

THE PLURAL PSYCHE AND
TRANSFORMATION OF INDIVIDUAL
AND SOCIETY

RUNNING HEAD: Plural Psyche, Transformation

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ABSTRACT

I discuss here the question of individuation and the transformation of both the individual and society. I begin with a discussion of Jung's view on individuation and the relationship of the individual to the community. The all-inclusive and transformative nature of the Self is, for him, the key. Although there is a general acceptance of contemporary culture, there does come a point in the individuation process where one needs to come to terms with contemporary collective values. I contrast Jung's views with those of several post-Jungians who, in most cases, have an agenda to change society and, in one case there is emphasis on the need to liberate the individual from cultural conditioning. The former wish to define the ego less individualistically than is normally the case and they define it more communally, whereas the latter puts emphasis on individual subjective truth. A third position, that of Jung's, is both critical of the nature of present day society and collective values and yet sees it as the place individuation occurs. I conclude that only Jung's view, along with that of von Franz, genuinely allows for a potentially full expression of the pluralistic psyche and, in particular, the deeper needs and demands for transformation of both the individual and of the collective psyche or the community.

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Introduction

In this essay I discuss the relationship between the individual and society with emphasis on their transformation. This involves an important dimension of the plural psyche by which, following Samuels (1989), I mean one that allows for both unity and multiplicity along with the need to reconcile individuals and their aspirations with the collective and its demands and needs. I compare and contrast Jung's views with several psychologists who can be loosely described as stemming from his school. I write from the general perspective that society itself is in the process of going through a profound transformation.

Background

In his voluminous writings, Jung provides a considerable glimpse into the nature of individuation and the individuation process. Significantly, he draws a sharp contrast between individuation and individualism. He argues that whereas individualism means the development of supposedly unique properties of the ego, individuation refers to a more complete expression of collective qualities. The aim of individuation, that is to say, is not to produce a superior ego, but a psyche with a wider range of interests and expressions of being. Moreover, while individualism has to do with self-interest and ego-fulfillment, individuation refers to the unfolding of the Self over space and time. Here, following Jung, I understand the Self in two paradoxical ways; first as a transcendent center of the unconscious or the psyche itself, and secondly, as one's wholeness, which includes both conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche.

In addition to referring to the individual psyche, individuation has to do with one's relationship to community and one's role there. As Jung (1974) observes, the Self is as much the ego and other Selves as one's Self. It follows that, in order for the individual Self to be fulfilled in time, there must be the realization of an intimate connection between the individual Self and the Self of the community. In Jung's (1974) words, "if a man is capable of leading a responsible life himself then he is also conscious of his duties to the community (p. 163)."

Individuation, as Jung (1974) defines it, then, involves an intimate interrelationship between the individual and community. With individualism, in contrast, there is always an effective separation between the ego with its self-interest and others. Even so-called enlightened self-interest is based on a hypertrophied ego and its [manipulative] will-to-power. Individualism modified with social interest, Adler's (1976) solution, is also ultimately a non-inclusive approach or isolationist approach to psychology, based as it is on the ego and not the all-inclusive Self as described by Jung.

Jung's writings are a marvelous testimony to his own individuation process, which manifestly involved a direct encounter with the collective psyche and the psyche of the Western collective community, if not the world community. Murray Stein (1986), for instance, has shown how Jung's writings in the latter part of his life posed a direct challenge to Christianity for the need to undergo a transformative process. Although his writings are full of suggestions that, at a deeper level, individuation by necessity involves some form of encounter with the collective psyche, until relatively recently, one

finds little direct examples outside of himself referred to in either his own writings or in the writings of his disciples.

To put this discussion in perspective, in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, following the alchemist, Gerhard Dorn, Jung (1970) alludes to the fact that there are essentially three broad phases in the individuation process. The first phase is what he refers to as the *unio mentalis* or mental union which culminates in self-knowledge which includes both positive and negative values of the psyche. It results in a purification of the ego and the development of a conscious relationship to the incarnated aspect of the Self, which is to say the Self behind the heart. In the second stage, there is the need for embodiment of insights, which means that they have a direct effect on one's conduct in life. There is in other words a far-reaching transformation of the vital or life principle and expressions of pleasure and power become subordinated to the Self. Potentially, this includes the physical-vital which is to say the psychosomatic and instinctive natures and even the physical nature itself. In the third phase, as Jung observes, there is a connection made between the individual *atman* (Self) and the universal *atman* (Self). It also involves experience of the *unus mundus* or one world, which not only includes unity and multiplicity but transcends and includes both spirit and matter. This transformation process is only possible due to a progressively more conscious relationship between the ego and the Self, where the Self includes both a Self behind the Heart and a Self beyond nature.

A major shift in consciousness ensues over the course of the individuation process.

For one thing, a deepening conscious relationship is forged between the ego and the archetypes of the collective unconscious in both their spiritual and dynamic, and even physical dimensions. In effect, as this happens, individuals not only experience synchronicity more frequently but a task becomes imposed on them by the Self that includes an encounter with the collective psyche or the community and its values. More than anything, the nature of the task involves expressing oneself more deeply, while becoming more conscious of one's destiny. It involves a universalizing process and connection to meaning beyond the individual, along with the effective power for creative realization.

What could be the significance of these observations to the individual in today's world? Jung (1970, p.158) writes that "resistance to the organized mass can be effected only by the man who is as well organized in his individuality as the mass itself" He also notes that at a certain point in analysis "the apparently individual conflict of the patient is revealed as a universal conflict of his environment and epoch (p. 150)." In addition he writes that the "great organization in a monstrosity that destroys individuality (p. 166)." Given these reflections and the massive influence of large organizations on people's lives today, one way or another, there is surely a need to come to terms with it during the individuation process. Indeed, these comments suggest that it is unavoidable for an individual far enough into the individuation process to not need to come to terms with our contemporary socially constructed reality, which is becoming increasingly problematic. This, requires one to become "as well organized in his [her] individuality as the mass itself (Jung, 1970, p. 158)."

Until recently, Jungian-oriented literature, however, makes little reference to the effect of encounters with collective organizations and their values as a phase in the individuation process. There seem to be many examples of people reorganizing their lives and improving their position at work or in relationship. But how the individual interacts with collective organizations and community and the significance to individuation is rarely explored. My own experience suggests that from the point of view of individuation, what is important is the gain in Self-knowledge and individuation or Self-organization, while the collective institution one is involved with is relatively unaffected. What is most important is withdrawing projections from the organization in question, including its purpose, activities, products and individuals working there. In the process, there is an experientially deepening Eros connectedness with the community although it may not be so evident to others. In the long run, individuals may also feel the ethical need to pass on their insights and, in some cases, allow for life to be re-organized in an unforeseen way.

Meanwhile, there is always the danger of being drawn back into old ways. In this regard, von Franz (1999) reports that Jung once told her the following:

Yes. If one does not constantly walk forward, the past sucks one back. The past is like an enormous sucking wind that sucks one back all the time. If you don't go forward you regress. You have constantly to carry the torch of the new light forward, so to speak, historically and also in your own life. As soon as you begin to look backward, sadly, or even scornfully, it has you again. The past is a tremendous power.
p. 119

As von Franz insists, Jungian psychology brings a new approach to practical living, a new consciousness-life. Using Jungian insights, for instance on psychological types, for the sole benefit of organizational efficiency and profits is an example of the old way using new knowledge for its own purposes, a regression. One cannot put new wine in old bottles, and, in the words of von Franz, Jungian psychology is “really shockingly new” (p. 120).

Individuation: Individual and Community

What follows are comments on Jung, von Franz and other post-Jungians and their understanding of the relationship of the individual to the community and the individuation process.

Jung, von Franz

Jung (1979) observes that individuation entails alienation from others as it demands disentanglement from collective attitudes and opinions. He also makes ample references to the need to develop Eros or connectedness, indicating that there continues to be relationship to the community, even at a deeper level. Marie Louise von Franz, (1975), who follows Jung closely, argues that, with individuation, relationships are progressively organized by the Self and not one’s natural family, and comes from all walks of society. This is reminiscent of Christ’s dictum that his disciples are to take up their swords, leave their families and follow him. A symbolic reading suggests that a new family is being formed through Christ, which is to say the Self.

Jung (as reported in Hannah, 1978) also continuously advises his disciples to follow

the way of “the rainmaker,” referring to a true story told to him by Richard Wilhelm, the man who popularized the *I Ching* in the West. In the story, a little old man first became unsettled by prevailing conditions and then put himself in Tao, which resulted in the needed precipitation. The moral of the story is that after first being affected by external conditions and by consciously searching for and attaining inner harmony and knowledge, that is relationship with the Self, things happen as they should in one’s relationship to others and the community.

Jung and von Franz are saying that although analysis has to primarily do with the individual, at a deeper level it includes an intimate relationship with the community. Moreover, by allowing oneself to be directly affected by others or society and by re-establishing inner harmony, individuals are effectively not only in deep connectedness with the community, they are at the same time participating in some form of collective mutation. It is noteworthy that the Self, not the ego, is the principle source of transformation, although the ego has the important role of consciously relating to and dialoguing with the Self. As I indicated earlier individuals may feel the ethical need to pass on their insights to others, like Jung himself did. In that case, the creative working through of insights in the form of papers, books, art, etc. becomes a fundamental aspect of their own individuation process. In addition, life itself potentially becomes re-organized in fundamental ways.

Although Jung’s approach makes good sense, and provides a blueprint for others to follow, some contemporary post-Jungians challenge him, or if not him classical

Jungians, and his understanding of what takes place in the individuation process. I now give a brief account of the position taken by several of them on the question of individuation and the collective psyche.

Hillman

In an interview given some two years ago, Hillman (as reported by Safransky, 1991), spoke of what he calls the “Rainmaker Fallacy.” He argues that therapists, including, if not especially Jungian analysts, have remained introverted in their counseling room, analysands have become more sensitive, etc., but there has been virtually no effect on the collective psyche or community and collective organizations. More recently in a book with Michael Ventura, he observes that, “we’ve had a hundred years of psychotherapy and the world is getting worse (Hillman, Ventura, 1992),” which is the title of their book. He concludes that therapy must somehow embrace what he refers to as the world soul.

Analysis, he argues, has been too individualistic and not concerned enough with the soul in the world, his understanding of the *anima mundi*. In practical terms, at least if one judges from his own activities, Hillman seems to want to take therapy out of the consulting room into working with groups such as men’s groups and other groups of people in order to foster change in the world, that is in the community. Hillman argues that what is necessary is to re-imagine the world and, in the process to define therapy less individualistically and more communally. He puts decided emphasis on the polytheistic nature of the psyche and multiplicity, which he sees as being repressed by

the [heroic] ego and the Self, which he understands as a kind of super-ego.

Mindell

Mindell (1989) seems to have come to somewhat the same conclusion as Hillman as indicated in his book, The Year I - Global Process Work. There, he discusses innovative ways of working in the world and perceiving the world. His approach involves group psychology and the perception of what he calls the group and world dream body, which he believes is largely unconscious. Essentially, he argues for the need to bring them more into personal awareness. He also argues that individuation today must include working with this dimension of the psyche. Like Hillman, then, Mindell is asking for therapy to be defined less individualistically and more communally, allowing for a transformation process in line with the demands of the group and the world [cultural] unconscious. His view of the nature of the psyche can be described as pluralistic, purportedly allowing for both unity and diversity, although his process oriented approach to therapy seems to emphasize multiplicity.

Watkins

Watkins (1991) recognizes the need for defining the ego less individualistically in her plea for an interdependent self. In comparison to a Self, conceived as one's wholeness and totality, the self can be understood as one's sense of identity and integrity. Rather than defining it individualistically, Watkins argues for the need to define the self as interdependent, decentralized and "composed of a multiplicity (p. 17), "allowing for other aims than those of an ambitious and "heroic ego (p. 17)." In addition, she sees

the need to acknowledge the negative impact of the present individualistic culture on the individual. In addition to individuals and their personal unconscious, Watkins focuses on the interaction between the individual and the cultural unconscious which she understands as being the special task of therapy to uncover. The cultural unconscious can be defined as the unconscious assumptions and predispositions of any given society. Her approach is both individual therapy and group therapy, which she claims is sometimes more relevant.

Samuels

Like Mindel, Samuels (1989) takes a pluralistic approach to psychology, embracing unity, order and meaning, and diversity or multiplicity, seeing them as complementary view points. Although his position, at first glance, seems to correspond with that of Jung, Samuels challenges Jung's understanding of the archetypes, suggesting that they may be culturally conditioned and not, as Jung sees them, as pre-ordered underlying structures.

Given Samuel's different assumption on the nature of the archetype, he writes, "as clinicians working in an evanescent society, analysts are faced with the problem of evaluating the general cultural version of the images (p. 27)." It is this understanding that leads him to the conclusion that depth-psychology has a role, even a responsibility to help change these images, to liberalize them both in individuals and ultimately in society at large, especially when its collective wisdom sees them as oppressive or regressive.

In particular, Samuels (1989) sees a special role for depth-psychology at the place where the public and private and the personal and political intersect. In contrast to Hillman (1991), who emphasizes the imaginal and Mindell, who emphasizes the unconscious, he proposes that awareness of counter-transference reactions to political events and positions is the royal road to political change and empowerment. It is noteworthy that he expresses a particular interest in rallying individuals or groups and not necessarily only psychologists. For Samuels (1989), the operational vehicle to mobilize change is, however, principally individual and group therapy.

In actual fact, although the archetypes may consist of pre-ordered underlying structures, according to Jung (1974), they are in essence unknowable. Moreover, he does allow for a metamorphosis or transformation of the archetypes themselves, but as ordained by the Self and not the individual ego, no matter how enlightened. Individuals can, of course, be authentic instruments of the Self in their relationship to the community and others, which is a different position than that of Samuel's or any of the other post-Jungians discussed here, with the possible exception of Stein.

Poncé

At this point, it is interesting to delineate the position of another Jungian-influenced analyst, Charles Poncé (1990). Although, he too, sees the present socially-constructed reality as being neurotic and one-sided, his decided emphasis is on individual change and not social change. According to his understanding, archetypes are merely a socially conditioned modification of the instincts. Poncé argues for the

need for the individual to be liberated from attachment to the present social [and archetypal] reality to the extent possible. Rather than being concerned with the community *per se*, he emphasizes that with release from attachment to the socially-constructed reality the individual is liberated, in however a limited way, to express the “will to become.” In keeping with an emphasis on the individual, individual therapy and teaching seem to be his principle vehicles for encouraging change.

Recapitulation and Commentary

With the possible exception of Poncé, then, in their own way all the other post-Jungian psychologists mentioned here are interested in bringing therapy to bear on the larger world, on the community. Either explicitly, or implicitly, they suggest that an individual’s individuation must involve this dimension of the psyche. According to them, the reaches of the pluralistic psyche, that is to say, cannot be confined to the consulting room and a flurry of introverted imaginative exercises. None of them, however, have allowed for the existence of a transformative Self nor for an essential Eros connectedness between the individual Self and Self of the community. Nor do any of them give any account of an individual actually having to deal with working in a contemporary organization and the implications for individuation. Ironically, the one exception is Poncé (1992), who in a lecture at Pacifica Graduate Institute, commented on an interpretation of a dream where the bosses at work were depicted as Nazis. He wondered why no consideration was given by the dream interpreter, a classical Jungian, for the analysand to leave such a work place.

Stein

To go into more detail on individuation in the community and in the contemporary organization, I now turn to some observations made by Murray Stein. In an interesting article in Psychological Perspectives, Stein takes an essentially classical Jungian position in arguing that the Self needs relationship and involvement with the collective organization in order to come into consciousness. He contends that the organization is representative of the Great Mother Archetype in both its beneficent and devouring aspects. He notes that individuals are in *participation mystique* with the organization, and that individuation eventually leads to dissolution of unconscious involvement with the organization and a more objective relationship with it.

Stein argues that the work group provides a living metaphor for the dynamics involved with the original parental presence, with individuals unconsciously choosing a particular organization in order to repeat early patterns of behavior. As consciousness enlarges, one experiences the same dynamics as earlier, although at a different point on the spiral. As Stein sees it, dissolution of the projective identification with members of the work group may or may not end in changing jobs, business partnerships, family, etc. It is an individual question. Of ultimate importance rather, argues Stein, is that one's role in the organizational life be infused with archetypal energies in order for it to carry personal value and learning. Therefore, even after one's *participation mystique* with the organization is dissolved, in Stein's view, activities there can still be meaningful.

Commentary on Stein's View

Stein's view is well considered and represents some of the dynamics at play in the individual's relationship to collective organizations and the community. Indeed, it offers an explanation of how individuation proceeds in relationship to the world. However, he does not specifically ask the difficult question of how one relates when the work is mindless, or the organizations culture narrow or the individual's ideals and worldview go beyond what the organization or organizations in question generally have to offer. Nor does he discuss this equation in face of the present one-sided cultural pattern that many see as neurotic at best.

There is a further complication in that contemporary culture is in the process of a profound transformation. In such times, as Neumann (1951) indicates, there is a need for new forms and new organizations to contain the emerging and metamorphosed archetypal energies. Genuine creative artists, in the large sense of the word, are the harbingers of the new, representing transformed archetypal images symbolically in their work. When individuation goes deep enough one is also connected, in this case personally, to the new spirit of the age.

But in my observation, most organizations today not only do not allow for enlightened cultural change, they actively discourage it. They belong to an old paradigm. Therefore, although involvement in most contemporary organizations can take one a certain distance in individuation, there may come a point when one needs to encounter the values driving a specific organization or the contemporary socially constructed

reality in general. At this point one must come to terms with contemporary values and the cultural unconscious. Stein takes this into little or no consideration, at least in this article.

Critique

In my estimation, in contrast to the other post-Jungians discussed here, Stein's position has the distinct advantage of fully accepting the world as it is, without ego involvement for changing it in any way. Essentially, he sees the world as a place for individuation. Nonetheless, he seems to underestimate the potential dichotomy between the values of the contemporary organization and the individual who has come to the point of having to deal with the cultural unconscious -- especially considering the profound transformation that is taking place today.

All the other psychologists I have discussed, excluding Poncé, seem to underestimate the place of the individual in the world and the need for individuation to work within the social paradigm as it is. They have an agenda for social change which, in itself, not only has nothing to do with individuation *per se* but, in my opinion, may actually divert attention away from the individuation process, perhaps towards a social or altruistic ego. Indeed, both Watkins (1991) and Samuels (1989) admit that their approach may be grandiose, although they recommend it nonetheless. Poncé on the other hand, tends to undervalue the collective altogether in his intense search for a subjective truth, with the risk of encouraging an inflated ego and individualism.

In my view, only Jung (1979) and von Franz (1975) present a position that allows for

the transformation of both the individual and eventually society. The key difference between Jung, von Franz (1975) and the others is that the psyche for them is grounded on an all-inclusive and transformative Self, while for the others it isn't. In their paradoxical full acceptance of the world and challenge of it, Jung and von Franz give expression to what I would call a genuinely pluralistic psyche.

There is considerable confusion on the nature of the individuation process and how it relates to the community and the collective organization. In all their writings, both Jung and von Franz have discussed the process in its essence and their own lives stand as testimony to how this can transpire. Moreover, their understanding of the nature of the Self and the archetype allows for the transformation of both the individual and society and the potentially full expression of the pluralistic psyche. Amongst the post-Jungians, Stein, it seems to me, comes closest to representing how individuation takes place in relationship to the community, although he doesn't go far enough in allowing for the need to come to terms with the values of contemporary culture and the cultural unconscious at a more advanced level of individuation. Poncé seems to undervalue the collective altogether, while the others have an agenda to revolutionize society, in either case, diverting attention away from the business of individuation itself.

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