

SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS ON  
SCIENCE OF THE SOUL: A JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE:  
A [VIDEO] INTERVIEW WITH DR. EDWARD F. EDINGER

RUNNING HEAD: Science of the Soul

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper I summarize and then reflect upon a video interview with Edward Edinger on a Jungian perspective on the science of the soul. Edinger not only makes a lucid presentation on seminal Jungian ideas, but he also presents his own valuable insights and worldview. Although I appreciate Edinger's presentation, along with its clarity, what I find missing is any allusion to the mystery involved in the individuation process itself. In the same vein, Edinger relies principally on the Christian myth, as the archetypal pattern for individuation, which I believe, is a shortcoming. I argue that there is also a need to integrate patterns and energy found in the goddess and pagan traditions to give a more complete picture of the process.

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Introduction

I always look forward with eager anticipation for books and essays by Edward Edinger. He is, in my opinion, one of the more interesting commentators on Jung and his works. He never disappoints me as he brings both rigor and clarity of mind to his study of Jungian psychology. He not only clarifies some of Jung's more difficult concepts and writings but provides interesting insights of his own. Indeed, Edinger has the wonderful knack of making complicated ideas accessible to his audience and readers.

Summary

This three part video series, Science of the Soul: A Jungian Perspective is quintessential Edinger, produced in the careful and thorough style one is used to from reading his books. Moreover, his unabashed admiration for Jung whom he sees as an epochal man, that is to say one whose very life symbolizes a new advance in consciousness, comes through unreservedly. Indeed, his chosen clips of Jung as an old man add considerably to the video and set the stage for Edinger's intended message. "Man observes Jung, "has always lived in myth. It is a disease," he goes on to relate, to think that there is no history." This is the basic theme that Edinger develops and clarifies.

In the process, he diligently works his way through several Jungian ideas, while presenting a remarkably concise overview of his own psychology and worldview.

Despite the nature of the medium itself, which does not encourage in-depth exploration, and the relatively limited time allotted, Edinger manages to creatively interpret important seminal Jungian ideas. The video, in other words, is not just a primer on Jung. It is much more, and should stimulate viewers into further study of both Edinger's books as well as Jung's.

The video is made up of three parts. In part one, the Jungian Analyst not only discusses the nature of consciousness and the unconscious, but sketches the evolution of consciousness since the advent of Yahweh up through the Renaissance to the present day. Whereas consciousness, Edinger notes, involves self-reflective awareness and the ego's perception of itself as an object, the unconscious itself contains objects of diffuse consciousness that can potentially enter conscious awareness. He also makes the startling observation that the unconscious, too, is a subject, which inner experiences of being looked at by the "Eye of God" affirm.

With regards to the evolution of consciousness Edinger relates that with the advent of the Old Testament Yahweh there was an increased awareness of the sovereignty of the ego which, with the Renaissance, became inflated and separated from the transcendent dimension. For a creative minority, the Church and the prevailing Christian mythology no longer serve as a viable container for their psyche. Indeed, the twentieth century discovery of depth psychology, particularly that of C.G. Jung's, has opened the way to the possibility of in-depth self-scrutiny and a science of the soul.

In part two, Edinger discusses the structure of the psyche and the essential nature of individuation and the individuation process, while preparing the ground for a discussion on the social implications of individuation in part three. He begins by describing the nature and role of the ego, the shadow the anima/animus and the Self as well as the autonomy, power and structural reality of the archetype. Finally, the nature of the individuation process is discussed, which Edinger defines as the ego becoming aware of its relationship to the Self through the process of self-collection and withdrawing projections.

Since Jungian literature does not often deal with the social implications of individuation, the next section, part three, has a particular appeal. Having a reliable ego and adapted persona, notes Edinger, are basic prerequisites for constructive social interaction. He further notes that being conscious of one's shadow and shadow projections are essential for healthy participation in the social process. The importance of integrating animus/anima projections, he observes, is based on the fact that they are the two most fundamental aspects of the whole social fabric, starting with the family, the way children are raised and so on. Regarding the Self, there is, Edinger warns, a strong tendency for it to be projected, especially in times of disorder, which is psychologically dangerous and can lead to totalitarianism. In contrast, he asserts that the more one assimilates qualities of the Self, the more one becomes a true individual and an instrument for a higher cause.

Edinger goes on to argue that the historical loss of relationship with the transcendent dimension of being has led to the present day constellation of the archetype of the Apocalypse. There is however he observes, an antidote to the portending catastrophe, and that is for individuals to consciously participate in the incarnation of the Holy Spirit and the transformation of the God image, which is now possible. It involves lonely individuals directly experiencing the ambiguity of the God image as exemplified by Jung in his Answer to Job. This eventuality is not only empirically evident today but, in Edinger's reading, it is built into the basic thematic structure of the Christian myth. The sequential process experienced by Christ is, by destiny he reasons, lived out by the church, the body of Christ, and then by the individual.

### Reflections

According to Edinger, then, the incarnation of the Holy Spirit through individuals and the resulting Christification process is based on the Christian myth, and allows people to participate in the advent of a new epoch. It is difficult to find fault with this exposition of Jung's basic message and psychology, which is presented with wonderful clarity. However, too much clarity often hides a greater truth and, in this case, suppresses the living mystery of what is actually involved in the individuation process. There is not only a science of the soul but also the art of soul realization. This video presentation would profit by alluding to and attempting to incorporate some of this reality.

In this regard there is, in my mind, one glaring omission in Edinger's exposition, or perhaps understanding, of Jung and his message, and that is the phenomena of the

Goddess and Her relevance today, along with the needed reintegration of pagan sensibility into life. In my reading of Jung and his life this is very relevant. Not only did Jung enter into an informative dialogue with archetypal patterns intrinsic to the Mithraic mysteries, late in his life, he was astonished to observe how much his life resembled that of Merlin who, according to legend, was the offspring of a Christian mother and the Devil.

If individuation involves the incarnation of the Holy Spirit, which I believe it does, the Christian Myth, in itself, is not sufficient to indicate what actually transpires, at least potentially. It only gives a partial picture of what it means to become conscious of the unfolding saga of an individuating life. After all, the Holy Spirit was originally a manifestation of Sophia or Wisdom who had direct links with the pre-Judaic goddess culture. In fact, Edinger himself has written a profound book on alchemy, which brings the necessary compensation for a one-sided Christianity. Another video series, perhaps, entitled [Art of Soul Realization: A Jungian Perspective](#) to complement this excellent series is, I suggest, now in order. It will help to give a more complete picture of the scope of Jungian psychology and its message.