

## Jung's Model of the Psyche

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A Native American myth recounts that the Creator gathered all of creation and said, "I want to hide something from humans until they are ready for it. It is the realization that they can create their own life and their own reality." The eagle said, "Give it to me; I'll take it to the moon and hide it there." But the Creator said, "No, one day they will go there and will find it." Then the salmon said, "Give it to me; I'll hide it in the bottom of the sea." "No," said the Creator, "they'll get there too." Well, the buffalo came and said, "Give it to me; I'll bury it in the plains." The Creator said, "No, they will get there. They will cut into the skin of the earth, and they will find it even there." But then Grand Mother mole came, the one that has no physical eyes to see on the outside but has spiritual eyes and the capacity to see on the inside, and she said, "Put it inside them; they'll never find it there." And the Creator said, "It is done."

We all know how difficult it is for us to look inside and how much effort we spend trying to not come in touch with whatever hides inside. A case example is a 50-year-old professional woman of brilliant intellect and with multiple interests and a successful career; her psychosomatic symptoms and hypochondria are all taken at face value as incontrovertible reality rather than as a finger pointing at something at work in her psyche, restricting her existence and even undermining her. In her search for relationship? she realized that something was wrong, as all her attempts floundered after increasingly shorter intervals. She continues to be unwilling to look in depth at what may lie going on inside. She remains "stuck" in her controlled and controlling rational approach. The fairy tale Rapunzel comes to mind. A young girl is taken by a witch (the negative mother archetype) and kept isolated in her high tower (intellect) without possibility of escape. When she starts to sing (activated feeling function) she attracts the prince who will ultimately free her.

Psychology, in its efforts to be recognized as a legitimate science, holds as a major governing principle that whatever exists, exists in some quantity and therefore can be measured. Gaging the invisible by visible methods, psychology's pursuit, triggered this reaction from Jung:

Science is not, indeed, a perfect instrument, but it is a superb and invaluable tool that works harm only when it is taken as an end in itself. Science must serve. ... It is part and parcel of our understanding and it obscures our insight only when it claims that the understanding it conveys is the only kind there is. (CW 13, par. 2).

It is indeed paradoxical that the category of existence, the indispensable sine qua non of all existence, namely the psyche, should be treated as if it were semi-existent. Psychic existence is actually the only category of existence of which we have immediate knowledge, since nothing can be known unless it first appears in the psyche (CIT11, par. 769).

We accept the invisible in math, in physic, even in philosophy. We have great difficulty, however, in accepting the invisible in the workings of our psyche beyond the logical, linear, and scientific.

Jung saw that the predominance of linear, logical thinking has enabled our culture to master the world through science, but in the process we have lost the capacity to think with the heart and live-through the soul. "Knowledge does not enrich us; it removes us more and more from the mythic world in which we were once at home by the right of birth" (MDR, p.237. Indeed, knowledge comes about not only by means of a rational elaboration, it also requires myth. "Cut of from the intermediary world of mythic imagination, mind falls prey to doctrinaire rigidities" (MDR, p. 316).

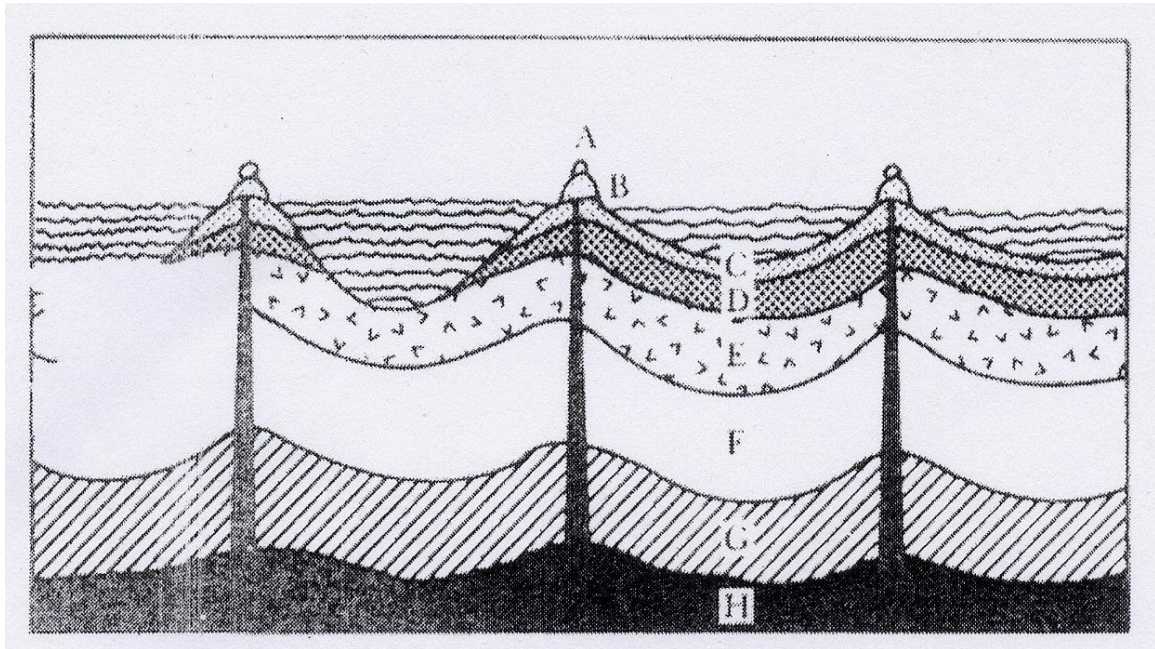
The more critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes. But the more the unconscious and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion, the individual is pauperized (MDR, p. 302).

In contrast, Elie Humbert (one of the most influential Jungian analysts in France and one who had analyzed with Jung himself) recounts that Jung considered that analysis can be best described as an attitude three verbs can depict: *gsschehen lassen*, meaning "allow it to happen"; don't direct, don't use your brains to tell it where to go. It comes very close to the Eastern attitude expressed in *Wu Wei*, action in non-action. The next step is *betrachten*, which means to contemplate. Observe that which appeared to you while you were just allowing it to happen. But then don't just leave it there, engage it, *auseinander setzen*, meaning challenge it, confront it, enter into a dialogue with whatever you have come face to face with.

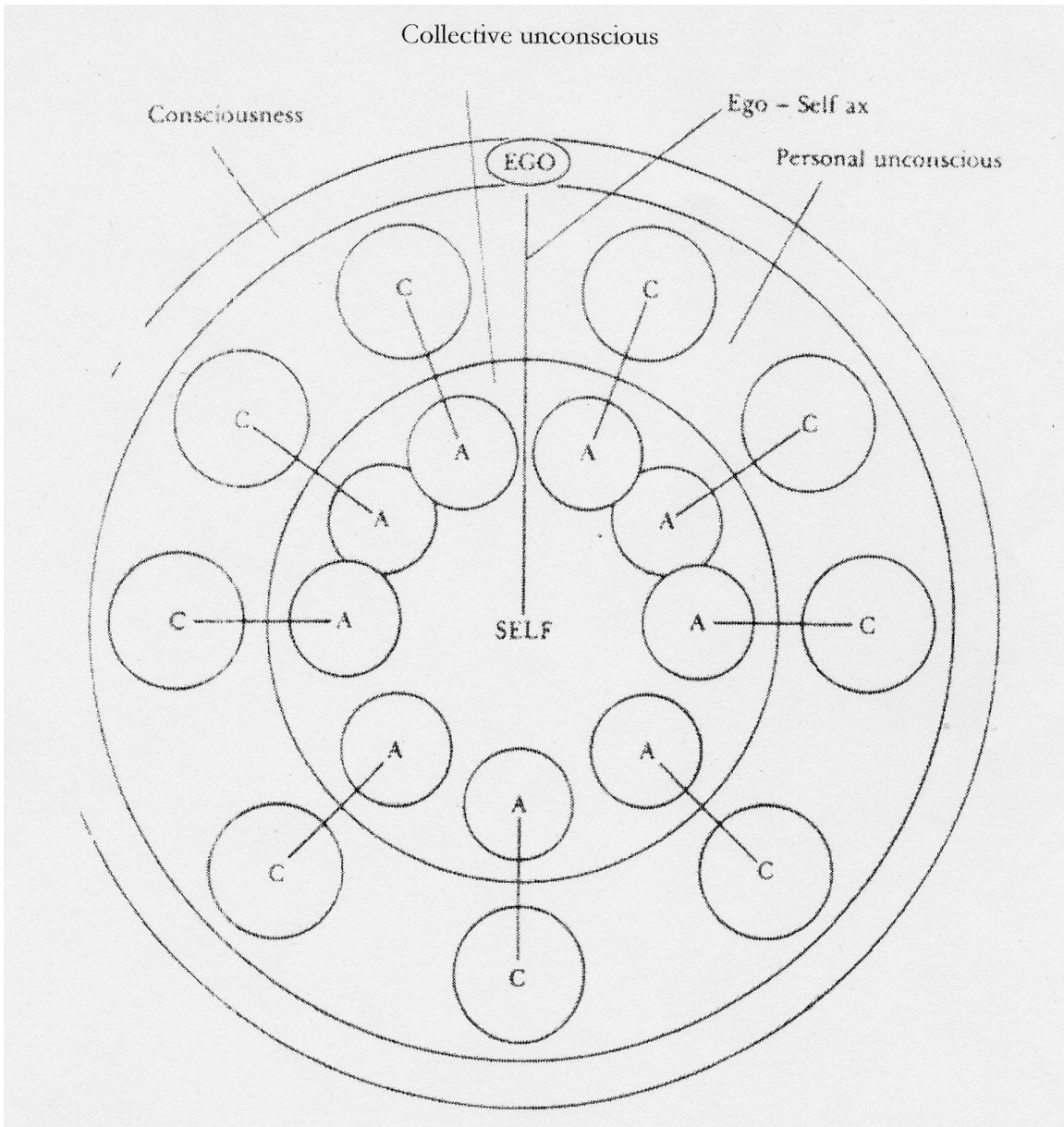
Humbert was giving a glimpse into Jung's desire to create the opportunity for the analysand to have a different kind of experience by adopting the stance these three verbs depict: rather than directing and controlling everything, judging everything, measuring everything, and deciding rationally whether or not they are acceptable (as the woman in the case illustrated above did), one could be open to information we already have, but are not conscious of.

Imagine that two cartographers design maps of a particular territory. One cartographer describes what is on the surface of that territory; the other, however, makes a map, a geological survey. In Jung's description of the geology of the psyche (in a collection of his talks published in 1925 as *Analytical Psychology*) there's a sketch of the psyche (p. 133) made by Jung himself and reproduced below (wherein A = individuals; B = families; C = clans; D = nations; E= larger groups, such as Europeans; F = primate ancestors; G = animal ancestors, in general; and H = the central fire). Jung was quite aware that we have peaks where our ego shows up, that we have the personal unconscious

that underlies it; we also have the collective unconscious, and there is additionally what he calls the fire within, which permeates it and comes right up, if you let it. What is the vehicle for it? Myths and fairy tales and imagination. If we can open to the imaginal, all this richness can come up and be mobilized and can enrich the way we approach things that at times might be quite troublesome.



In his book *On Jung* (p.29), Anthony Stevens presents a schematic diagram of what he saw as Jung's model of the psyche, wherein circles containing the letter C indicate complexes and those with the letter A indicate archetypes, as reproduced below



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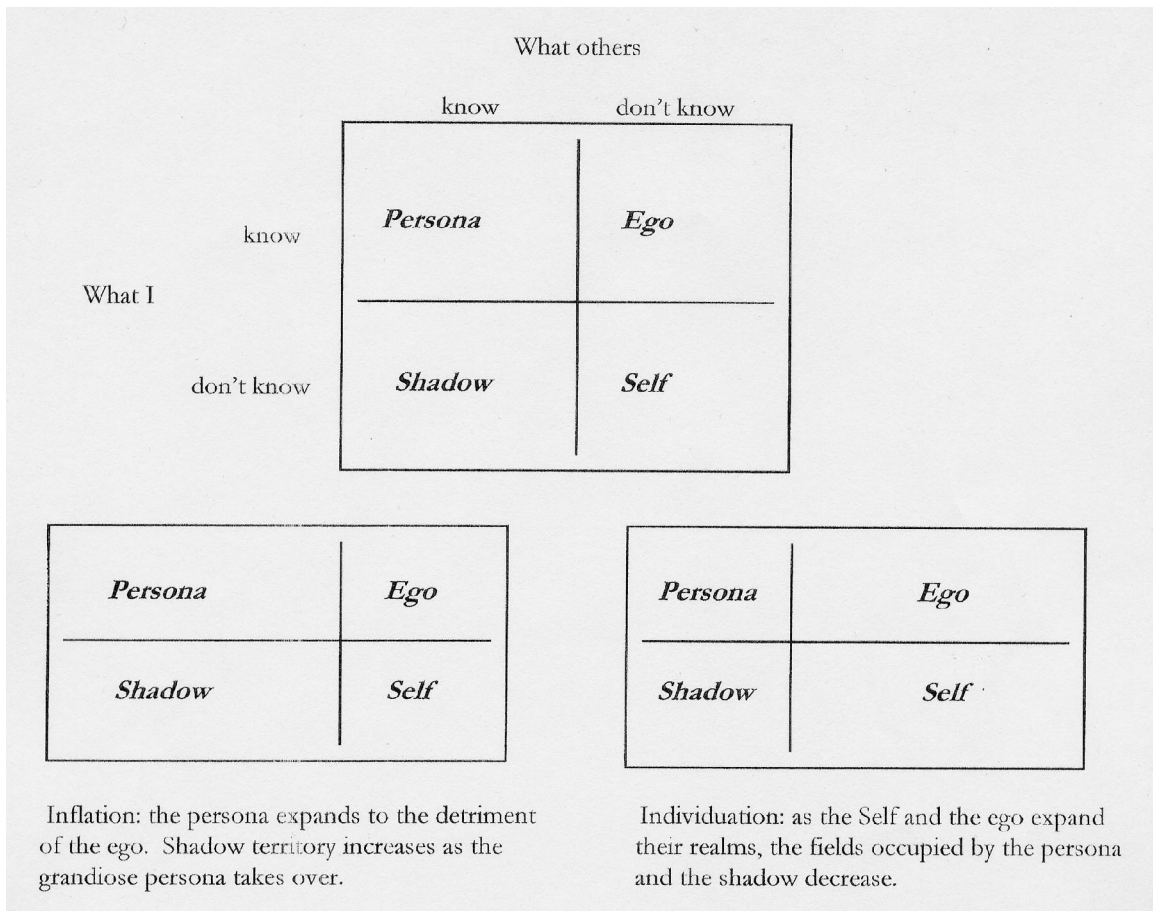
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is shown orbiting in a band of consciousness around a central nucleus, the Self. The inner and middle concentric bands represent the collective and the personal unconscious, respectively. The functional units making up the personal unconscious are the complexes, and those of which the collective unconscious is composed are the archetypes. A close functional relationship exists between complexes and archetypes in that complexes are "personifications" of archetypes; complexes are the means through which archetypes manifest themselves in the personal psyche (Stevens, p.28). These functional components subsist under the co-ordinating influence of the Self.

The ego is seen as both the mediator of the Self to the world and of the world to the Self. For Jung the Self is "not only the center but also the whole circumference, which embraces both consciousness and unconsciousness" (OF 12, par. 41). It is difficult not to be reminded here of the poem

God is my center  
 When I close Him in  
 And my circumference  
 When I melt in Him.

If we were to assemble the ego and the Self, as well as the persona and the shadow in a schema, it might look like this:



Jung describes the persona as that which one is not, but which oneself and others think one is (CW 9/1, par. 221). It is a functional complex that comes into existence for reasons of adaptation or personal convenience but is by no means identical with the personality. The persona is exclusively concerned with the relation to objects.

The shadow is everything an individual refuses to acknowledge about himself (CW 9/1, par. 513). Qualities perceived as undesirable, unacceptable, or reprehensible are repressed or hidden from view in the shadow, the polar opposite of the persona.

The ego is a complex of ideas that constitutes the center of [one's] field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity (CW 6, par. 706).

The Self the unknown essence that transcends our powers of comprehension (CW 7, par. 399). It is the ordering structure living principle within the psyche.

As an empirical concept, the Self designates the whole range of psychic phenomena in humans. It expresses the unity of the personality as a whole. ... It encompasses both the experienceable and the inexperienceable (or the not-yet experienced). . . . Insofar as psychic totality, consisting of both conscious and unconscious contents, is a postulate, it is a transcendental concept, for it presupposes the existence of unconscious factors on empirical grounds, and thus characterizes an entity that can be described only in part, but for the other part, remains at present unknowable and illimitable (CW 6, par. 789).

Jung's psychology is essentially based on a biological model: the existence of archetypes embedded in the collective unconscious. The archetype is a primordial image that is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and therefore informed by the material of conscious experience. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a capacity in potentia. It is the archetypal image that will make the archetype appear in consciousness.

This difficult concept may become more comprehensible if we use an image from a movie that was popular in the thirties, *The Invisible Man*. When the Invisible Man was invisibly walking through a room, you knew that he was there because chairs or other objects moved about - it was evidence that there was something there that the viewer couldn't see. How did we "see" the Invisible Man? It was when he was putting on a coat and wearing bandages on his head that his presence became "visible." What better image, then, to see the archetype in the Invisible Man and the archetypal image in the Invisible Man dressed up, since our psyche "dresses up" the archetype with our personal experience.

The strongest scientific support of Jung's archetypal hypothesis has come from behavioral biology of ethology. The behavioral repertoire that every animal possesses is dependent upon experiences that evolution has built into the central nervous system of the species. These structures are called innate releasing mechanisms (IRM). Each IRM becomes active when a significant stimulus appears.



When such a stimulus occurs, the IRM is released and the animal responds with a characteristic pattern of behavior that has adapted, through evolution, to the given situation. Thus, the archetype is essentially a biological concept.

Another validation of Jung's proposition that there is layer in our psyche, the collective unconscious, which provides the archetypal "geological" structure and that myths, fairy tales, legends, fantasies, and dreams give content to the events in our psyches, at the same time placing them in historical continuity and in a timeless, transcendent dimension comes from comparing two myths in two cultures separated by centuries and by geography. One is found among the Platonic Myths wherein, it is said, the soul of each (if us is given a unique daimon before we are born, and it has selected an image or a pattern that we will live on earth. The daimon is the soul companion that guides us, but at birth we forget. The daimon remembers, however, what belongs to us, and therefore, it is our daimon that is the carrier of our destiny. We must go back to childhood, because there we still had some idea, some grasp of what the intention of our daimon was. We need to get back to that if we don't want to be sick.

The other one comes from West Africa. It says that before we enter this world, we draw up a contract with our double as to what we will do in the course of our life. Then, just before birth, we are led to the Tree of forgetfulness. We embrace it, and from that moment on, we have no conscious recollection of the contract. We must, however, live up to our agreements, for if we do not we will become ill, and we will need the help of a diviner to contact our heavenly double to discover which articles of the agreement we are failing to fulfill.

For Jung, the essence of life was *esse in anima*, to be in the soul. Whenever we disregard the unique promise of our existence, that which James Hillman calls "The Soul's Code," we are left with a sense of loss, of quiet despair. Primitive people call it "loss of soul"; we call it depression. The solution is to discover what we were meant to be, what our daimon knows, what our contract was before we came to the Tree of Forgetfulness.

As an empiricist, Jung's keen observation and his unwillingness to dismiss the unusual and the unexpected as irrelevant led him to the discoveries that resulted in his Word-Association Experiment and to his therapeutic approach. A symptom, for him, was not there to be treated so that it can "go away." On the contrary, a symptom was a finger that pointed to a frustration of archetypal intent. The greater the gap between archetypal needs and environmental fulfillment of those needs, the greater the stress and the more incapacitating the symptoms. Thus, therapy needs to explore the meaning of those symptoms, not to focus on making them disappear.

You have only to look at the expression on the face of an infant to recognize this frustration of archetypal intent. There is an expectation there; the infant has not been born with a *tabula rosa*; it has big eyes that look around and expect to be smiled at and given some approval. If that infant doesn't receive that kind of feedback, and if that absence is repeated, you can see that infant looking sideways and the expression of sadness that follows - first a sort of expression of "What's going on here?" of not understanding, of confusion, or "How come? How is this possible? And then the

depression becomes deeper and deeper. You can see it in the following clinical example, that describes, also, how a Jungian would approach that particular situation.

A person comes to her analyst and recounts the fact that she has had difficulty at work. She was unable to complete a task that she was given. So the question is What happened? She said, "I felt sluggish; I felt like a big weight. To tell you the truth, I felt bored." One is bored only when one doesn't engage. When something in you is not invested in whatever it is you are doing, that's when you get bored. It has nothing to do with what happens out there; it has everything to do with how you are connecting with it. So I started asking myself, "Why is she not engaged in the thing she is supposed to be doing?" So obviously the next question from me was, "So, what would you have rather, done?" She said, "Oh, I would have rather gone out to do some skiing or some other activity." "Oh? And how old is that part of you who would rather play than go to school?" Some other school of therapy would have attempted to "help" her do the task she was having such great difficulty doing. I asked myself, "What is happening in this woman's life that makes what she is doing so absolutely unengaging?" In other words, "Why is the passion that ought to be there not there?" The next question obviously was, "Where is your passion? Where is your interest? What would you have liked?" To use Hillman's expression, "What in your soul's code would be speaking if you were to do something that would really express yourself?" And from one thing to another, she told me what she would have liked to do and how she was stopped by her parents from doing it.

If you are not connected with soul, obviously you are depressed, obviously you have disconnected with something that is life giving, which is the place of energy, the connection, and if you want, the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. "Being that has soul is living being. Soul is the living thing in [us], which lives of itself and causes life" (CW 9/1, par. 56).

Among all of Jung's contributions, I believe there is nothing more important than the capacity to access the imaginal, because there is no other way that we can compensate the real conflicts that we have to fight through in every-day life. If we were to try to solve them only on the concrete plane, we would have no source in which to really put our roots and to draw up energy that is beyond our level. That access to that kind of layer is the imaginal. It's in fairy tales, it's in myths that one's psyche can get energized at a time when one really doesn't know where that energy might be coming from because our personal sources have gone fallow. So the contribution of everything that can open the door to the imaginal is an immense contribution, not only because the imaginal is rich in and by itself, but because it is the vehicle to the transcendent, and the transcendent is one of the major aspects of healing. How can one help someone who is profoundly depressed, having the feeling that he or she has done everything they could, that at the material level, there is no resource that they haven't tapped into without result? If they have absolutely no hope and no door open to the transcendent and they remain only at the concrete level of reality, they will miss out on that which, for Jung, was a natural alternative level of reality, which is the spiritual aspect of our soul.

The moment you realize that this is not all there is, that there is another dimension of which you are a part, then you are never going to be alone, you are never going to be lonely, and you are always going to feel that you are a part of something that is bigger than you are, greater than you are,



that is never going to go away because it has been there from the beginning of time.

How does the transcendent function get activated? By enduring the conflict of opposites, instead of rationally opting for one or the other of the terms of the conflict, you just stay with it and stay with it and sweat through it, and all of a sudden, out of the blue, you don't know how, but you wake up and you are no longer there. Somehow, your perspective has changed, as if something has come and has taken you out of the valley and put you on the peak of the mountain, and you see the conflict down in the valley but you're not there any more.

You have to have had the experience to know what I'm talking about, because words cannot really express that incredible shift of perspective that lets you tolerate something that, twenty-four hours before, was totally intolerable. Somehow you feel better for it, and somehow you feel expanded. There is something in you that has become stronger and has given you the feeling that, if you were able to do that, you can do other things, too. And you can trust yourself and you can rely on yourself, and that is invaluable. But over and beyond that, you can trust also the fact that in your make-up you are not only in this finite existence that started and will end at some particular point that you don't know yet, but you know it will come. There is the reality of the psyche, and that reality is: the psyche is timeless and spaceless. Remember, the experience of doing something, and all of a sudden you recollect something and, for one reason or another, you shudder because the memory of it is so incredibly present that you have the feeling that you have just done whatever it is that you have remembered right now and you are feeling, "Oh, my God, I wish I hadn't done it."

It is that kind of collapse of time and space that is characteristic of psychic experience. It might have happened forty years ago, but it has the feeling that it happened, not yesterday, but now, this minute. And it is because of that it behooves us to realize that our days are, if you want, lined with this alternate reality that can help us at any time to step out of something that is troublesome, and find, in that alternate reality, a comfort, calm, and contentment. This does not mean avoidance of whatever it is that the conflict requires, but it gives us the strength to endure it and to reach an understanding of what the conflict was really all about.

Jung made possible a new experience of reality through the rehabilitation of the mythical and archetypal dimension of the psyche, leading to the realisation that images are themselves embodiments of meaning. The unitary vision of mythical imagination is today dichotomized into the individual and the world. To recapture this vision, an art is needed, the artless art of watching images in the psyche's mirror. This art, in the end, involves the relativization and decalcification of the Apollonian and Heroic ego; an art of being fully attentive and at the same time fully relaxed, ready to listen to the voice of the Self. Imagination is the intermediary realm between conscious and unconscious (inner and outer.). It embodies the first images and constitutes the common matrix of myth and language. Thus it is that characteristically human talent - the divine power in humankind that works toward self-transcendence and reconciliation of spirit and world. For it is the imaginal that allows us, in the words of William Blake

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.

The imaginal is the vehicle; and voice of the transcendent. The transcendent function, emerging from enduring the tension of the opposites, forms the middle ground on which the opposites can be united. The transcendent function always represents the creative intervention and guidance of the Self, the archetype of wholeness, which functions as the regulating center of the psyche. Jung's approach has also emphasized the transcendent context of human experience, making possible a spiritual awareness or participation in a higher purpose that soars above the mundane preoccupations of the purely personal. Thus, a living spirituality grants access to the numinous. Spirituality, therefore, is the attitude peculiar to a consciousness that has been changed by the experience of the numinous, essential to confront and counteract the depression and confusion resulting from our existential condition.

In his book *On Jung*, Anthony Stevens notes that one of Jung's most extraordinary gifts was his ability to live in his time and to simultaneously step out of it to share an affinity with men of all times that have ever been. He appreciated the incomparable value of the sacred view, which elevates human life above mundane survival and enhances all acts by revealing the duty we owe to our wholeness and authenticity, to our fellow creatures, and to our planet. His stance grants us a vision of our dual nature, both temporal and eternal, micro- and macrocosm, and though we may be subject to the constraints of daily existence, we nevertheless transcend them by virtue of our humanity. To be spiritually alive, he believed, we must perceive ourselves to be part of a cosmic purpose (p. 273).

## GLOSSARY

**Psyche:** The totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious (CW6, par.797). "Psyche" would have to be understood as a purposive system, as an arrangement not merely of matter ready for life, but of living matter, or more precisely, of living processes (CW 8, par. 606)

**Archetype:** Can be conceived as a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or engram, which has arisen through the condensation of countless processes of a similar kind. ... As a mythological motif, it is a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way. From this standpoint it is a psychic expression of the physiological and anatomical disposition. . . . [I]n its constant and universal distribution it is the product of equally constant and universal influences from without, which must, therefore, act like a natural law. (CW6, par.748)

It is an innate center or dominant, common to both brain and psyche, which has the capacity to initiate, influence and mediate behavioral sequences and typical experiences of all human beings.

**Complex:** Functional unit- composing the unconscious. A group of associated ideas bound together by a shared emotional charge. Complexes are the means through which archetypes manifest themselves in the personal psyche. They are autonomous, having an archetypal nucleus which functions beyond the reach of the conscious will; the emotional charge clusters around this nucleus. The less conscious a complex is the more complete its autonomy.

**Animus /anima:** Contrasexual inner personality, the inner attitude, the characteristic face, that is turned towards the unconscious. They act as mediators of the unconscious to the ego in dreams and in the imagination; they provide means for compensating the conscious attitude and thus accomplish inner as well as outer adaptation.

**Transcendent function:** Forms the middle ground on which the opposites can be united. It emerges from the activity of the unconscious constellated by thesis and antithesis in equal measure and standing in a compensatory relation to both. The energy created by the tension of opposites flows into the mediatory product, which forms the raw material for a process, not of dissolution, but of construction, in which thesis and antithesis both play their part.

**Types:** Ways in which people differ as to their assigning importance to inner or outer realms of experience determining the introverted/extraverted dimension. People also differ with regard to the conscious use they make of each of four primary functions. In order to form a complete picture of an object in the psyche besides thinking (the meaning of things) the function of feeling (valuation), sensation (reality-sense) and intuition (perception of possibilities) we also need the reaction of the unconscious (CW10, par 626).