Individuation: The Jungian Process of Spiritual Growth

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There has always been an interest in society worldwide to understand more clearly the definition of the concept of spirituality. In today’s materialistic society adults are often engaged and involved in finding a meaning and purpose in their lives. It is my intention in this book chapter to develop a conceptual framework for understanding and differentiating the concept of spirituality and Jungian psychology. This chapter focuses on the definition of spirituality, spiritual problems of modern human being and then finding the salvation through Jungian psychology. A review of the research has been done in the area of Jungian psychology, mainly taking the audience through the concept of Archetypes and linking it with the ultimate healing process of individuation. The author concludes it by inviting the readers to find a deeper meaning by integrating the spiritual self with the process of individuation. It is my contention that individuals at any stage of their life are able to find a meaning and purpose in their lives. This chapter will relate spirituality to transformative understanding of one’s self.

Psychological Perspectives of Spiritual Development

Spirituality is a word used in various contexts that means different things for different people at different times in different
cultures. Although, expressed through religions, art, nature and the built environment for centuries, recent expressions of spirituality have become more varied and diffused. This is reflected in the range of vocabulary used to describe spirituality. Some of the more common themes in the literature describe it using one or more of the following elements:

- a sense of purpose (Hassed, 2000)
- a sense of ‘connectedness’ – to self, others, nature, ‘God’ or Other (Hassed, 2000)
- a quest for wholeness (Humphreys, 2000)
- a search for hope or harmony (Mc Sherry, 2000)
- a belief in a higher being or beings (Hassed, 2000)
- some level of transcendence, or the sense that there is more to life than the material
- or practical (Oldnall, 1996), and
- those activities that give meaning and value to people’s lives.

Underlying many of those themes is an assumption that an intrinsic (often sub-conscious) human activity is one of trying to make sense of the world around us and of our meaning and place within it, (O’Reilly, 2004; Powell, 2002; West, 2005) In this context, “spirituality” becomes the vehicle through which that meaning is sought, and can vary according to age, gender, culture, political ideology, physical or mental health and myriad other factors. Swinton (2001) recognizes that spirituality has broadened in meaning into “a more diffuse human need that can be met quite apart from institutionalized religious structures”. He identifies it as the outward expression of the inner workings of the human spirit.

According to Swinton, “Spirituality is that aspect of human existence that gives it its ‘humanness’. It concerns the structures of significance that give meaning and direction to a person’s life and helps them deal with the vicissitudes of existence. As such, it includes such vital dimensions as the quest for meaning, purpose, self transcending knowledge, meaningful relationships, love and commitment, as well as [for some] a sense of the Holy amongst...
us” (Swinton & Pattison, 2001). Swinton argues that spirituality is an intra-, inter- and transpersonal experience that is shaped and directed by the experiences of individuals and of the communities in which they live out their lives. In other words, if we go into depth, we will notice that there are self, group and transcendent elements linked to spirituality. And in today’s world, spirituality is that driving force, through which human beings tries to attain self realization and also self-actualization.

The spiritual problem of modern man is one of those questions, which belong so intimately to the present, in which we are living that we cannot judge of them fully. …It must be clearly understood that the mere fact of living in the present does not make a man modern, for in that case everyone at present alive would be so. He alone is modern who is fully conscious of the present….Psychic life always found expression in a meta physical system of some sort. But, the conscious modern man despite his /her strenuous and dogged efforts to do so, can no longer refrain from acknowledging the might of psychic force. This distinguishes our time from all others. …This “Psychological” interest of the present time shows that man expects something from psychic life which he has not received from the outer world: something which our religions, doubtless out to contain, but no longer do contain-a least for the modern man (Jung, 1933). The spiritual problem of modern man is one of those questions which are so much a part of the age we live in that we cannot see them in the proper perspective. We, human beings tends to get so much involved in our daily grind that it becomes difficult to detach ourselves and take a re look at the psyche.

Modern man is an entirely new phenomenon; a modern problem is one which has just arisen and whose answer still lies in the future…..It must be clearly understood that the mere fact of living in the present does not make a man modern, for in that case everyone at present alive would be so. He alone is modern, who is fully conscious of the present…Modern man has seen how beneficial are science, technology and organization, but also how catastrophic they can be….The rapid and worldwide growth of a
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Psychological interest over the last two decades shows unmistakably that modern man is turning his attention from outward material things to his own inner processes… The psychological interest of the present time is an indication that modern man expects something from the psyche which the outer world has not given him: doubtless something which our religion ought to contain, but no longer does contain, at least for modern man. … Along the great highways of the world everything seems desolate and outworn. Instinctively, modern man leaves the trodden paths to explore the by-ways and lanes, just as the man of the Greco-Roman world cast off his defunct Olympian gods and turned to the mystery cults of Asia (Jung, 1971). In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung clearly lays out that it is essentially through a spiritual experience that people find the true courage to overcome their anxiety, doubt, and estrangement. Thus, Jung’s process of coming to terms with himself is a model that interests modern people as a way or paradigm that they might use for themselves. This “psychological” interest of the present time shows that man expects something from psychic life which he has not received from the outside world: something which our religions doubtless, ought to contain, but no longer do contain—at least for the modern man (Jung, 1933).

Jung was able to identify it as the outward expression of the inner workings of the self starting from the Unconscious and then proceeding through self to give it a new meaning and salvation from the sufferings and the constraints of the present materialistic world, is the one that will be used for the purpose of this chapter. Though written few decades back, Jung’s writing and visionary concept is still able to touch the chord, because of its simplicity and relevance in today’s world.

**Carl Gustav Jung** (1875-1961) was a famous and influential Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, and founder of analytical psychology. His approach to human psychology emphasized understanding the psyche through exploring the world of dreams, art, mythology, world religion and philosophy. Among the early research in the field of psychology, the work of Jung has been instrumental in exploring and understanding spirituality within the
human psyche. Jung adopted a very sympathetic approach towards the religion, and his concern was more of having a positive appreciation of religious symbolism.

Although, Jung (1959) focused most clearly on the concept of ‘soul’, he saw spirituality as a foundation for human development and described the spirit as the characteristic of a human that “makes him [sic] creative, always spurring him on, giving him lucky ideas, staying power, ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘inspiration’” (p. 393). Singer (1972) explicates Jung’s interest in spirituality. She argues that: for Jung, questions of the spirit were of highest importance. By ‘spirit’ he did not mean the supernatural, but rather those higher aspirations which are so much a part of man’s striving, whether they are expressed in works of art, in service to one’s fellow man, or in attempting to understand the workings of nature and her order (p. 94).

Although, it is impossible to do justice to Jungian psychology within the context of this overview, it is important to understand that Jung believed that religion evolved from the ‘collective unconscious’ and he considered religiosity to be an instinctual aspect of human functioning. Jung had a deep and long-standing interest in the occult, and his esoteric beliefs had a wide impact on his work. It is the influence of those beliefs which are examined here. As Jung put it: “By becoming conscious, the individual is threatened more and more with Isolation which is, nevertheless, sine qua non of conscious differentiation.” The greater this threat, the more it is compensated by the production of collective and archetypal symbols which are common to all men. This fact is expressed in a general way by the religions Jung’s concepts of the collective unconscious and of the archetypes led him to explore religion in the East and West, myths and alchemy.

Jung had seen many patients who in the second half of life had felt the need to discover something beyond the ego. They had experienced the healing power that came from the personal realization that the ego was part of a greater totality composed of both ego and unconscious, which Jung called “the self”. This self became manifest in dreams by means of various symbols -circles, crowns, gems, and “quaterni ties,” that is, fourfold figure (Mago, 2002).
The flow of this chapter owes the following direction i.e. in depth look at the unconscious, followed by the collective unconscious and the various important archetypes, ultimately focusing towards individuation and concluding it by the transcendent function. To understand Jung’s belief in understanding oneself and ultimately leading towards the spiritual path, it is essential to give brief account of the unconscious.

**Unconscious**

“People”, Jung observed,” live on only one or two floors of a large apartment building, which is our minds, forgetting the rest”. The individuation process puts up in touch with “the rest”. Our conscious ‘I’ is not the total psyche. There is an unconscious background that operates subliminally, whether we realized it or not. Plugging into those undertones and making them conscious enlarges and deepens our experience of ourselves and of life. The unconscious can be guide, friend and adviser to the conscious. It speaks to us in the language of symbols, usually in the form of dreams. (Dunne, 2002).

Taking a much more positive outlook, Jung sees the unconscious as a potential friend due to its tendency toward wholeness. Jung insists that the unconscious is the “matrix, the artesian well from which all creativity springs” (Johnson,1989, p. 14). Thus, the journey through this unfamiliar world may be a valuable one, because transformation is a spontaneous motion, and if one does not inhibit the unconscious but rather removes the roadblocks, the unconscious will be helpful towards healing. The overarching goal of Jungian psychology is the reconciliation of the life of the individual with the world of the supra-personal archetypes. Central to this process is the individual’s encounter with the unconscious.

Humans experience the unconscious through symbols encountered in all aspects of life: in dreams, art, religion, and the symbolic dramas we enact in our relationships and life pursuits. Essential to the encounter with the unconscious, and the reconciliation of the individual’s consciousness with this broader world, is learning this symbolic language. Only through attention
and openness to this world is the individual able to harmonize his or her life with these supra personal archetypal forces. The encounter between consciousness and the symbols arising from the unconscious enriches life and promotes psychological development. Jung considered this process of psychological growth and maturation (which he called the process of individuation) to be of critical importance to the human being, and ultimately to the modern society. In order to undergo the individuation process, the individual must be open to the parts of oneself beyond one’s own ego. In order to do this, the modern individual must pay attention to dreams, explore the world of religion and spirituality, and question the assumptions of the operanal societal worldview rather than just blindly living life in accordance with dominant norms and assumptions.

The world of the unconscious is essentially an ambivalent one, with both positive and negative aspects at all its levels, which doesn’t make it easy to understand. Often it begins to make itself felt out of a negative state, such as boredom or stagnation in life, or a blow to the ego, a wounding of the personality.

The most essential issue for Jung was coming to terms with the unconscious aspect of himself and others. There is the question of estrangement and how it comes about in the first place. How do we get reconciled with the true self once we are off course? Jung’s essential notion is that the ego (one’s consciousness) must be open to the various ways in which the unconscious presents itself. It is the manifestation of the unconscious mind that assists us in overcoming our one-sidedness and estrangement.

According to Jung, the Self (big S, i.e. the central core and totality of life, and not little s self) wants life fully developed and integrated. Dreams, visions, and religious experiences present those parts of our selves (or reality) of which we are not conscious. It is in the process of receiving and integrating these contents of the unconscious “other” that we become more whole and truly individual persons. Jung, proposes that the unconscious is in fact composed of two layers, namely, the personal and the collective unconscious. The more superficial layer, the one more easily
accessible to consciousness, is the personal unconscious, “made up essentially of contents that have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed” (Jung, Archetypes 42). The personal unconscious is connected with the individual’s life, with its various experiences, traumas, difficulties, joys. The other, deeper layer is called collective unconscious, and it “does not derive from personal experience and not a personal acquisition but is inborn”. The personal and the collective unconscious have different contents and play different roles in the life of the individual, and it is the ego’s task to integrate as many of their elements as possible and bring them to consciousness.

**The Collective Unconscious**

Jung coined the term “collective unconscious” to refer to that part of a person’s unconscious which is common to all human beings, as opposed to personal unconscious, which is unique to each individual. According to Jung, the collective unconscious contains archetypes, which are forms or symbols that are manifested by all people in all cultures. The concept of collective unconscious relates to the Spiritual model of living beings consisting of individuated parts of Spirit encased in physical form. Like island in the sea, we appear as distinct individuals, but beneath the surface we are all connected. And we will take an in-depth look at the various common and important archetypes, which are connecting people across the cultures.

The use of psychological archetypes was advanced by Jung in 1919. In Jung’s psychological framework, archetypes are innate, universal prototypes for ideas and may be used to interpret observations. A group of memories and interpretations associated with an archetype is a complex, e.g. a mother complex associated with the mother archetype. Jung treated the archetypes as psychological organs, analogous to physical ones in that both are morphological givens that arose through evolution. An innate need for self-realization leads people to explore and integrate these rejected materials. This natural process is called individuation, or the process of becoming an individual.
According to Jung, self-realization can be divided into two distinct tiers. In the first half of our lives, we separate from humanity. We attempt to create our own identities (I, myself). This is why there is such a need for young men to be destructive, and can be expressed as animosity from teens directed at their parents. Jung also said we have a sort of “second puberty” that occurs between 35-40- outlook shifts from emphasis on materialism, sexuality, and having children to concerns about community and spirituality. In the second half of our lives, humans reunite with the human race. They become part of the collective once again. This is when adults start to contribute to humanity (volunteer time, build, garden, create art, etc.) rather than destroy. They are also more likely to pay attention to their unconscious and conscious feelings. Young men rarely say “I feel angry,” or “I feel sad.” This is because they have not yet rejoined the human collective experience, commonly re-established in their older, wiser years, according to Jung. A common theme is for young rebels to “search” for their true selves and realize that a contribution to humanity is essentially a necessity for a whole self. Jung proposes that the ultimate goal of the collective unconscious and self-realization is to pull us to the highest experience. This, of course, is spiritual. (Wikipedia).

Jung’s map of the psyche includes the ego, persona, shadow, complex, anima/animus, self, introversion, extroversion and the like. Jung saw problems in opposites or the antinomies and looked for a resolution of this duality into unity, writing, “The Self then functions as a union of opposites and thus constitutes the most immediate experience of the Divine which it is psychologically possible to imagine” (CW 11, par. 396). The Self is the slow, gradual realization of a divine cosmic center in the unconscious psyche of the individual. It is interesting to look at the nature of psychological projection and its purpose of bringing about reconciliation and wholeness, as well as Jung’s method for becoming a unified whole. His methods of becoming an individual and becoming whole offset the simple method of belief or identification with collective roles or values that bring authentic life.

Jung’s knowledge of, and interest in, world mythology led him to recognize that the dreams and fantasies of his clients were often
inhabited by the ancient symbols, images and mythological motifs that many of these people had never been exposed to. Because they had not acquired this information within their lifetimes, Jung concluded that the motifs were innate structures inherited by every member of the human race. These primordial images, or ‘archetypes’ as Jung called them, were common to all people: trans-individual, collective, and transcendent.

Jung (1959) explained that the interpretation of archetypes was reliant on the fact that ...eternal truth needs a human language that alters with the spirit of the times. The primordial images undergo ceaseless transformation and yet remain ever the same... Always they require a new interpretation if, as each formulation becomes obsolete, they are not to lose their spellbinding power... (p. 396).

According to Jung’s interpretation, archetypes are innate prototypes for ideas, which may subsequently become involved in the interpretation of observed phenomena. A group of memories and interpretations closely associated with an archetype is called a complex, and may be named for its central archetype (e.g. “mother complex”). Jung often seemed to view the archetypes as sort of psychological organs, directly analogous to our physical, bodily organs: both being morphological givens for the species; both arising at least partially through evolutionary processes. There are few forms of archetypes as identified by Jung:

- The Self.
- The Persona
- The Shadow - every manifest part of ourselves has a repressed and opposite counterpart, represented by the shadow.
- The Anima - a young lady represents intuitive wisdom.
- The Animus - a handsome young man represents active, assertive energy.

The author explains these archetypes and tries to establish link and their relevance, with the theme of this chapter.

The symbols of the unconscious abound in Jungian psychology, e.g. The Syzygy (Divine Couple), The Child, The Superman, The
Hero, The Great Mother (manifested either as the Good Mother or the Terrible Mother), The Wise Old Man, The Trickster or Ape. Jung’s archetypes relate to the concept of occult symbols, i.e. ideas and images that have become charged with significance through aeons of reflection and veneration now standing ready to release their potential upon invocation.

In order to understand the importance of the concept of archetypes to Jungian psychology, we must realize that within Jung’s approach to religion, the spiritual element was an essential part of the psyche. Singer (1972) explains it more clearly: It is the source of the search for meaning, and it is that element which lifts us above our concern for merely keeping our species alive… The spiritual element is expressed in symbols, for symbols are the language of the unconscious… The symbol attracts, and therefore leads individuals on the way of becoming what they are capable of becoming. That goal is wholeness, which is integration of the parts of the personality into a functioning totality (p. 392).

The Self for Jung comprises the whole of the psyche, including all its potential. It is the organizing genius behind the personality, and is responsible for bringing about the best adjustment in each stage of life that circumstances can allow. Crucially, it has a teleological function: it is forward looking, seeking fulfilment. The goal of the Self is wholeness, and Jung called this search for wholeness the process of individuation, the purpose being to develop the organism’s fullest potential. It is a distinguishing feature of Jungian psychology. The theory is organized from the point of view of the Self, not from the ego, as early Freudian theory was. The teleological perspective of Jung is also distinctive. The ego, along with other structures, develops out of the Self which exists from the beginning of life.

The Self: The Self is rooted in biology but also has access to an infinitely wider range of experience, including the whole wealth of the cultural and religious realms, and the depths of which all human beings are capable. It is, therefore, capable of being projected on to figures or institutions which carry power: God, the sun, kings and queens and so on, (Fordham).
The self has the function of verifying meaning. This depends upon being able to separate self from object as explained by Michael Fordham: Jung identified religious experiences with archetypal symbolism: it is often thought that infantile experiences comprise states of mind with which a truly adult person has noting to do: I contend, on the contrary, that they persist and are progressively integrated into later and more mature living. So, the grandeur, the mystery and the numinosity of religious experience are rooted in infancy and enrich its mature equivalent. I shall make an opportunity to illustrate a thesis about the relation between infancy childhood and maturity. Unless the links with the helplessness, the dependence and the spontaneity of the childhood are maintained, religious experience can lose its true meaning and may become either an empty and formal ritual or merely a rational exercise. (Fordham, 1976, p.25).

**The Persona:** The persona is an archetype of adaptation, and the term is connected with the effort made by the individual towards adapting to the outside world and its demands. Persona is the face that you show to society, and it is but a mask that hides your true nature. The first task in the process of individuation is to have a clearer perception of this mask. This poses a challenge for the individual because of the danger of identifying with it so closely that the person loses sight of who he is as an individual and becomes the social mask that he wears to adapt to society. It is the “mask” or image we present to the outside world. It is designed to make a particular impression on others, while concealing our true nature.

The best kind of Persona is one that adapts flexibly to different social situations while simultaneously being a good reflection of the ego qualities that stand behind it (Bessa, 2008). Difficulties arise when:

- One tries to assume a persona that does not fit, and or to keep up some kind of posture which one does not possess the personal wherewithal to sustain.
• One identifies with the persona, for this means sacrificing the rest of the personality and imposes a harmful degree of constraint on the realization of one’s undeveloped potential.

**The Shadow:** Jung had a deep interest in the shadow – its form and content – and in the process of assimilating “the thing a person has no wish to be” [CW16, para 470]. The first layer that we encounter in the Unconscious is what Jung called the shadow, usually those parts of ourselves we don’t like, don’t know or don’t want to know. “The shadow can be repressed in us like a cancer or projected outward onto others as qualities we dislike most in a person or group. The negative shadow can present us with a shortcoming to be overcome. The positive can show us a meaningful part of ourselves we should recognize and live out. Either way, it is a tricky element to deal with as Jung himself knew” (Dunne, 2002). This carries all the things we do not want to know about ourselves or do not like. The shadow is a complex in the personal unconscious with its roots in the collective unconscious and is most easily accessible to the conscious mind. It often possesses qualities which are opposite from those in the persona, and therefore opposite from those of which we are conscious. Here is the Jungian idea of one aspect of the personality compensating for another: where there is light, there must also be shadow.

If the compensatory relationship breaks down, it can result in a shallow personality with little depth and with excessive concern for what other people think about him or her. So, while it can be troublesome, and may remain largely unconscious, the shadow is an important aspect of our psyche and part of what gives depth to our personalities. The fascination which the differing, contrasting, or opposing aspects of personality hold for us is illustrated in such novels as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, or The Picture of Dorian Gray. The way in which we most immediately experience the shadow is as we project it on to other people, so that we can be fairly sure that traits which we cannot stand in other people really belong to ourselves and that we are trying to disown them. While difficult and painful, it is important that we work at owning our shadow to bring it into relationship with our persona, and so provide some integration of these two complexes within our personality.
Complementary to Jung’s idea of the persona, which is “what oneself as well as others thinks one is” [CW9 para 221], the “shadow is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors…If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is his shadow does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses etc “ [CW9 paras 422 & 423].

Personal and collective aspects of the shadow-It may be helpful to think of the shadow in a vertical way. At the top is the personal shadow – it may feel rather black, formless and underdeveloped as well as unwanted and disowned. But, as we have seen, while it may feel like a cess-pit it can also be a treasure trove. Below this, but not divided from it in any way, is the collective shadow. This, like the personal shadow, is relative in that it will be in part culturally determined. It consists of that which opposes our conscious, shared and collective values.

It is important to note that Jung upheld the psychic necessity of recognizing the shadow within, however, embarrassing or distressing, acknowledging its unpleasant qualities and its offensive behaviour, coming to terms with its mischief and mayhem, owning its character as ours and no one else’s. His accounts of psychotherapy demonstrates how the individuation process almost always begins with this humbling integration of the shadow into one’s conscious sense of self, the first and most important task on the road to psychic health (Hopcke,1989).

The influence of others on the shadow: From infancy and through childhood and adolescence, we pick up from our parents/elders both conscious and unconscious messages about what is acceptable in terms of our body, our feelings and our behaviour. We look forward to be accepted. All that is unacceptable is suppressed and repressed and becomes part of our shadow. We not only take in and repress what is unacceptable; we also internalize our parents/
elders’ attitudes to these unwanted qualities and characteristics of ourselves. The harsher the attitude, which may have been expressed by withdrawal of love, rejection, physical/emotional/sexual abuse, the more hostile we are to these facets of our shadow. At worst, the shadow becomes inextricably entwined with abandonment anxiety so that its emergence can really feel like a matter of life or death. Though, it is necessary to emphasize that positive, loving feeling, fantasies and impulses can become as much part of the shadow as negative hostile ones, both the positive and negative feelings tend to play an important part in development of the self and the healing of the psyche.

**Assimilating the shadow:** This process of the assimilation of the shadow, leads to self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. Ultimately, it helps in bringing the feelings hidden below at the surface level. Grievance and blame give way to the taking of responsibility and attempts at sorting out what belongs to whom. A fierce conscience, which tends to be self and other punitive, can relax, and personal values can be set in counterpoint to collective morality. This process is important in understanding since it leads towards the path of ultimate individuation.

**Anima and Animus:** The next two complexes in the personal unconscious are perhaps the most difficult to understand and the most contentious. Jung conceived of there being at another psychic level a contra sexual archetype, designated as anima in the man and animus in the woman. These figures are derived in part from the archetypes of the feminine and masculine and in part from the individual’s own life experience with members of the opposite sex beginning with mother and father. They inhabit the unconscious depths as a compensation for the one-sided attitude of consciousness and a way of rounding out the experience of belonging to one sex or the other. Just as happens with the shadow, these archetypes are met with firstly in projected form. They carry with them the numinous quality which accounts for falling in love at first sight, which one can think of as a projection in a man on to an unknown woman of an archetypal image and the woman then becomes fascinating and immensely appealing.
While he was influenced by the gender-based thinking of his time, Jung recognized that the “masculine” aspects of the psyche such as autonomy, separateness, and aggression were not superior to the “feminine” aspects such as nurturance, relatedness, and empathy. Rather, they form two halves of a whole, both of which belong to every individual, and neither of which is superior to the other. One can see this as a development of the emphasis on the masculine psyche in Freud’s work. These complexes need to be related to in their “otherness”, and connect the ego to the objective psyche.

**Individuation**: Jung called the search for wholeness within the human psyche, the process of individuation. It may be described as a process of circumambulation around the Self as the centre of personality. As Jung (1935) puts it: “The aim of individuation is nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand and the suggestive power of primordial images on the other” (para. 269). The person aims to become conscious of himself or herself as a unique human being, but at the same time, no more nor less than any other human being.

For Jung, conflict is not only inherent in human psychology, but is necessary for growth. In order to become more conscious, one must be able to bear conflict. There are many internal opposites, as well as those experienced in the outside world. If the tension between the opposites can be borne, then out of this clash something new and creative can grow. In Jung’s view, this ‘something’ is a symbol which will contribute to a new direction which does justice to both sides of a conflict and which is a product of the unconscious rather than of rational thought. For Jung, the symbol is something which cannot be fully explained or understood but has the quality of both conscious and unconscious worlds. The symbol may be the agent of transformation which brings about the development which was so important an aspect of his thinking, and which leads towards individuation as the goal towards which humans strive (Jung, 1921).

Jung views the individuation process starts in the second half of life, often triggered by a ‘mid-life crisis’—where the conscious
aspects of the personality (i.e. one’s superior function) has diverged too far from the unconscious, causing a split. By confronting opposite tendencies and ‘inferior’ functions in one’s psyche, one realizes and progressively integrates unconscious contents, such as the shadow and the anima or animus. For Jung, the favorite image of the Self was the Mandala, it being an old age symbol of wholeness and totality, with its centre emphasized and usually containing some reference to a deity. Other symbols of unity and the emergence of Self are the tree, the jewel, the flower and the chalice (e.g. the wholly grail).

According to Jung (1939), “Consciousness and the unconscious do not make a whole when either is suppressed or damaged by the other. If they must contend, let it be a fair fight with equal right on both sides. Both are aspects of life. Let consciousness defend its reason and its self-protective ways, and let the chaotic life of the unconscious be given a fair chance to have its own way, as much of it as we can stand. This means at once open conflict and open collaboration. Yet, paradoxically, this is presumably what human life should be. It is the old play of hammer and anvil: the suffering iron between them will in the end be shaped into an unbreakable whole, the individual. This experience is what is called, the process of individuation.”

Jung emphasized the importance of balance and harmony. He cautioned that modern people rely too heavily on science and logic and would benefit from integrating spirituality and appreciation of unconscious realms. He considered the process of individuation necessary for a person to become the whole. This is a psychological process of integrating the conscious with the unconscious while still maintaining conscious autonomy. Individuation was the central concept of analytical psychology.

Individuation is the process of integrating the conscious with the unconscious, for the purpose of self-actualization. Individuation is a philosophical, spiritual and mystical experience (Jung, 1989b, p. 294). It is the goal of our psychological development and in metaphysical terms amounts to God’s incarnation (Jung, 1989b, p. 157). Individuation is the central concept and purpose of Jung’s analytical psychology (Jung, 1989a, p. 209).
Individuation is also about choosing one’s own uniqueness. It involves not only self-realization but self differentiation: the ethical decision to pursue one’s individuation is a choice to differentiate oneself as a whole human being from all other human beings. The great paradox of the entire process is that in realizing one’s full humanity one is, at the same time, actualizing one’s unique individuality. To individuate, in the Jungian terms, is to defy the tyranny of received opinion, to disengage from the banal symbols of mass culture and to confront the primordial symbols in the collective unconscious—in one’s own unique way. Thus one becomes individual, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’. In adopting this view, Jung is not advocating individualism—which is merely the arrogant assertion of the ego. Far from it: ‘Individuation means precisely the better and more complete fulfilment of collective qualities’ which are invested in the Self (CW, 7, para, 267). Nor is he advising a narcissistic withdrawal from the outer world, the termination of relationships or the abrogation of one’s social responsibilities. On the contrary: ‘Individuation does not shut out from the world, but gathers the world to one self’ (CW 8, para.432). Thus, the desire to individuate is quite opposite to the neurotic desire to be ‘normal’, that is to say, just like everyone else. The individuating person wants to be like everyone else (a full member of the human family) but in his or her uniquely individual way.

......Jung saw it predominantly as a development in the second half of life. In the first half, one is concerned with expanding the ego and “adaptation to collective norms”, such as building personal social status.

The second half of life is concerned with coming to terms with death, finding meaning in living and the unique part each one of us plays in the world. It is in the vicissitudes of negotiating the individuation process that Jung saw the major causes of neurosis. In the young, neurosis comes from a fear of engaging with life; in the old, it comes from clinging to an outdated youthful attitude and shrinking back from death. Jung admits that: “Individuation is an heroic and often tragic task, the most difficult of all, it involves suffering, a passion of the ego: the ordinary empirical man we once
were is burdened with the fate of losing himself in a greater dimension and being robbed of his fancied freedom of will. He suffers, so to speak, from the violence done to him by the self.” (1942a, para. 233) Jung adds: “Human nature has an invincible dread of becoming more conscious of itself. What nevertheless drives us to it is the self which demands sacrifice by sacrificing itself to us.” (Jung 1942, para. 400) Individuation could therefore be understood as the drive of the Self to consciousness and an ultimate path of leading towards spirituality.

Levels of Spiritual Individuation through Typology Jung developed a highly detailed yet flexible framework within which we can attempt to understand the legitimate differences among persons and the inner development they are called to. Certainly, past spiritualities had no adequate way to deal with these differences. In practice, a uniform rule and prescribed spiritual exercises were often imposed in a mistaken quest for unity. We differ in our needs for food, sleep, and exercise. We vary in our capacity for solitude and social life, and in our reactions to joy and sorrow. In short, we differ in our very physical and psychic makeup and in our ways of perceiving and judging the world within and without. We vary in our capacity for solitude and social life, and in our reactions to joy and sorrow. In short, we differ in our very physical and psychic makeup and in our ways of perceiving and judging the world within and without. This means that we will be attracted to different forms of prayer and service, for our spiritual gifts will tend to build on the distinctive natural gifts we possess. The trajectory of our interior lives will intermingle with the movement towards our own distinctive form of typological wholeness. Jung’s typology, then, is an excellent tool with which to begin to revitalize the practical science of spiritual direction. There are three distinct levels at which this process can take place, and it is by delineating these levels that we can see the effectiveness of Jungian spirituality in practice (Mago, 2002).

The first level is the simple discovery of our psychological type and its application in the ways just described as an instrument for understanding human differences within the field of spirituality.
Explorations in Human Spirituality

Of great value, this is the level at which a significant amount of the present encounter between Jung’s psychology and spirituality is taking place.

**The second level** can emerge from this acquaintance with typology. We begin to perceive that typology is not only interpersonal, a way we relate to those around us, but also an intra psychic process that is no different from the process of individuation itself. We begin to feel the pull of the outgoing tide that leads to the fascinating and terrible night sea-journey of psychic transformation. It is only by means of such a journey that we truly begin to grasp what typology really meant to Jung and what are the psychic contents that exist under the names of the shadow, anima, animus, and self. It is this experience that will sensitize us to the psychological dimension that exists and must exist in the whole of the spiritual life.

There is literally no place for the spiritual life to take place but in the psyche, and we row grasp this psyche in all its immediacy and in all the continual process which strives for wholeness. Here, too, there can be no objection to the employment of Jungian psychology in the spiritual life, but rather only a sense of gratitude that we can finally deal with the psychological dimension that exists in all our spiritual activities.

**The third level**, where this encounter will take place and has taken place in certain individuals like Victor White. The process of individuation as it is found in Jung and many of his followers are wrapped in an epistemological fabric which resists a Catholic understanding of faith. It is abundantly evident. Jung himself comments, for example, for lack of empirical data, I have neither knowledge nor understanding of such forms of being which are commonly called spiritual. From the scientific viewpoint, it is immaterial what I may believe on that score, and I must accept my ignorance . . . . All comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic, and to that extent we are hopelessly cooped up in an exclusively psychic world (Jung, 1963).

Similarly, Jung indicates that he sees individuation as a more evolved stage of consciousness to which Christianity stands as a
deficient stage. If in being guided by Jung to the experience of individuation, we unconsciously imbibe this presentation of it, we will find ourselves in the state in which Victor White found himself — torn on one hand by a living awareness of the reality of the individuation that Jung describes, but sensing that the way it was presented conflicted with his faith (Arraj, 1988).

Jung saw spiritual growth as a component of individuation. In her interpretation of Jung’s work, Mack (1994) suggests that individuation involves the process of achieving wholeness through synthesis of conscious and unconscious aspects of the self … Jung characterized this process of individuation as religious in nature… According to Jung, both psychological and spiritual health depends on an open relationship between conscious and unconscious forces in personality. This open relationship, which is fundamental for the Jungian process of personality integration, is the criterion in discerning genuine spirituality (pp. 16-17).

Individuation is the transformational process of integrating the conscious with the personal and collective unconscious (Jung, 1962, p. 301). Integrating the conscious with the personal unconscious involves the following: Finding the suppressed memories and curing the psychological traumas. Acquiring general knowledge, developing will-power, integrating the conscious with the collective unconscious is realizing and harmonizing the archetypes. The Individuation process brings up the true personality of a person, it makes him an Individual. Individuation generally has a profound healing effect on the person (Jung, 1962, p. 433).

It is a process of maturation in which the psyche ages or matures in the same manner as the physical body. And these general guidelines are summarized by Jacobi (1973) and consist of four parts, which is true for people of all ages:

1. *Becoming conscious of the shadow.* The shadow is our dark side, containing those things that we have repressed or ignored for one reason or another. It usually manifests to us in dreams as an archetypal figure who is dark and ominous. Just as the persona is that part of us that we want to present to the world, so the shadow contains those
things that we want to hide from the world, and from ourselves. This dark side of ourselves must be confronted and accepted, at least in part, as the first step in the individuation process. Johnson (1991) emphasizes the need to acknowledge and accept our shadow in order to become a whole and complete person.

2. **Becoming conscious of the anima or animus.** Basically, the anima is the feminine soul or inner femininity of every man, and the animus is the inner masculinity of every women. The individuation process is, above everything else, a process of wholeness. This includes sexual completeness. Jung (1978) wrote that the anima and animus represent “functions which filter the contents of the collective unconscious through to the conscious mind” (p.20). Thus, when the ego seeks to find the inner Self, it must look through the anima or animus, which colors its perception in many different ways. Edinger (1995) distinguishes four separate progressive states of maturation in the ego’s relation to the anima: (a) the infantile state, in which the ego is totally unaware of the anima or animus, (b) the projected state, in which the anima or animus is projected outward into people of the opposite sex, (c) the possessed state, in which the ego is possessed or governed by the anima or animus, and (d) the conscious state, in which the ego becomes conscious of the anima or animus.

3. **Becoming conscious of the archetypal spirit.** This archetype, as I noted above, is often represented in fairy tales as the wise old man, especially for men. For women, it often takes the form of *Magna Mater*, the great earth mother. The individuation process is primarily one of uniting opposites. In the first step, we unite good and evil and try to see ourselves as capable of both. Eastern religions often symbolize this with the lotus, which has its roots below in the dirty mud and its flower in the clean air above. In the second, we see ourselves as containing both masculine and feminine characteristics. Now we must unite matter and
spirit, form and formlessness, body and psyche. Jung (1990) called the archetypes of spirit and matter “mana-personalities” where mana means extraordinary power. In part, this step includes liberation of a man from his father, and of a women from her mother leading, in both cases, to true individuality.

4. **Becoming conscious of the Self.** Jung called this final step **self-realization**— “We could therefore translate individuation as “coming to selfhood” or “self-realization” (Jung, 1977, p.173). Jacobi (1973) says “For the conscious personality the birth of the self means a shift in its psychic centre, and consequently an entirely different attitude toward, and view of, life—in other words a ‘transformation’ in the fullest sense of the word” (p. 127). The Self is often symbolized by a circle or mandala, glyphs which represent completeness. Each step of the individuation process has its dangers that must be avoided, and each has its rewards. He (1978) warns that individuation is an ongoing endless process, and that as it progresses, the chief danger is an inflation of the ego.

**The Transcendent Function:** The main conviction that emerged from these years of ‘soul searching’ was that we each have a transcendent function, a yearning to evolve, to transcend oneself and that it is the blocking of this function that leads to mental illness. Jung believed that God can become whole only through a creative confrontation with the opposites and through their synthesis in the Self – the wholeness of the individual human personality. The transcendent function is an archetypal process which mediates opposites and enables transition from one attitude or condition to another, by the utilization of symbols. It is activated whenever consciousness is engaged in the tension of opposites, and only the living symbol has the power to unite opposites and mutually supplement and another.

The function, therefore, has a healing effect by bridging the conscious and unconscious, facilitating movement beyond onesidedness. In this respect, the choice of psychiatry helped Jung to
reconcile the opposites within himself—the rational with the irrational, the objective with the subjective, the biological with the spiritual, his number 1 with his number 2 personality, etc. It is this reconciliation of opposites within, and the principle of compensation between inner and outer realms of experience, that formed the cornerstone of Jungian theory (h2g2 2001).

CONCLUSION

It seems appropriate to conclude where we began, with a challenge from Jung (1957): The spiritual transformation of mankind follows the slow tread of the centuries and cannot be hurried or held up by any rational process of reflection, let alone brought to fruition in one generation. What does lie within our reach, however, is the change in individuals who have, or create, an opportunity to influence others of the like mind in their circle of acquaintance. (p. 121).

Jung believed that a human being is inwardly whole, but that most of us have lost touch with important parts of ourselves. And it is important to understand that, through listening to the messages of our dreams and waking imagination, we can contact and reintegrate our different parts. The goal of life is individuation, the process of coming to know, giving expression to, and harmonizing the various components of the psyche. If we realize our uniqueness, we can undertake a process of individuation and tap into our true self. Each human being has a specific nature and calling which is uniquely his or her own, and unless these are fulfilled through a union of conscious and unconscious, the person can become sick. Ultimately, it is very important to realize that the truth of life lies in acceptance of the hidden parts of ourselves.

The ultimate aim of the Individual is to free the Self by removing the false wrappings of the persona and also from the suggestive power of the archetypes. In today’s world, the task of becoming more conscious of how we affect and in return how we get affected by the people and society around us is an urgent task in our hands. And life is meant to be inhaled deeply, slowly with all its beauty and wisdom scattered around each one of us. The present analysis is an attempt to understand ourselves better.
REFERENCES


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Walker, W. (2001). *The nuts and bolts of Jungian psychology and spirituality*. (The following text is an introduction and overview to a seminar presented by the Samaritan Counselling and Spiritual Direction Program in Memphis, Tennessee.


The Jungian process of individuation, can be traced back to Temple Ritual (Edfu, Dendera), Qabalah (Tree of Life). In Ancient Egypt, the process of individuation was made spatial, as it were eternalizing the stages of spiritual growth in the architecture of the temples. Thanks to the Greeks, a more abstract level was reached (cf. the “Sephiroth” in Qabalah), but the basic structure remained in place. But in all temples, Pharaoh was the officiating high priest. Indeed, Pharaoh could be understood as an archetypal idea of the “Perfect Man”, a being accomplishing the ultimate spiritualization, i.e. a Self-realized human being. Viewed as such, the Ancient Egyptian ceremonial order reveals it. This guide explores Carl Jung’s individuation process, showing how Jungian psychology highlights a path to achieving wholeness.

A Closer Look at Carl Jung’s Individuation Process: A Map for Psychic Wholeness. by Scott Jeffrey. Overview: This guide explores the individuation process as described by Carl Jung and Jungian psychology. Sigmund Freud was a pioneer in the field of psychology. He named his new field psychoanalysis, as in the study of psychotic and mentally ill patients. Jung’s thinking about the Self and its dynamic of individuation separates Jungian analytical psychology from other psychoanalytical schools. Jungian analytical psychology sees the self as many things including psychic structure, developmental process, transcendental postulate, affective experience and archetype. It has been depicted as the totality of body and mind, the God image, the experience of overpowering feelings, the union of opposites and a dynamic force which pilots the individual on his/her journey through life. Jung Platform is an online education space that offers multiple depth psychological and spiritual perspectives. Our courses and lectures explore the journey of life with the help of highly regarded teachers. We’re passionate about providing practical life-enhancing tools and the opportunity to connect with others on this path. So you can live your life colorfully.