

Individuation: Inner Work

Murray Stein

Abstract

The work of individuation proceeds in two movements, an analytic and a synthetic one. These are not sequential—first one, then the other—but rather take place in a rhythm specific to each individuation process. The analytic movement results in separation and differentiation; the synthetic movement builds up the transcendent function. Out of this process emerges an identity based on conscious and unconscious, personal and cultural (as well as archetypal) images and contents. Jungian analysis works in both directions through the analysis of identity and identifications, of transference contents and dynamics, of complexes and cultural assumptions as well as through the synthesis of emergent aspects of the self as they manifest in dreams, active imagination, and archetypal transference. The individuation process is lifelong and does not begin with entry into analysis or end with the termination of analysis.

Keywords

Analysis, anima, animus, differentiation, identity, identification, imitation, individuation, individuation process, introjection, life-line, participation mystique, persona, projection, separation, synthesis, transcendent function, transference.

“For me,” the elder analyst said, “Jung’s greatest contribution to psychology was the discovery of an inner world.” He was a man who had known Jung personally and had studied his writings for decades. I remember well the feeling of immense gratitude with which he spoke these words. As one who lived in an extremely extroverted culture, he recognized that Jung’s opening of the inner world had meant everything to him. Some years later I wrote a book entitled *Jung’s Map of the Soul*, in which I focused precisely on Jung’s pioneering explorations of the inner world and his accounts of what he had found.

Many people have shared with me their gratitude to Jung for offering a non-pathological account of psychological life. What a gift this is for those of us who

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have struggled to become individuals! I well remember how relieved I was when a college professor in an English literature class spoke of adolescent rebellion as healthy and necessary, as an affirmation of a person's normal striving for self-definition and separateness from his parents' generation. So it wasn't only Oedipal hatred and a wish to kill the father, a negative complex! My conscience was soothed, and I could affirm myself without a guilty feeling that I was only attacking the older generation out of shadowy rivalry. Naturally there was a mixture of motives, as always. Psychological life is complex, as Jung so frequently emphasized. Inner work has to do with raising the paradoxes of the psyche into consciousness and with untangling them, with making motives and part-selves distinct and holding them firmly in the mirror of consciousness. Always the shadow lurks in the background. But that is not the entire story. What Jung offers is a more complete view of the psyche as a whole and a way for coming to terms with it. And this I have found to be redemptive.

Yet besides all of that pioneering exploration, I want to say that Jung's life-long business was inner *work*, and for me this feature of his published writings has been equally impressive and perhaps even more important. Why? Because he offers us several methods for gaining direct experience of the inner world for ourselves. What I am referring to here is, of course, the work of individuation.

As I see it, the opus of individuation proceeds in two major movements. First, it requires a person to break up (i.e., analyze and make conscious) the prevailing state of unconscious identification with extraneous figures and psychic contents. This movement has the effect of creating a mirror of consciousness. Second, after a person has made some headway with this analysis, individuation requires paying careful and continuous attention to the emergence of the Self. This is the synthetic aspect of individuation and requires heeding the spirit of the unconscious. The two movements, which appear in some respects to be exactly contradictory to one another, are of equal importance.

The Analytic Movement

One of Jung's first uses of the term "individuation," perhaps even the very first, occurs in a text from 1916, *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*. This work contains what I believe one can consider a central piece of Jung's myth for the second half of his life. The text, Jung tells us in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, came to him in a sort of visionary experience, more or less dictated from the unconscious. It emerged over the course of several days and during his years of most intense inner work, the results of which were recorded in the famous Red Book. In *Septem Sermones*, the teacher, a figure named Basilides of Alexandria, states that the *principium individuationis* is the essence of *creatura*, and sets the *creatura* apart from the *pleroma*. For the individual human being (i.e., *creatura*), it is a matter of life and death to become separate and distinct:

What is the harm, ye ask, in not distinguishing oneself? If we do not distinguish, we get beyond our own nature, away from *creatura*. We fall into indistinctiveness, which is the other quality of the *pleroma*. We fall into the *pleroma* itself and cease to be *crea-*

tures. We are given over to dissolution in the nothingness. This is the death of the creature. Therefore we die in such measure as we do not distinguish. Hence the natural striving of the creature goeth towards distinctiveness, fighteth against primeval, perilous sameness. This is called the PRINCIPIUM INDIVIDUATIONIS. This principle is the essence of the creature. From this you can see why indistinctiveness and non-distinction are a great danger for the creature. (Jung, 1916a, p. 380)

The principle of individuation defines the essence of the human. It is absolutely fundamental to human beings to distinguish themselves from their surroundings. This is the essential nature of individual consciousness: to be itself, it must create distinctions and separateness. It is in accord with human nature, therefore, to seek individuation. Individuation is not optional, not conditional, not subject to vagaries of cultural differences. It is essential.

The teacher states further that the *pleroma* is All and Nothing. It contains all possible psychological “qualities” but without distinction or separation. It is the primal psychic *materia*, the Great Mother, the matrix out of which all consciousness will emerge. The fundamental principle of the *pleroma* is inclusion without distinction. Out of this and standing over against it emerges the consciousness of the single individual, whose essential nature is distinctiveness and whose most basic impulse is to achieve individual consciousness, i.e., a sense of uniqueness, which requires continuously making distinctions between the I and the not-I: not this, not that, but something other, something apart and unique. In the course of making such distinctions, a person discovers (or perhaps creates) the opposites. Pairs of contrasting qualities come into view: good and evil, time and space, beauty and ugliness, male and female. Upon attaining visibility, some of them beckon and invite identification and preference. The creature is tempted to identify with one side of the pair and to repudiate the other. In this fashion, the first stage of definition is achieved—and shadow is created. Thus is born, too, an illusion of distinctiveness. While this is a step in the direction of individuation, it is not yet the real thing because the qualities identified with are collective, not individual.

This early stage of individuation is based on forging a state of psychological identity with some qualities that have become separated out of the *pleromatic* state. A somewhat distinct but still collective personality and character come into being. (This, Jung will say, is a *persona*.) Now individuation demands that one separate from the collective qualities that have been identified with:

The qualities belong to the *pleroma*, and only in the name and sign of distinctiveness can and must we possess or live them. We must distinguish ourselves from qualities. In the *pleroma* they are balanced and void; in us not. Being distinguished from them delivereth us. (Jung, 1916a, p. 381)

Thus the work of separation continues, and now on a profound inner level, creating a distinction between the individual and the very qualities that had been taken for one’s self, which had become one’s most fundamental attachments, values, and convictions. The urgent requirement of individuation is to return to one’s

nature, to one's true being ("Therefore not after difference, as ye think it, must ye strive; but after YOUR OWN BEING"—p. 382). This striving after one's own being is a major work and extends throughout a lifetime.

Jung (1916b) again takes up this same theme of what it means to become an individual, but this time in a less mythopoetic and more prosaic psychological way, in a lecture that he delivered to the Association for Analytical Psychology in the same year, 1916, titled "Über das Unbewusste und seine Inhalte." (This is also the year in which the Psychological Club was founded.) Here he develops for the first time the notion of the persona and how it is constructed as a "compromise" between the individual and the collective. The persona is constructed, he says, of pieces of the collective that the ego identifies with and that function to facilitate adaptation to the social world in which a person lives. The persona is actually a "segment of the collective psyche" (Jung, 1916b, paras. 464–470), but it mimics individuality. Its existence can be, therefore, a subtle enemy of individuation if it is not made conscious as a "mask": "Human beings have one faculty which, though it is of the greatest utility for collective purposes, is most pernicious for individuation, and that is the faculty of imitation" (para. 463).

It is this proclivity to imitate rather than individuate that led Jung to be so negative about the prospect of institutes and training programs set up in his name. "Thank God I'm Jung and not a Jungian" is one of his more famous remarks, indicating his jaundiced view of people who form a persona by identifying with his ideas and methods. This may result in nothing but a lot of imitators, he judged, through whom his original ideas could be turned into stereotypes and recipes. When Joseph Wheelwright told Jung about the formation of a training program in San Francisco, Wheelwright reported, Jung stared at him as if "he had been hit by a Mack truck, and I said, 'I see you really don't want to hear about it.' He said 'To tell the truth I can think of nothing I would rather less hear about, Wheelwright'" (quoted in Shamdasani, 2004, p. 345). Jung was clearly allergic to imitators.

It should be stated, however, that forming unconscious attachments and forging psychological identity with important people in one's immediate environment is an entirely normal part of early development. Infants become attached to their mothers and enter into a state of *participation mystique* with their close caregivers. This is actually a primitive form of communication through unconscious channels. The infant can indicate need and feeling to its mother in a nonverbal way that the mother registers through her profound identity with the infant. This begins even in the womb through a sensitive mother's attunement with the fetus. Later the child will form similar relationships with other family members and eventually with neighborhood, tribe, school, city, and nation. With all of these environmental elements the developing person enters into participation mystique. Through the existence of this type of human identity, which is a socially constructed persona, the collective gives voice to itself. One becomes a good citizen, a loyal son or daughter, a reliable employee, a faithful husband or wife, an ethical professional, and people feel confident that they can lend such a person their trust and high regard. Such people may speak for the family, for the community, even for the nation or all of humanity, but not for themselves as individuals. If they remain unconscious of the persona, their true individuality lies dormant and hidden away, and they simply assume the role of mouthpiece for the

collective attitudes they have identified with. While this may serve their interests to a point because everyone after all has to adapt to society and culture, and a well-constructed persona is a distinct advantage for practical purposes of survival and social success, for individuation it is not an end but only a beginning. Jung concluded his lecture by affirming that "Individuality is the principle which makes possible, and if need be compels, a progressive differentiation from the collective psyche" (para. 514). Individuation is a force of nature, every bit as strong and persistent in Jung's view as the instinct of sexuality and the will to power. If not chosen consciously, the drive toward individuation may produce bizarre twists and turns in a life's course as it insists on individuality in the most unexpected places and at inconvenient times. Jung saw this type of conflict as a possible source of neurosis.

At the same time that he was composing the two texts I have just quoted from, Jung was also working on *Psychological Types*, which he began thinking about during the period of his break with Freud around 1913 but did not complete and publish until 1921. It is a massive tome and represents his accumulated psychological insight and understanding to that date. In the concluding chapter of *Types*, he defines "individuation" as "a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality" (para. 757). Opposed to this is the psychological phenomenon of "identity": "a characteristic of the primitive mentality and the real foundation of *participation mystique*, which is...a relic of the original non-differentiation of subject and object... a characteristic of the mental state of early infancy, and...of the unconscious of the civilized adult, which, in so far as it has not become a content of consciousness, remains in a permanent state of identity with objects" (para. 741). Identity, he says, "depends on the possibility of projection and introjection" (*ibid.*). From this statement we can conclude that individuation involves making conscious and peeling away from one's personal sense of self a great deal of unconscious material—all the introjections and identifications, the unconscious identity with objects and people, which have accumulated over a lifetime. This is an ongoing aspect of individuation that is never final, never complete.

If identification with the personal elements that make up the persona is an impediment to individuation on the one hand, identification with archetypal figures of the collective unconscious is another and perhaps even more difficult (because more subtle) obstacle to be overcome. In the course of his self-analysis, Jung discovered the severity of this second threat to individuation. Once the persona has been analyzed and dismembered, he states in the 1916 lecture mentioned above, the images of the collective unconscious rise to the surface and offer themselves for identification. (One should add that this might also happen if a person has not previously formed an adequate persona, as compensation for lack of social identity. In this case, a negative identity, *vis-à-vis* the collective, often takes shape, and this is based on archetypal figures like "the rebel" or the "the outcast" or "the victim.") If a person succumbs to this temptation, the result is a grandiose inflation (a "mana personality"). One becomes convinced that one is a prophet or a wise sage, a culture hero or a demon lover, or another myth-sized figure, and an identity is forged from a psychological content that is archetypal. But this new identity is as collective as the elements making up a persona, and equally antipa-

thetic to individuality. For individuation's sake, identification with the figures from the collective unconscious must be analyzed and resisted as strenuously as identification with the persona. Delusions of grandeur are the result if the individual fails in this.

It was this threat to individuation that faced Jung after he broke with Freud and gave up the persona of psychoanalyst, first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, editor of the *Jahrbuch*, and professor at the university. At this point he was plunged into the world of the collective unconscious and entered the period of his life that he calls "Confrontation with the Unconscious" in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung, 1989). The task of individuation now became to differentiate his unique personality from the archetypal images. The structure that interfaces with the collective unconscious, corresponding to the persona that interfaces with the collective world around, is the anima/animus. Jung was just then (in 1916) beginning to identify the anima in men and the animus in women. The danger, as Jung seems to have experienced it at that time, was to become identified with the anima and be carried off by her seductive inducements: You are an Artist! You are a Genius! You are a misunderstood Hero! You are a World Savior! You are the Christ!, etc. To take on this kind of an identity would be fatal to individuation.

The opus of individuation, therefore, requires careful analysis on two fronts: on the persona side, to differentiate the subject from the social collective all around and to dissolve the identifications that have built up over time in one's personal history, and on the anima/animus side, to differentiate from the collective unconscious as the fantasies and archetypal images emerge and invite grandiose identification with them as a compensation for what has been lost through the analysis of the persona.

In an important passage, Jung (1916b) defines what he means by "individuality":

The collective psyche must be contrasted with...the concept of *individuality*. The individual stands, as it were, between the conscious part of the collective psyche and the unconscious part. He is the *reflecting surface* in which the world of consciousness can perceive its own unconscious, historical image, even as Schopenhauer says that the intellect holds up a mirror to the universal Will. Accordingly the individual would be a point of intersection or a dividing line, neither conscious nor unconscious, but a bit of both. (para. 507, my italics).

I think of this aspect of the individuation opus, therefore, as equivalent to transforming an oil painting into a mirror, so that one recognizes that the contents shown within the frame are not permanent but temporary. They can come and go, depending on the demands of the situation. It is a shift in awareness that sees through the fixed identifications and is able to let them pass into and out of view without clinging to them and trying to make a permanent feature of the scene that is being temporarily mirrored in consciousness. Differentiating one's consciousness from the images offered by the anima/animus on the one hand and from the persona identity on the other creates a mirror that can more accurately reflect

whatever passes before it. There is as a consequence much less projection and distortion, and objects can be seen more clearly and related to for what they truly are. Genuine relationships, I to Thou, become possible.

In addition, one stands increasingly before the mirror oneself and witnesses one's own role in the dramas of life that are engaging one in their enactments. In the mirror of consciousness, one sees now not only others but also oneself. Naked. And increasingly one may come to the point of accepting what one sees of oneself as good enough. At first it is typically the imperfections and flaws that stand out, and one wants to turn away in self-defense. But if one gazes long enough and finds an attitude of appreciation for life itself, one will also find the features of beauty and attractiveness. Self-acceptance becomes possible with a degree of clear-sightedness and lack of illusion.

Now I would like to make some personal observations. The opus of individuation, as I have described it, is for everyone and is a natural process of reflection. Analysis helps it along but is not required. Since I have spent so much time working as an analyst, however, I would like to draw on this experience to speak about the value of these perspectives concerning individuation for analysis. Over the last thirty years of working as a Jungian analyst and teacher/supervisor, I have found the ideas about individuation put forward by Jung in these and other texts especially valuable for the analysis of transference and countertransference. The interpersonal "field" that comes into being between analyst and analysand is a *locus classicus* for projection, introjection, imitation, identification, and participation mystique (sometime bordering on *folie a deux*). In analysis, we have the opportunity to study the activity of these dynamics in great detail as transference and countertransference phenomena unfold in the course of a long analytic relationship. Jung wisely laid down the rule that analysts must themselves be analyzed before taking up a clinical practice precisely to avoid countertransference pitfalls.

There is a much touted ideal afoot, first stated by Wilfred Bion, whose writings have some strong Jungian overtones, that the analyst should enter each session without memory and without desire. From the perspective of the work of individuation as described above, this is also what Jung would recommend. The analyst's projections onto the analysand should be made conscious and held in check. The analyst's unconscious identification with the analysand must be analyzed and removed. The analyst must realize that it is another individual, not a generic "patient" or an identical twin, who is seeking analysis and coming to the *temenos* of analysis for that purpose. The analyst must not be identified, either, with the archetypal figures of the healer or the savior or any other image of the collective unconscious. Nor should the analyst step into the trap of projective identification and become manipulated by the analysand into breaking the frame of analysis by entering into a love affair, conducting business affairs, becoming the godparent of the analysand's newborn child, etc. If the mirror of the analyst's consciousness has been cleaned up, analysis can take place in a space that is free of contamination by unconscious material brought into the work by the analyst. Of course, this is an ideal and one very difficult to create or to maintain. In my work as a control analyst for candidates in training, my eye has been largely trained on possible countertransference attitudes and reactions. Does she want to nurture and feed the analysand too much? Does he want to overcome resistances too hero-

ically? Is the candidate falling into the role of mother or father, brother or sister, lover or child or antagonist? These must be made conscious and integrated if the analysis is to gain fluidity and movement. Empathy is not accurate if it is swayed to one side or the other by projection or identification. To practice analysis is to be in analysis oneself, constantly questioning one's emotional reactions and analyzing the points of unconscious identity. The analyst must continually individuate, and with each analysand anew.

Transference, as Jung writes about it in his famous essay of 1946 ("On the Psychology of the Transference"), creates a kind of attachment and kinship bond, based on unconscious projection and identity. This provides a golden opportunity for increased consciousness and integration. I can offer myself as an example of this. When I first arrived in Zurich as a young man of 26, I went to the Jung Institute and asked for an analyst. I was given a sheet of paper with a list of names and telephone numbers. From these, I chose a name, and not knowing anything about the analyst except his name and that he spoke English, I dialed his telephone number. When he answered, I instantly heard the voice of my father! It was astonishing. I had an immediate transference connection, with all the attendant complexes and projections from my personal history.

The analysis began, and over time I discovered how unlike the analyst was to my father. As a result, I could see my father more clearly, and I developed some compassion for him. Even so, the personal transference persisted, gradually giving way to other fantasies about the analyst's personal life, his relationship with his wife, his life history, and so forth, all of which were of course completely unknown to me in reality. When we ended the analysis after a couple of years, I parted with a feeling of gratitude and love. My troubled relationship with my father had been healed by this experience, and I could now much better assume the role of father for my own son, who had been born in the course of the analysis.

Some years later, when I returned to the States and set up an analytical practice of my own, I caught myself one day imitating my former analyst in the way I greeted analysands when they entered the room and shook hands when they left. My analyst had been introjected unconsciously, and it was quite some time before I became aware of this. My early identity as an analyst was bolstered by this identification because at the time I needed it, having had so little experience. In time I could let it go and become my own person as an analyst. Sometimes when I gave lectures in an especially inspired Jungian way, I heard the voice and felt myself imitating the mannerisms of Dr. von Franz. Zurich came back to America in my psyche. I eventually managed to convert this identity into conscious love and admiration for these great teachers, and by now I hope I am no longer quite so unconscious of their presence in my psyche. For me it was instructive to discover how lineages are built. This is the way traditions are created and sustained over generations. The intervention of consciousness does not destroy the attachment or the love; it only makes the relationship less compulsive and blind.

The Synthetic Movement

About twenty years ago a woman in her mid-60's approached me seeking analysis. I have not forgotten her words in our first session: "Ever since I was a

young girl and my mother went to see Jung for analysis, I have remembered what she told me. She said that you could continue to grow as long as you live! Jung told her that. And that's why I'm a Jungian and want to enter analysis now, even at my age." I accepted her into analysis, and we worked off and on for about twenty years (she lived several hundred miles away and would come into my area several times a year for a week at a time, when we would meet for an hour every day). And she did grow during this season of autumn in her life. The work of individuation is never done. Her emphasis on "growth" is something I would now like to put into the context of this essay on the individuation process.

Since the individuation process involves so much peeling away of identity and reduction of consciousness to the seeing "I", it might well be asked: So what grows? And is it not a fact that we analysts are commonly called "shrinks," not "growers" or "gardeners"? So it was also the case that as this older woman entered into the work of analysis and began intensively to reflect on her history and her habitual life patterns, she became less identified with her persona and animus. As a result, her psychological size shrank, at least in certain dimensions. She went through the expected crisis of losing confidence in her highly developed and refined social identity, and she also came to question many of her previously held convictions and opinions (the animus identity). As the painting transformed into a mirror, she felt unstable at times and at sea. In my book *In MidLife*, I call this condition "liminality." Liminality is a core feature of psychological transformation whenever it occurs in life. The term indicates a period of uncertainty, when one finds oneself floating "betwixt and between" fixed identities. Then, as the mirror of consciousness becomes emptied of fixed contents, one can also see oneself a good bit more clearly and perhaps even for the first time. This is certainly one important aspect of the growth that takes place during individuation—an increase in consciousness about oneself, one's boundaries, one's true features, which means seeing the shadows and the flaws, as well as the lovely parts. What one loses here in identity, one gains in insight. It is a worthwhile exchange.

Becoming freed from persona and animus/anima identities, moreover, one is released from the past into the present. These identities are personality fixtures that have a long history, and their rigid lock inhibits new growth and restricts wider experience of life and of the Self. At this point in the analysis, she recognized more clearly her personal boundaries and became more sharply defined. Moreover, she could take action on her newly won freedom. She could say "yea" and "nay" in a much more certain and distinct way. For instance, she could give her children a portion of their inheritance, but she could also reserve enough for herself to live on for the remainder of her life without feeling guilty. She could affirm herself among the family members, rather than living in the confusion of wondering if she was giving too much or giving not much at all. This increase in clarity, too, spelled growth. She was becoming more "distinct," in the terminology of the *Septem Sermones*.

More importantly, gaining freedom from the past and living more fully in the present allows one to pay attention to the unconscious in a different way. Jung's key insight about the relation of the unconscious to consciousness was that it not only represents the haunting presence of the past as Freud had taught—in the form of complexes, perseverating family dynamics and traumas, repressed

infantile sexuality, etc.—but that it also manifests the active presence of a living spirit in the “here and now.” The unconscious is forward looking and anticipates possible futures. What comes into view as one begins to pay attention to the unconscious as an actor in the present moment becomes critically useful for orienting oneself to the future. This is especially true if a person is relatively free of persona and anima/animus identifications and has looked long and hard at oneself in the mirror of consciousness.

In the 1916 lecture quoted above (“Über das Unbewusste und seine Inhalte”), Jung refers to “life-lines”: “I am persuaded that the true end of analysis is reached when the patient has gained an adequate knowledge of the methods by which he can maintain contact with the unconscious, and has acquired a psychological understanding sufficient for him to discern the direction of his life-line at the moment” (1916b, para. 501). I find the term “life-line” suggestive. To my knowledge, Jung did not use it again. He distinguishes the life-line concept from Adler’s notion of “guiding fictions” (para. 500), which he finds too fixed and “cramping.” A life-line is a perception of direction made in the present moment, and it looks ahead, not backward. It indicates the “direction of the currents of libido” at the present time. Since these currents are fluid and constantly shifting direction, the perceived life-line must be held as temporary. It only hints at what may possibly be unfolding and where the libido is heading. This orientation to the future is what Jung would call the prospective orientation of the psyche. This function of the psyche is not teleological in the sense of creating a definite fate or preordained destiny. It only suggests what may be possible and forthcoming in the immediate future by way of libido direction.

The unconscious not only contains the past, then, but it also contains the prospects of a psychological future. This notion expresses the basis for the growth orientation of Jungian psychology. Individuation, moreover, not only means transforming consciousness into a mirror with no fixed content or features of identification—i.e., into a more or less pure “I” of conscious awareness—it is also a process of development that emerges through time in small but steady increments.

We must keep in mind that the goal of individuation is individuality, and the individual is “a point of intersection or a dividing line, neither conscious nor unconscious, but a bit of both” (Jung, 1916b, para. 507), as quoted earlier. The center of consciousness is occupied by the ego complex—registering and sorting data, reflecting, reacting to stimuli, acting and containing, defending, initiating and responding, calculating and planning, rejoicing and suffering. Jung was ever careful to call this center of the field of consciousness a *complex*, because the ego is not a simple and pure entity or entirely conscious. It is the most intimate and individual psychological fact we can know, and we count it as individuality itself. It is the actor, the gazer, the initiator, and the sufferer. Yet much of this “I” is not conscious and not available to reflection. We cannot see all of it in the mirror of consciousness. Parts are hidden in the shadow; other parts have not yet emerged and remain potential. The point is this: Individuality depends on all of this coming to light. Individuality cannot manifest fully until the invisible, unconscious elements of the personality that lie outside the range of the ego complex are brought into the open. In order for the individual to be completely revealed, an “assimilation of unconscious contents” (para. 505) must happen.

This requirement introduces the second great movement of the individuation opus: synthesis. To bring this about, the ego must relinquish control over the contents of consciousness temporarily in favor of a process that is not entirely under its management: "The assimilation of unconscious contents leads... to a condition in which conscious intention is excluded and is supplanted by a process of development that seems to us irrational. This process alone signifies individuation, and its product is individuality... particular and universal at once" (Jung, 1916b, para. 505). This act of giving over control to an irrational process of emergence and synthesis gives birth to the transcendent function, the essential core of individuality.

In another paper written in 1916 (a very creative year indeed!) entitled "The Transcendent Function," Jung (1916c) described how to set this irrational process of individuation into motion. The psychological factor that he now began calling the transcendent function "arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents" (para. 131). It therefore represents a more complete picture of the whole psyche and specifically of individuality than can be obtained by the ego complex alone through introspective reflection and taking inventory of what simply appears in the mirror of consciousness. The main method for creating the transcendent function is active imagination, which Jung describes for the first time in this 1916 text. Basically what active imagination does is to make conscious, through deliberate effort, i.e., work, the unconscious images and fantasies that are potential attributes of the individual but are not now, and perhaps never have been, accessed by the ego complex. The images that are captured through active imagination, Jung found, offer a rich prospective value for the further development of conscious attitudes. They are also, he explains here, more coherent and useful for creating the transcendent function than are dreams, because dreams "make too great demands on the subject" (para. 153). (Later, notably in "Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy" [CW 12], Jung would include dreams importantly in the irrational process of individuation, and Dr. von Franz emphasized dreams in her classic paper on this subject.)

It is important to recognize that these unconscious images and patterns that now emerge in the individuation process are different from those that were unearthed in the prior analysis of identity. Those all were from the past and were fixed in place for personal reasons having to do with early development through introjection and identity creation (persona and anima/animus identities). These images from active imagination arise in the present from the unconscious matrix, and they are archetypal, often numinous, and definitely compensatory to the personal equation and prevailing attitudes of the ego complex. Those earlier images constricted individuality and narrowed psychological options; these expand individuality in the direction of the Self, i.e., the psyche's wholeness, and they offer totally new options for feeling and action.

With the method of active imagination, as Jung (1916c) describes it, a dialogue opens between conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche in which now one side takes the lead, now the other (paras. 181ff.), until a "third thing" is formed that represents a union of the two parts (para. 189). This is the transcendent function, which "manifests itself as a quality of conjoined opposites." It is this new synthetic psychological structure (a union of conscious and unconscious parts), then, that is able more completely to represent a person's wholeness and

individuality in all its heights and depths, from the instinctual to the spiritual—body, soul, and spirit (para. 190). With the creation and growth of the transcendent function, a person is freed to be himself fully, freely, and genuinely. The whole individual emerges. Needless to say, this irrational process of individuation is a deeply spiritual one since the contents that emerge from the unconscious are typically numinous.

“The Transcendent Function” of 1916 was a preliminary sketch and an anticipation of the extensive studies and reflections that flowed from Jung’s pen in the decades to follow. His views on the centrality of active imagination and dreams for individuation were deepened and extended in his brilliant “Commentary on ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower’” of 1929 and again in his paper of 1933, given at the first Eranos Tagung, “Zur Empirie des Individuationsprozesses,” translated into English as “A Study in the Process of Individuation” (Jung, 1934). Most of Jung’s later works dealing with individuation had to do with the movements of emergence and synthesis. Although the analytic movement in the individuation process never dropped away completely, the synthetic aspect came more to the fore. Jung’s ultimate statement on synthesis was the late and magisterial work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, published in 1955, in his 80th year.

In the analysis of the woman I have been referring to, the use of active imagination was of critical importance for her individuation process. Through consistent and long-term use of this method, she was able eventually to experience an impressive constellation of images and narratives that revolved around numinous images of a Great Goddess and the Quan Yin figure of Buddhism—nurturing, compassionate, feminine deities. At first, this figure stood in stark contrast, even in direct contradiction, to her conscious egoistic attitude. In this imaginal figure, she truly met an “opposite” to her conscious attitude and ego complex. Historically, she had been known as a strident, emotionally fragile, narcissistic, male-identified woman, and she had vivid and pervasive memories of herself as an inadequate mother, a critical and complaining wife, and a frustrated intellectual. As she looked into the mirror of consciousness, she was often horrified and appalled at what she saw of herself, and she grieved deeply for past “sins” of omission and commission. The compassionate, loving, forgiving Goddess was a far cry indeed from her sense of her own individuality. With the repeated appearance of this image in active imagination, however, and increasing integration of the qualities represented by her, she was able—as I observed from my perspective as her analyst—to unite and synthesize the known historic ego complex with these new features of the collective feminine. Finally she could experience herself as the “third thing” that Jung writes about: the transcendent function “as a quality of conjoined opposites.” In this sense, she grew into a new person—not a different person, but a more whole person—whose conscious attitudes reflected vastly greater dimensionality. When she looked at herself in the mirror of consciousness, she could see an incarnation of Quan Yin alongside the human-all-too-human person she well knew herself to be. She did not become inflated by an archetypal identification.

Along the way of this irrational process, there were a number of important synchronicities. Synchronicity, I have come to realize, accompanies individuation regularly once it has been taken up in the irrational process we are speaking of

here. In her case, the synchronicities appeared as moments of opportunity concretely to realize her emerging Self, this synthesis of the personal and collective. Her children presented opportunities for critically testing her newly won capacities for support and containment. Friends reentered and left her life at key moments; important books came her way at just the right time; opportunities to revisit old places, persons, and objects that had represented crises or failures became available for a new approach. Her dreams also added important features to the picture of emergent selfhood. It was this whole set of related phenomena—data from history, conscious awareness and memory, unconscious images from active imagination and dreams, and synchronicities—that added up to what I have described in my book *Transformation—Emergence of the Self*.

In this elderly woman, who was in her late 80's when we finally concluded our sessions—at that time conducted only by telephone because she could no longer travel—I had the privilege of witnessing the process of individuation take root and flower. I guess we were both “gardeners” in this case. The work was truly a confirmation of her expectation that “growth” was still possible for her when she entered Jungian analysis in her late 60's.

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