepting our own littleness” (1995, p.11). So, in my little way, I will attempt a little response to a little bite of the complex journey I found myself taking in reading Edinger's *The Aion Lectures*.

An aspect of Edinger’s exploration of the Self in Jung’s *Aion* that I am particularly drawn to is the concept of “magnetic attraction” especially since sandplay therapy begins with the magnetic attraction that sand, water and certain figures might hold for someone engaging in a process Dora Kalff calls “the path to the goal of the realization of the Self” (2003, p.9). One of the ways Jung amplifies “magnetic attraction” is through a deep and broad study of symbols found in original texts from philosophy, religion, alchemy, historical myths, etc. An aspect of Jung’s thesis, based on these researches, seems to be that there are a number of symbolic images connected by a kind of magnetic attraction.
Regarding this connection, Jung refers to symbolic images of the Christian religion as exponents of the human psyche and its development. In amplifying Jung’s thoughts, Edinger refers to Tertullian’s assertion that humans are like fish in the sea – “We, little fishes... are born in water [and don't have] safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water” (Edinger, 1995, p.77). So as fish, we humans cannot yet be “water carriers,” because, as Edinger makes clear, that would require “a totally different relation to the psyche” (p.77). It is this “very different relation to the psyche” to which Jung points in Aion, giving Edinger the inspiration to assert that “Jung is the last fish and the first water carrier” (p.77); in other words, Jung is the first person known to step outside the experience of being water-bound, and into the work of containing and carrying the very substance and sustenance of human existence.
Edinger then illuminates Jung’s thesis in the suggestion that we are to eat the fish! The fish that is also human? Yes, as it turns out, eating the fish that is also human is not unlike Jesus, also named Ichthys/fish, insisting that his disciples eat his body, represented by the bread eaten at the last supper. Jung asserts that, known as “the fish drawn from the deep, [Jesus has] a secret connection with Leviathan: he is the bait with which Leviathan is lured and caught [so] Leviathan... like the Ichthys, is eucharistic food” (Jung, 1959/1978, par.185). Since Leviathan (sea monster or sea serpent) is considered the lowliest of the low, we are then also eating the “dirty” and “filthy thing... in the eucharistic meal” (Edinger, 1995, p.102). Both Edinger and Jung realized this would be a shocking connection, but it does seem that Jung is suggesting Jesus represents the “good fish” we ingest, which is the magnetic attraction that lures the Leviathan – the split off, primitive infantile or traumatized psyche – for assimilation into consciousness. For a little bite of a little fish from the deep, that is connected magnetically to a big, filthy serpent, this is most certainly a big bite to chew, let alone digest. It gives one a respectful sense of the paradoxical enormity of the archetypal Self as reflected in these images and rites.

In this series of lectures, Edinger (1995) becomes a guide, leading the reader toward sensing the immensity of the Self and knowing the significance of catching the human in our nature and digesting it in an analytic or sandplay process, to which Jung has conferred the sacredness of the eucharistic meal. My take is that central in this process is the magnetic element in our attraction to a relationship with the Self and the symbols that lead us to a reconnection with the possibility of being wholly ourselves. Edinger wrote that we must develop “the capacity to contain the psyche, rather than be contained by it... [such that] the individual becomes a conscious carrier and dispenser of the psyche” (p.193)— a “water carrier.” It seems Jung and Edinger are reaching out to those of us willing to go fishing for our own human nature in the depths of the unconscious and then carry our discoveries in an ever-increasing knowledge of our own human being.

REFERENCES
About the author

LESLEJOHNES, MEd, LMFT, CST-T, maintains a fulltime private practice in Bellevue, Washington, where she works with children, adolescents and their families, as well as individual adults, couples, and adult psychotherapy groups. An STA (Sandplay Therapists of America) & ISST (International Society for Sandplay Therapy) teaching member and AAMFT Approved Supervisor, she works with interns, associates and therapists interested in earning state licensure as well as STA Sandplay Practitioners and STA Associates interested in expanding their knowledge, experience and clinical practice of sandplay therapy. She is co-founder of Northwest Sandplay Therapists, currently serves on the STI committee, has served on the board of the Jungian Psychotherapists Association in Seattle, Washington, and has served STA as co-chair for the STA 2014 National Conference, The Spirit of Story in Sandplay. She has written for The Alliance Forum magazine in Seattle and for the Journal of Sandplay Therapy (JST). CORRESPONDENCE: leslie@lesliejohannes.com

THE AION LECTURES BY EDWARD EDINGER

A Reflection by Leslie Johannes

Seattle, Washington, USA

KEY WORDS: Jung, Edinger, Aion Lectures, Self, Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self, Dora Kalff, symbolic image, “magnetic attraction,” capacity to contain.

ABSTRACT: Leslie Johannes reflects on the Aion Lectures: Exploring the Self in C.G. Jung’s Aion by Edward Edinger.
About the artist

SHERYL HUMPHREY, is a painter and writer in Staten Island, NY. She did two years’ undergraduate study at Yale University, received her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, was awarded The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Graduate Fellowship in Painting in 1982, and earned her MFA degree at Brooklyn College in 1998. She has exhibited extensively in New York and across the US. Her paintings are included in many public, private, and corporate collections, including Prudential Insurance, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and the Williamsburg Art & Historical Center in Brooklyn. The artist says of her work: “My paintings are representations of powerful forces that I sense within myself, in others, and in the world around me. I sometimes think of these paintings as portraits of the spirits of Nature; they reflect my visions of anthropomorphized energies at work in the universe. Herbalism, alchemy, folklore, and mythology, in conjunction with close contact with Nature in my garden, are sources for the subjects of my paintings.” Ms. Humphrey is the author of The Haunted Garden: Death and Transfiguration in the Folklore of Plants (2012), available at http://www.etsy.com/listing/118819081/. Ghosts and gardens also figure in her writings, which have been included in anthologies published by Egaeus Press. See more of her work at http://sherylhumphrey.tumblr.com/  

CORRESPONDENCE: brainiacbooks@gmail.com.