

Chapter 6  
 Personal Mythology and the Archetypal Realm:  
 C. G. Jung and the Depth Psychological Approach to the Sacred

*On Jung and the Relationship between Depth Psychology and Mythology*

Together with Joseph Campbell, C. G. Jung must be considered a founding figure in the evolution of the concept of personal mythology. In addition, Campbell and Jung have played equally definitive roles in developing the idea that the sacred might be experienced through a personal engagement with myth. Whereas Campbell's approach to these concepts grew largely out of his work as comparative mythologist, Jung's frame of reference regarding both mythology and religion evolved in the context of his crucial role in the development of the psychological school known as depth psychology.

As a general approach to psychological inquiry, depth psychology traces its roots back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century work of Sigmund Freud and his colleagues. Depth psychology takes as its primary concern the phenomenology of the deeper level of consciousness—variously described as the unconscious, subconscious, or preconscious—that underlies the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of the human mind. “Since its beginning in Freud’s study of the deep layers of the mind,” writes James Hillman, “the field of ‘depth psychology’ [. . .] has always been directed downward, whether toward buried memories of childhood or toward archaic mythologems” (*Archetypal Psychology* 28).

With regard to understanding the nature of the unconscious, a key distinguishing feature of depth psychology has been its recognition of the prominent connection between this foundational layer of the psyche and the stories, themes, and characters of ancient mythology. Expressing depth psychology’s understanding of the profound nature of this relationship, Michael Vannoy Adams observes, “the unconscious is intrinsically

mythopoetic, or myth-making” (11). Considering this fundamental concept from a slightly different perspective, Hillman observes that, for depth psychology, the “Gods of mythology become ‘psychic factors,’ and [. . .] the archetypes of psychology become mythological Gods” (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 37).

According to Adams, it was Freud himself who first speculated on the nature of the connection between the unconscious and the mythological (2). In a letter written in 1897, Freud first introduces two terms—“endopsychic myths” and “psycho-mythology”—to describe the inherently mythic dimension of the unconscious mind. In this letter, he describes the process by which such mythic material is generated, observing that the “dim inner perceptions of one’s own psychic apparatus stimulate thought illusions, which of course are projected onto the outside and, characteristically, into the future and beyond” (*Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud* 286). From his early emphasis on the Greek myth of the tragic hero Oedipus to his late reflections on Eros and Thanatos, the Greek divinities of love and death, Freud continued to affirm the critical importance of the interconnection between depth psychology and mythology throughout his career.

Equally important for the early development of depth psychology is the fact that C. G. Jung, while still a protégé of Freud, became equally fascinated by the similarities he discerned between the characters and themes of mythology and the functioning of the unconscious mind. Expressing the seriousness of this interest in a letter to Freud in 1909, Jung writes, “It has become quite clear to me that we shall not solve the ultimate secrets of neuroses and psychoses without mythology” (Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters* 279). To an even greater extent than Freud, however, Jung’s ever-deepening recognition of the relationship between the nature of the unconscious and world mythology grew to

the point where understanding the former became incomprehensible without knowledge of the latter. Indeed, while the myth of Oedipus was certainly not the only myth that came to assume a special importance for Freud, as Adams observes, Freud never saw the need to elaborate “an archetypal psychology of multiple mythological motifs” (5). Jung’s approach to depth psychology, in contrast, could not have evolved without one.

It is also important to note in this context that Freud primarily viewed the psychological dimension of myth in terms of the deeply rooted patterns by which repressed personal material becomes expressed behaviorally. In this regard, for example, the primary psychological significance of the Oedipus myth for Freud is that it reflects an archaic model for the unconscious ways in which male children act out their incestuous desires and aggressive instincts. While Jung initially seems to have endorsed this more limited view of the relationship between mythology and psychology, he soon came to recognize that myth played a far more significant role in psychological functioning than that of an innate template for the acting out of sublimated sexuality and aggression. Indeed, in one of his many statements regarding the fundamental role of myth within the study of human consciousness, Jung goes so far as to characterize myth as “the primordial language” of psyche (*CW* 12: 25; para. 28).

With particular regard to the concept of personal mythology, one can trace the evolution of this idea in Jung’s thinking back to the intensely painful period that followed the breakup with his mentor Freud. During this critical time, a period described in detail in his memoir, Jung found himself deeply engaged in contemplating the powerful unconscious material that suddenly began to appear in his own dreams and waking visions. Eventually these reflections gave rise to many of the principles and methods that

were to become the core of his unique approach to psychology. Chief among these was the recognition that psychological development was dependent upon understanding one's guiding inner mythology. "I did not know that I was living a myth," he writes, reflecting on his own process of psychic evolution, "and even if I had known it, I would not have known what sort of myth was ordering my life without my knowledge." As a consequence, he continues, "I took it upon myself to get to know 'my' myth, and I regarded this as the task of tasks" (*CW 5: xxv*).

While his encounters with the contents of the unconscious were enormously intensified during this period, Jung had been aware since childhood of receiving important symbolic messages in the form of dreams and visions. It was in the midst of the deep depression that followed his banishment from the psychoanalytic community, however, that the ultimate significance of all of this unconscious material began to become clear to Jung. In his memoir, he describes the dawning of this realization in the following passage:

About this time I experienced a moment of unusual clarity in which I looked back over the way I had traveled so far. I thought, "Now you possess a key to mythology and are free to unlock the gates of the unconscious psyche." But then something whispered within me, "Why open all the gates?" And promptly the question arose of what, after all, I had accomplished. I had explained the myths of peoples of the past; I had written a book about the hero, the myth in which man has always lived. But in what myth does man live nowadays? In the Christian myth, the answer might be. "Do *you* live in it?" I asked myself. To be honest, the answer was no. For me, it is not what I live by. "Then do we no longer have any myth?" "No, evidently we no longer have any myth." "But then what is your myth—the myth in which you do live?" (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections 171*)

In this remarkable passage, Jung reflects upon three principles that are essential both to the concept of personal mythology as well as the whole of Jung's psychological

approach. The first of these principles acknowledges the irreplaceable role played by myth in understanding the functioning of the unconscious. The second expresses a recognition that the prevailing collective myths of the past—and, in particular, the Christian myth—may no longer be valid or meaningful to modern humans. The third principle is that individuals who are no longer sustained by a historical collective myth inevitably need to seek an individually derived one if their lives are to retain an abiding sense of context and purpose. Jung’s recognition of the profoundly personal nature of such new myths is further highlighted by the emphasis he places on the word “you” in his self-reflexive question regarding his relationship to the Christian myth. “Far from an inferior alternative to a group myth,” writes Robert A. Segal in this context, “a personal myth for Jung is the ideal, for it alone is geared to the uniqueness of one’s psyche” (Introduction 29).

*On Jung and the Religious Dimension of Depth Psychology*

In addition to the deeper and broader significance attributed to mythology in Jungian depth psychology, Jung’s approach differs from that of Freud in another important way, namely with regard to their respective visions of the relationship between psychology and religion. Summarizing the core difference between Freud’s and Jung’s views on this subject, Michael Palmer observes that for Freud, the goal of psychotherapy inherently involves “the elimination of the religious neurosis in the life of the maturing individual.” Opposing that viewpoint, he continues, Jung “sees the process as requiring a reorientation of consciousness towards religion, towards those psychic processes generic to the human species which religion embodies and which are thus expressive of the deepest and innermost processes of the psyche” (92).

It should be noted in this context that Freud, who remained a professed atheist throughout his life, considered all religious beliefs and practices to be a form of primitive and infantile regression on the part of modern humans. As he wrote in *The Future of Illusion*, “religious ideas have arisen from the same needs as have all the other achievements of civilization: from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushing superior force of nature” (21). As a result, Freud states, “religious beliefs are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest wishes of mankind” (30). Moreover, given that Freud sees the roots of the religious impulse largely arising from the neurotic need to resolve the Oedipal conflict with the father, it is not surprising that he characterizes religion as “the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity” (226).

Far from viewing religious behavior as either wish-fulfilling illusion or neurotic regression, Jung’s personal and professional experience brought him to view human consciousness as possessing an innately and intrinsically religious function. Jung further came to understand that this religious function of the psyche exercised as powerful an influence on human behavior as the instincts of sexuality or aggression. For Jung, Palmer writes, “religion does not [. . .] signify the repression of a sexual and infantile impulse, but rather the energetic movement of the libido towards the deepest layers of the psyche” (111).

Perhaps most importantly, in contrast to Freud, Jung came to recognize that conscious engagement of the psyche’s religious function was essential for long-term psychological health and development. In this context, he observes that among all of his clients past the onset of mid-life, “there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life.” Moreover, Jung declares, “every one

of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age have given their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain a religious outlook” (*CW* 11: 334; para 509).

Regarding the evolution of the human understanding of divinity, Jung’s work suggests a three-stage movement beginning in ancient times and extending into the modern world. At the beginning of the evolution of human consciousness, Jung writes, the gods “lived in superhuman power and beauty on the top of snow-clad mountains or in the darkness of caves, woods and seas.” Then, with the rise of the monotheistic religions about 3,000 years ago, he continues, the many divinities “drew together into one god, and then that god became man.” The third stage of this process, initiated with the birth of depth psychology, continues that evolution in consciousness by shifting awareness entirely away from the conception of divinity as an external, transcendent power and toward awareness of its internal manifestation in the form of equally powerful psychological phenomena. Regarding this third phase of the evolving relationship between the divine and the human, Jung writes, “the gods in our time assemble in the lap of the ordinary individual and are as powerful and as awe-inspiring as ever, in spite of their new disguise—the so-called psychical functions” (*CW* 11: 84; para. 141).

In order to comprehend Jung’s vision of the essential relationship between depth psychology and the religious dimension of human life, one must first explore his perspective on two interrelated religious concerns. The first of these concerns deals with the meaning of the term “religion” in the context of Jung’s approach to depth psychology, while the second focuses on the distinction between theological or doctrinal

conceptualizations regarding the nature of divinity and the direct, phenomenological experience of the sacred.

It is important to note that in both his definition of religion and his description of the phenomenological nature of the human experience of the sacred, Jung draws heavily on Rudolf Otto's concept of the numinous. As was discussed in Chapter 4, Otto employed this term to describe the fundamental nature of the experience of the sacred or holy. In this context, Otto defines the numinous to be a pre-rational, involuntary, emotional response to an image or event that simultaneously totally overwhelms and utterly fascinates. Since the experience of the numinous cannot be a manifestation of rational consciousness, Jung attributes such experience to the functioning of the unconscious. Indeed, in writing of the "numinosity of the unconscious" Jung directly ascribes to it both the awe-inspiring and wonder-inducing qualities of Otto's vision of the sacred (*CW* 9.2: 194; para. 303).

With regard to Jung's definition of religion, his most definitive statement on the subject is provided in the text of his Terry lectures delivered at Yale University in 1937. In this text, Jung declares that religion, "as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the *numinosum*" (*CW* 11: 8; para. 8). He further contends that, in his view, religion necessitates:

a careful consideration and observation of certain dynamic factors that are conceived as 'powers': spirits, daemons, gods, laws, ideas, ideals, or whatever name man has given to such factors in his world as he has found powerful, dangerous, or helpful enough to be taken into careful consideration, or grand, beautiful, and meaningful enough to be devoutly worshipped and loved. (7; para. 6)

Later in this same text, Jung is also careful to emphasize what is not included in his definition of religion. "I want to make clear," he emphatically states, "that by the term

‘religion’ I do not mean a creed,” adding that creeds are primarily “codified and dogmatized forms of original religious experience” (8-9; para. 9-10).

In his insistence that the depth psychological view of religion bears no relationship to the concept of religious creed, Jung is also implicitly addressing the second of these concerns, namely the psychological necessity of distinguishing between direct, personal experience of the sacred and any form of empirical knowledge regarding the ultimate source of such experience. Recognizing the distinction between the experience of divinity and knowledge of its source was critical for Jung, since he viewed the former to be an experientially knowable psychic phenomenon, while the latter must remain, empirically speaking, an inherently unknowable mystery about which one may only speculate. Commenting further on the significance of this concept, Lionel Corbett observes that “numinous experience arises out of the autonomous level of the psyche” and that one cannot empirically say whether this level of the psyche is “the source of, or the medium for, the transmission of religious experience” (*Religious Function of the Psyche* 8).

This emphasis on the primacy of phenomenological experience is among the most important aspect of Jung’s orientation to religion. Regarding the depth psychological view of religious experience, Jung observes, metaphysical and theological speculation “answers itself by reason of the subjectively overwhelming numinosity of the experience.” Anyone who has had an experience of the numinous, he continues “is seized by it” and for this reason is not “in a position to indulge in fruitless metaphysical or epistemological speculations” (*CW* 11: 293-4; para. 506). Moreover, as Corbett further argues, regardless of the manner in which it appears, “numinous experience is

always psychologically relevant to the experiencer, and at the same time it tells us something about his or her true spirituality” (“Depth Psychological Approach to the Sacred” 78).

Another key aspect of Jung’s view of the relationship between psychology and religion—and one which is directly related to the concept of personal mythology as pathway to the sacred—is the role Jung ascribes to myth as the carrier of numinous experience. “Myth gives the ultimately unimaginable religious experience an image,” he observes, “a form in which to express itself” (*Letters* 486). Because of this critical imaginal role played by myth in the experience of the sacred, Jung also describes myth as ‘the revelation of a divine life in man’ (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* 340). In this context, Corbett is not exaggerating when he states that “mythical sensibility is integral to the depth psychological approach to psyche’s religious function” (*Religious Function of the Psyche* 84).

In considering Jung’s view of the proper function of myth in the modern world, it is important to note the utter disregard he shares in common with Campbell regarding the traditional religious approach to myth. Like everyone else who accepts the modern scientific worldview, Jung rejects what Segal calls the “explanatory” view of myth, the perspective that seeks metaphysical explanations from myth for how the material world works. Likewise, Jung avoids the secular, materialist view that dismisses myth as meaningless and irrelevant to life in the modern world. Instead of dismissing myth as falsehood because it fails in its old explanatory function, Jung adopts the same radically different approach as Campbell. That strategy, writes Segal, is “to separate myth from

the rest of religion” and instead “to offer mythology as a psychological, not explanatory, phenomenon” (“Is Analytical Psychology a Religion?” 552).

Jung also recognizes that the depth psychological approach to the religious dimension of human existence, like the depth psychological orientation to myth, must focus on the numinous experience of the individual rather than on collective religious dogma. At the same time, the Jungian perspective also recognizes the universality of the broader underlying patterns within which personal religious experience tends to manifest, just as it recognizes the universal patterns underlying the images and themes within personal myths. “The individual who works seriously with the products of the unconscious,” observes Edward C. Whitmont, “finds symbols and images arising in himself which have occurred over and over again in the religious experiences of all peoples—whether within the framework of an organized religion or not” (*Symbolic Quest* 84). Such symbols and images, he further cautions, while universal in nature, “are exclusively concerned with the individual’s personal relation with ultimate reality” (85).

Considering the larger religious implications of Jung’s approach to depth psychology, Ann Belford Ulanov observes that the individual human psyche can now be seen as “the medium through which we experience the divine” (120). In this regard, she is commenting on the degree to which universal, ancient religious images, stories, and symbols can be given renewed meaning and energy when refracted through the medium of the individual in communion with the unconscious. According to Ulanov, Jung sees the purpose of his psychology “as helping us reestablish connection to the truths of religious symbols by finding their equivalents in our own psychic experience.”

*On the Collective Unconscious and Archetypes*

The underlying reason why encounters with the numinous “belong to the most intimate and personal of human experiences, yet they are of a universal validity,” writes Aniela Jaffé, is that “from a psychological point of view, they are rooted in the collective unconscious and in collective archetypes” (*Was Jung a Mystic?* 23). These two concepts are key to understanding not only Jung’s approach to myth and religion, but also the Jungian approach to depth psychology as a whole. In addition, these two concepts are interconnected in Jung’s work to such an extent that, as Robert H. Hopcke suggests, to “separate Jung’s conception of archetype from his theory of the collective unconscious is impossible.” Since these two concepts depend on each other for theoretical coherence, Hopcke continues, “one could not speak of archetypes, as Jung used the term, without the theory of the collective unconscious, nor could the collective unconscious be truly collective, as Jung used the term, without the archetypes” (*Guided Tour of the Works of Jung* 13).

Jung first came to recognize the existence of archetypes in the course of his work with his own dreams and fantasies as well as those of his clients. In this context, Hopcke observes, Jung’s wide knowledge of mythology, anthropology, religion, and ancient art permitted him to recognize strong parallels between the symbols that appeared in the dreams of patients and those that had “appeared and reappeared over thousands of years in myths and religions all over the world.” Nevertheless, he continues, Jung was initially “at a loss to trace the appearance of such dream symbols to experiences in his patients’ individual lives.” Jung initially predicated the concept of the collective unconscious as a way of explaining the source of the universality of such archetypal material (*Guided Tour of the Works of Jung* 14). This recognition that a primordial, shared stratum of

consciousness was responsible for the universal nature of his patients' dream symbols ultimately came to be viewed by Jung as the single most significant aspect of his life's work. In this regard, when asked late in his life what myth or central idea had given the greatest meaning to his life, Jung answered without hesitation "Oh, that is the collective unconscious" (Bennet 101).

The concept of an impersonal and universal stratum of the unconscious coexisting side-by-side with a purely personal one is key to understanding Jung's overall conceptualization of the psyche. "We have to distinguish between a personal unconscious and an impersonal or transpersonal consciousness," Jung observes in this regard. "We speak of the latter also as the collective unconscious,' he further notes, "because it is detached from anything personal and is common to all men, since it is held to found everywhere, which is not the case with the personal contents" (*CW* 7: 66; para. 103-4).

Like Freud, Jung recognizes that the personal layer of the unconscious is the repository of an individual's neurotically repressed psychic material. Because Jung came to see the personal layer of the unconscious serving as a psychic bridge between individual consciousness and the collective dimension of the unconscious, however, he views the contents of the personal unconscious as more than the sum of an individual's repressed psychic material. As the point of entry for the contents of the collective unconscious, Jung observes that the personal unconscious also contains "the seeds of future conscious contents," nascent material, for example, rising into consciousness in the form of archetypal dreams (*CW* 7: 128; para. 204).

Again, as Freud does, Jung recognizes that the contents of the personal unconscious are often the impetus behind neurotic behavior. Because he recognizes the existence of its collective dimension, however, Jung also views the unconscious as a potential source of profound wisdom and guidance. In this regard, for example, contents arising into consciousness from the collective unconscious can greatly aid individuals in working with their neurotic complexes. Moreover, it is the unconscious, through the operation of its religious function, that serves as the medium through which the individual is enabled to encounter the numinous experience of the sacred.

In writing about the relationship between the collective unconscious and its psychic contents, Jung observes that the “collective unconscious, being the repository of man’s experience and at the same time the precondition for that experience, is an image of the world that has taken aeons to form.” From within this image, he continues “certain features, the archetypes or dominants, have crystallized out in the course of time.” These archetypes, he further states, “are the ruling powers, the gods, images of dominant laws and principles, and of typical, regularly occurring events in the soul’s cycle of experience” (CW 7: 95; para. 151). Also describing archetypes as “primordial images,” Jung calls them “the most ancient and the most universal ‘thought-forms’ of humanity” (66; para. 103-4).

When writing about the nature of archetypal material, Jung is always careful to distinguish between the generalized forms of archetypes and their specific content. Commenting on this distinction, he describes the “archetype *an sich*” as “a ‘disposition’ which starts functioning at a given moment in the development of the human mind and arranges the material of consciousness into definite patterns” (CW 11: 148-9; para. 222).

Jung also writes that “archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree.” Moreover, regarding archetypal content, he adds, “a primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience” (*CW* 9.1: 79; para. 155).

In addition, while the variable personal content of an archetype may become accessible to consciousness, Jung views the archetype at the level of its a priori form as ultimately unknowable. Because the unknowable archetypal form or pattern is the underlying shaper of its conscious content, however, an archetype makes its presence known to consciousness in the guise of symbolic images and metaphors. On the collective level, the conscious manifestation of such archetypal content becomes the symbolic source of collective myths and religious images, while on the individual level this material becomes the foundation of one’s personal mythology.

Regarding the relationship between such archetypal material and the evolving nature of one’s personal mythology, it is also important to bear in mind Jung’s view of the cyclical nature of life of symbols. This cycle begins, as Bond observes, when an archetypal image spontaneously arises out of the collective unconscious and constellates in personal consciousness as a response to an emotionally charged life situation. This image then serves to channel the intense psychic energy thus aroused and, in the process, attracts to itself a flow of associated archetypal material. Once such an image becomes sufficiently charged with psychic energy and takes on a sufficiently recognizable archetypal form, it becomes a living symbol.

Key to this concept of the life cycle of symbols is the recognition that the compelling power of a symbolic image is dependent on the flow of psychic energy it is able to direct. In this regard, Bond writes, “one must speak of the symbol always with the energy, fascination, and attention that the image commands” (83). Psychic energy periodically redirects itself in new directions over the course of a lifetime, however, and once the flow of psychic energy has been withdrawn from an image, it will gradually lose its archetypal power to generate a sense of psychological and spiritual meaning. When that happens, Bond observes, though its outer form remains for a time as a sort of empty archetypal shell, the symbol is no longer a living presence. Eventually a new archetypal situation will arise, calling forth a new symbolic image from the unconscious, and the whole cycle will begin again. That one’s personal myth evolves over the course of a lifetime is the result of this autonomous ebb and flow of archetypal material.

Like Adolf Bastian’s distinction between elementary and folk ideas which had so influenced Campbell’s view of myth, Jung’s theory of archetypes is foundational to the concept of personal mythology. By adding a depth psychological perspective to Bastian’s anthropological one, Jung’s concept of archetypes provides a profoundly useful tool for contemplating the universal dimension of the experience of being human. “At bottom, all psychic events are so deeply grounded in the archetype and are so much interwoven with it,” Jung states, “that in every case considerable effort is needed to separate the unique from the typical with any certainty.” As a result, he observes, “Ultimately, every individual life is at the same time the eternal life of the species” (*CW* 11: 89; para. 146).

Paradoxically, while deepening one's awareness of myth's universal and timeless aspects, adopting an archetypal view also simultaneously emphasizes the absolutely personal and time-bound qualities of the personal experience of the mythic. In this context, one might paraphrase Jung to observe that "the eternal life of the species" is only knowable through the archetypal experience of each individual human being (*CW* 11: 89; para. 146). Commenting on this aspect of Jung's vision, Segal acknowledges that "for all his insistence on the universal identity of the archetypal content of myths, Jung is also attentive to the differences." In this regard, Segal observes, Jung understood that "a myth is not merely a myth in its own right," but rather "is a myth for someone." As a result, he adds, in the Jungian approach to mythology, the meaning of a myth is always "more than its general meaning for all humanity" (Introduction 13).

Another important aspect or quality of archetypes, and one which is essential to the idea of personal myth as a religious or spiritual practice, relates to their inherently numinous nature. "The archetype, as a glance at the history of religious phenomena will show," Jung writes in this regard, "has a characteristically numinous effect so that the subject is gripped as though by an instinct" (*CW* 5: 158; para. 225). It is this numinous quality of the archetypes that explains both their enormous power as psychic phenomena as well as their profoundly religious significance.

Writing about the religious significance of Jung's theory of collective archetypes, Jaffé observes that "the recognition or experience of timeless archetypes as the hidden operators behind the scenes of life" brings with it "awareness of a transcendental or spiritual reality that complements the empirical reality of life and together with it forms a whole" (*Myth of Meaning* 21). Moreover, suggests Corbett, "any experience which

touches on questions of meaning, value, or purpose is potentially religious, depending on whether we contextualize it archetypally.” In this way, he adds, any experience “can become a religious one if we are influenced in our attitude toward it by direct contact with the archetypal realm” (*Religious Function of the Psyche* 67).

*On the Role of Symbolic Consciousness in Working with Personal Mythology*

The concept of mythological consciousness and its role in the evolution of one’s personal mythology was initially considered in Chapter 2. Expanding on that topic, it is important to consider at this point Jung’s distinction between two mutually exclusive and opposed forms of consciousness, forms which he names “directed thinking” and “fantasy thinking.” The former term, defined by Jung simply as “thinking in words,” describes that kind of consciousness which is inherently objective, logical, deliberate, and purposeful (*CW* 5: 16; para. 17). In contrast, the latter term is used by Jung to describe consciousness which is inherently subjective, non-logical, spontaneous, and directionless.

For Jung, the most advanced form of directed thinking is found in scientific discourse. “The clearest expression of modern directed thinking,” he writes, “is science and the techniques fostered by it” (19; para. 21). He goes on to suggest that the reason ancient and indigenous people developed only a primitive kind of science was that they lacked a sufficiently developed capacity for directed thinking. “We shall not be wrong” he observes in this regard, “in saying that the tremendous work of education which past centuries have devoted to directed thinking [. . .] has produced a readjustment of the human mind to which we owe modern empiricism and technics” (16; para. 17). While acknowledging that the rise of directed thinking has proven to be an undoubted and enormous asset in the evolution of humankind, Jung also recognizes that its elevation to

the forefront of modern consciousness has also tended to obscure and devalue the far more ancient form of consciousness expressed in the form of fantasy thinking.

If science and empiricism epitomize the nature of directed thinking, then dreams and the imaginal frame of reference typify the subjective realm of fantasy thinking. In this form of consciousness, Jung writes, “we no longer compel our thoughts along a definite track, but let them float, sink or rise according to their specific gravity” (16; para. 17). Regarding the content of fantasy thinking, he observes that it “shies away from reality,” focusing instead on “the past with its thousand-and-one memory images” (18; para. 19). In contrast to directed thinking, which is both “difficult and exhausting,” fantasy thinking is described by Jung as “effortless, working as it were spontaneously, and with contents ready to hand and guided by unconscious motives” (para. 20).

Another key difference between directed and fantasy thinking is that the former “is an altogether conscious phenomenon.” In contrast, Jung suggests, while much of fantasy thinking takes place in the conscious sphere, “at least as much goes on in the half-shadow, or entirely in the unconscious, and can therefore be inferred only indirectly.” It is therefore through the engagement of fantasy thinking, he continues, that one “is brought into contact with the oldest layers of the human mind, long buried beneath the threshold of consciousness” (29; para. 39).

Most importantly, since not only dream and image, but also the entire realm of myth emanates out of the unconscious, fantasy thinking is of the utmost importance in any form of engagement with the mythic dimension of existence. The relationship between myth and fantasy thinking is so intense, writes Segal, that for Jung, “mythic thinking is fantasy thinking” (Introduction 25). The application of fantasy consciousness

in the form of mythic thinking therefore is central to Jung's approach to the functioning of the psyche. "In describing the living processes of the psyche," Jung states regarding this key aspect of his work, "I deliberately and consciously give preference to a [. . .] mythological way of thinking" (*CW* 9.2:13; para 25). Walker suggests that, beyond simply preferring a mythological form of thinking, Jung demonstrates an "unusual capacity not only to empathize with the archaic mythological world view, but also to actually operate within it and adopt it as his own" (17).

With regard to the distinction between directed and fantasy thinking, Bond suggests that, as a result of Jung's ongoing experience, he later came to tacitly distinguish a third level of consciousness which is different from either one and serves as the bridge between them. Given that the archetypal contents of the unconscious cannot be described in the language of directed consciousness, psyche presents consciousness with fantasy images that signify these unconscious contents. Ordinarily, however, directed thinking then quickly steps in to dismiss these products of fantasy thinking as nonsensical and imaginary. Jung came to understand that by consciously adopting a symbolic frame of reference for the interpretation of the contents of fantasy thinking, an intermediary mode of consciousness comes into play. Symbolic thinking then creates an intermediary psychic space which is focused neither on the purely subjective or objective levels of consciousness, but rather "participates in the subjective process of fantasy while at the same time maintaining awareness of the process as an objective, autonomous factor" (18).

In considering the nature of symbolic consciousness, Jung further observes that for this level of psyche to function there must be what he calls a "symbolic attitude," a

concept he defines as “a definite view of the world which assigns meaning to events, whether great or small, and attaches to this meaning a greater value than bare facts.” The symbolic attitude, he continues, “stands opposed to another view which lays the accent on sheer facts and subordinates meaning to them” (*CW* 6: 476-7; para. 819-20).

Conscious engagement of a symbolic attitude is essential in working with the concept of personal myth because the archetypal content of the collective unconscious can only be understood through the medium of symbol. In this sense, writes Corbett, a functional definition of personal myth might be “the sum of an individual’s symbolic experiences.” Corbett is also careful to point out that, as carriers of the numinous energy of the archetypes, symbols serve another critical psychic function. This function, Corbett observes, relates to their “ability to bring new sources of sacred imagery from the unconscious into consciousness” (*Religious Function of the Psyche* 95). From the point of view of personal myth as pathway to the sacred, this religious dimension of symbolic consciousness is important because, as Corbett observes, “the individual’s relationship with such material is the basis of much of his or her personal religion, regardless of which outer religion he or she adheres to” (96).

The recognition of the power of the symbolic perspective and its application within the context of a religious orientation to life are key to what Jung calls “living the symbolic life.” In a lecture delivered to a group of Jungian pastoral counselors in 1939, Jung observed that the extreme reliance of the modern age on rationality has left many individuals bereft of access to an ongoing symbolic frame of reference for engaging their everyday experience. Such a symbolic perspective, he writes, imparts “the only meaning

to human life” by giving the individual a sense of being an actor “in the divine drama of human life” (CW 18: 275; para. 630).

Commenting on the personal mythic significance of this concept, Hopcke writes that “the meaning of our lives, the plot of our stories, is not written simply by what we know of ourselves but comes from a much deeper place, from our innately human capacity to experience wholeness through living a symbolic life” (*There Are No Accidents* 252). In a similar vein, Eugene C. Bianchi writes about the religious implications of engaging a symbolic perspective in the living of one’s life. He observes that the “direction of the symbolic way is toward inner religiousness, a quest for inner meaning.” He further suggests that in pursuing such a path, one is “called to move beyond the ordered certainties, patterned by family and church in childhood, to risk confrontation with the unpredictable numinous of archetypal symbols in the psyche” (185).

*On the Mythic Dimension of Dreams, Active Imagination, and Synchronicity*

Given that the content of one’s personal myth is not consciously chosen, but rather arises out the totality of one’s autonomous encounters with the archetypal content of the collective unconscious, it is important to understand the various ways in which such encounters arise. The need to understand how one may best attend to these manifestations of the unconscious is further increased by fact that personal experience of the sacred occurs through one’s contact with the numinous nature of the archetypal realm.

Among the ways in which one may most effectively engage the mythic, numinous content of the collective unconscious, Jung emphasized the importance of paying attention to one’s dreams and waking visions, as well as to the meaningful coincidences

in one's life. Regarding the powerful nature of these three forms of psychic phenomena, Jung observes that "when an archetype appears in a dream, in a fantasy, or in life, it always brings with it a certain power by virtue of which it [. . .] exercises a numinous or fascinating effect" (*CW 7*: 70; para. 109). In the particular context of personal myth, Stephen Larsen describes these autonomous manifestations of the unconscious as "spontaneous mythmaking experiences" (*Mythic Imagination* 22).

Probably the most familiar of these three avenues for encountering the archetypal contents of the unconscious is work with dreams. From the beginning, with Freud's injunction that they represent "the royal road to the unconscious," depth psychology has understood that dreams represent the principal means of accessing the unconscious, symbolic dimension of the psyche (*Interpretation of Dreams* 647). Given that Freud only acknowledged the existence of a personal unconscious, however, he saw all symbolic dream content as fundamentally personal in nature. While Jung did not disagree with the idea that dreams often contain symbolic material that is purely personal in context, his recognition of the existence of the collective unconscious also led him to perceive the potentially archetypal nature of the content of dreams.

In this regard, Jung distinguishes between two categories of dreams which he describes using the terms "little dreams" and "big dreams" (*CW 8*: 290; para. 554). Regarding the former, Jung characterizes such dreams as "the nightly fragments of fantasy coming from the subjective and personal sphere," adding that "their meaning is limited to the affairs of everyday" as a result of which they "are easily forgotten [. . .] because their validity is restricted to the day-to-day fluctuations of the psychic balance." In contrast, he characterizes the latter category as "significant dreams" which "occur

mostly during critical phases of life. Jung further suggests that such dreams “not infrequently prove to be the richest jewel in the treasure-house of psychic experience” (291; para 555).

Jung recognizes that big dreams “come from a ‘different level’ from that of the dreams we dream every night” (CW 17; 117; para. 209). Unlike ordinary personal dreams, which draw largely on the contents of the personal unconscious, big dreams draw their contents from the collective level of the unconscious. In this context, Jung observes that “the collective unconscious influences our dreams only occasionally, and when this happens, it produces strange and marvelous dreams remarkable for their beauty, or their demoniacal horror, or for their enigmatic wisdom” (118; para. 209).

Given their origin in the collective unconscious, big dreams are inherently archetypal in their symbolic content. In this regard, Jung observes, a big dream “uses collective figures because it has to express an eternal human problem that repeats itself endlessly, and not just a disturbance of personal balance.” As a result, he cautions, the interpretation of such dreams often involves “considerable difficulty” because the dreamer’s personal associations with images in such dreams are usually of little help (CW 8: 291; para. 555). “For these archetypal products are no longer concerned with personal experiences,” he continues, “but with general ideas, whose chief significance lies in their intrinsic meaning and not in any personal experience and its associations” (292; para. 557).

Regarding the archetypal content of big dreams, Jung writes that such contents reflect “ideas and associations whose exact equivalents can be found in mythology” (CW 17: 119; para. 209). In comparison to ordinary dreams, Jung writes, “the typical motifs in

big dreams are of much greater importance” precisely because “they permit a comparison with the motifs of mythology” (*CW* 8: 247; para. 474). Recognition of the identical nature of the motifs in big dreams and those of mythology, he continues, “not only raises the dream to a higher a level and places it in the larger context of the mythologem, but, at the same time by the mythology are brought into connection with the psychic life of the individual” (*CW* 11: 301; para. 451).

While many different archetypal figures may appear among the numerous mythological motifs of big dreams, Jung further observes that these motifs are often connected with “the life of the hero.” Describing some of the typical motifs of archetypal dreams, he observes:

Here we find the dangerous adventures and ordeals such as occur in initiations. We meet dragons, helpful animals, and demons; also the Wise Old Man, the animal-man, the wishing tree, the hidden treasure, the well, the cave, the walled garden, the transformative processes and substances of alchemy, and so forth—all things which in no way touch the banalities of everyday. (*CW* 8: 293; para. 558)

These archetypal mythologems, Jung adds, “are condensed, interwoven, and blended not only with one another [ . . . ] but also with unique individual elements” (para. 559). For this reason, big dreams often play a crucial role in both the genesis and evolution of an individual’s personal mythology.

Given the numinous nature of archetypal material, it should not be surprising that big dreams are not only mythic in nature but also possess an innately religious quality for the dreamer. As a result, while the figures in ancient mythologies can often “appear as pale phantoms and relics of a long lost past life that has become strange to us,” the religious aspect of a big dream “represents an immediate ‘numinous’ experience.” In this way, he declares, the dream becomes “a *living mythologem*.” (*CW* 11: 301; para. 451).

Often such dreams “stand out for years like spiritual landmarks,” Jung suggests, “even though they may never be quite understood.” As a result, he continues, it is “a hopeless undertaking to interpret such dreams reductively, as their real meaning and value lie in themselves.” Such dreams, he concludes, “are spiritual experiences that defy any attempt at rationalization” (*CW* 17: 117; para. 208).

Commenting further on the religious dimension of big dreams, Anthony Stevens observes that if one works seriously with such dreams “it is hard not to develop some degree of mystical awareness, for the dreams become more profound, more mythic, more ‘religious,’ and expose one to experiences unmistakably suprapersonal and ‘transcendent’” (220). In the context of archetypal dreams, he writes, the “mundane patterns of daily existence are transfused with the radiant intensity which is universally ascribed to ‘the sacred’.”

In addition to dreams, Jung recognized a second method for accessing the contents of the unconscious which he named “active imagination.” Characterized by June Singer as a method for “dreaming the dream forward,” active imagination can be likened to a waking dream or vision (272). As defined by Robert Johnson, active imagination is a symbolic process of “going to the images that rise up in one’s imagination and making dialog with them” (25). Describing the core of the process of active imagination, Jung states that the “essential thing is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them, and at the same time to bring them into relationship with consciousness” (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* 187). It is this “conscious participation in the imaginative experience,” Johnson observes, that makes active imagination “different from ordinary, passive fantasy” (140).

Just as dreams can function on both the purely personal as well as the archetypal level, the process of active imagination can also be applied to engage material from the personal as well as the collective unconscious. This latter type of active imagination, Johnson suggests, “is not to work out some immediate problem or conflict on the personal level,” but rather “to make a place in one’s life where the great archetypal themes can live themselves out” (157). At this level, he writes, active imagination “seems more like a mythical adventure, a journey into the archetypal realm” (151). Regarding this potentially mythic dimension of work with active imagination, Johnson observes that everyone contains “the seeds of the heroic quest” within them and active imagination can serve as “one of the best and most legitimate levels on which to live these experiences” (153).

Profounder still, as Johnson observes, is the employment of active imagination for experiencing the spiritual or religious dimension of consciousness. At this level, he writes, active imagination “is perceived as vision which gives rise to religious insight” (200). The essence of the meaning of such visionary experiences with active imagination, Johnson suggests, is the process of “learning from your own experience those profound truths of life that cannot be transferred from one person to another with words but can only be genuinely known through one’s own connection to the collective unconscious” (218). Further commenting on the religious dimension of engaging in this form of inner work, Barbara Hannah writes, “active imagination is a form of meditation which man has used, at least from the dawn of history, if not earlier, as a way of learning to know his God or gods.” In other words, she continues, “it is a method for exploring the unknown, whether we think of the unknown as an outside god—as an immeasurable

infinite—or whether we know that we can meet it by contemplating our unknown selves as an entirely *inner* experience” (3).

In addition to paying attention to the archetypal content of big dreams and the deepest forms of active imagination, Jung proposes a third way that individuals can access the mythic dimension of their life stories, namely by attending to the meaningful coincidences occurring within their lives. Jung began to recognize the existence of such events early in the course of his professional work and eventually created the term “synchronicity” to describe such phenomena. “Since the causality principle seemed to me insufficient to explain certain remarkable manifestations of the unconscious,” Jung writes of the evolution of the concept in his thinking, “my researches into the psychology of unconscious processes [. . .] compelled me to look for another principle of explanation” (CW 15: 56; para. 81). Jung defines the phenomenon of synchronicity as an “acausal connecting principle” and describes synchronicities as “meaningful coincidences” (CW 8: 518; para. 967). Examples of synchronicities offered by Jung include “the simultaneous occurrence of identical thoughts, symbols, or psychic states” (CW 15: 56; para. 81).

In his principle essay on this subject, Jung recounts an exemplary case of a synchronicity that manifested during his professional work, an incident in which a client was describing the contents of a dream about a Egyptian scarab beetle just as a very similar kind of beetle synchronously flew through the window of Jung’s study. The client, who had previously resisted the idea of looking at the meaningfulness of any irrational experience, was deeply emotionally affected by this event, as a result of which her work with Jung was greatly facilitated. Jung understood that both the dream image of the

beetle, an ancient symbol of rebirth and renewal, and its synchronous appearance in his office were harbingers of a major psychological and spiritual transformation in the client. According to Jung, the symbolic meaning of both the dream and the synchronous event derive from archetypal material which had been activated in the consciousness of this individual as a response to the psychological impasse she faced (*CW* 8: 438-440; para. 843-5).

Writing about the nature of synchronicities, Hopcke identifies four characteristics that typify such phenomena. The first and foremost of these attributes is the acausal nature of the relationship between synchronous events. Second, he continues, such events are always accompanied by an experience of deep emotion. The third quality of synchronicities, Hopcke writes, is that “the content of the synchronistic experience, what the event actually is, is always symbolic in nature.” The final aspect of synchronicities, he continues, relates to the fact “that such coincidences occur at points of important transitions in our life.” As a result, Hopcke concludes, “a synchronistic event very often becomes a turning point in the stories of our lives” (*There Are No Accidents* 22).

Considering the religious or spiritual significance of synchronistic phenomena, Jaffé remarks on the numinous quality of such experiences. “In the majority of cases an experience of the hidden, transcendental, ordering factor is bound up with an awareness of numinosity,” she observes, as a result of which the “synchronistic phenomena arranged by the archetype often arouse wonder and awe” (*Myth of Meaning* 153). Writing about the idea of “mystical experiences as synchronistic events,” Hopcke observes that humans historically and traditionally have used these insights “to develop ways of getting

spiritual direction for themselves, to discover the stories of their souls” (*There Are No Accidents* 190, 205).

Regarding the relationship between synchronous events and mythology, Segal observes that synchronicity “is not itself myth,” but rather “the experience of the world as meaningful.” Myth, he writes, “would be an account of that experience” (Introduction 20). Much as with the archetypal content of big dreams and waking visions, the symbolic significance of the synchronous experiences in one’s life helps to define and elaborate the contours of one’s personal mythology. Even more than in the case of dream-work and active imagination—which are both entirely inner psychic processes—contemplation of the significance of synchronicities also inevitably binds one’s mythology to one’s experience of the outer world.

In this sense, Hopcke observes that the phenomenon of synchronicity “invites us to see our lives from a different angle, in which our subjective experience determines our place in the universe of random events that occur around us and to us and to which we are connected through what they mean to us” (*There Are No Accidents* 29-30). In addition, he continues, mythic reflection on one’s experience of synchronicity can potentially convey a still greater gift. “Through our ability to uncover and live out the individual meaning of what befalls us,” Hopcke proposes, “we receive in a synchronistic event a reminder of an important truth” (47). At the core of that truth, he writes, is the recognition “that our lives are organized, consciously and unconsciously, the way a story is, that our lives have a coherence, a direction, a reason for being, and a beauty as well.”

*On Individuation and the Encounter with the Sacred through Personal Myth*

Central to Jung’s approach to depth psychology is the concept of individuation, a

term which describes the innate and lifelong evolution of personal consciousness in the direction of psychic wholeness, a process leading toward, as June Singer observes, “the conscious realization and integration of all the possibilities contained within the individual (134). Understanding Jung’s conception of the process of individuation requires that one first explore another core concept in Jung’s work, namely the idea of the self. The self functions as both the focus of and the force behind the individuation process. Describing the self, as “an innate teleological and psychic component,” Palmer observes that it simultaneously “confronts the individual” and acts “as an inner guiding factor” directing the individual toward increased psychic complexity and integration (121)”

In contrast to the concept of the ego, which Jung defines as the center of personal consciousness, the self is a term used to describe the totality of both consciousness and unconsciousness. Expressing the inherently paradoxical nature of his definition of this idea, Jung writes, the “self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre and totality,” Adding to the mystical and enigmatic nature of this concept, Jung also observes that the self is “a construct that serves to express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp as such, since by definition it transcends our powers of comprehension” (*CW* 12: 41; para. 44). Suggesting that the self “might be equally called the ‘God within us,’” Jung further observes that the “beginning of our whole psychic life seems to be inextricably rooted in this point, and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be striving toward it” (*CW* 7: 238; para. 399).

Another paradox regarding the nature of the self is its relationship to the rest of the archetypal realm. In this regard, as Vera von der Heydt observes, the self is both “the central archetype from which all other archetypes evolve,” as well as the “protective boundary” within which the archetypes may be said to interact. Moreover, while the self shares with all archetypes the quality of being knowable only through its symbolic contents, Jung found that the particular symbolic manifestations of the self uniquely tend to appear in the form of an “*imago dei*,” a term he used to describe the many images traditionally associated with divinity. Not surprisingly, Jung describes the experience of the manifestation of the self in the symbolic form of a god-image as possessing “the quality of numinosity, often in very high degree” (*CW* 11: 59; para.102).

In describing the nature of the self, Palmer lists a range of symbols cited by Jung as typical god-images. These symbols include powerful or prestigious human or animal figures such as monarchs and lions, images of gods and goddesses, outstanding religious personalities such as Jesus or the Buddha, sacred plant symbols such as the rose and the lotus, cosmic symbols such as the sun, elemental geometric figures such as the square and the circle, and, above all, mandalas (121). Given the wide range of archetypal images typically symbolizing the self, their overwhelming correspondence with images found throughout the world’s religious traditions, and their common source in the collective unconscious, Murray Stein suggests that there “is no god or goddess who is utterly alien to anyone, and, in fact, all deities have a place in the psyche’s pantheon.” In its own way, he further observes, “each image of God—whether male or female, animal, human, or superhuman, concrete or abstract—sheds some additional light on the wholeness of the God image embedded in the human psyche” (viii).

While the self functions as both the catalyst for and the goal of human psychological development, it is the process called individuation that describes the path along which development proceeds over the course of a lifetime. As noted above, Jung's approach to depth psychology deems the individuation process to be the core concern of the psyche. Defined as an ongoing dialogue between the ego, as the central archetype of personal consciousness, and the self, as the central organizing and integrating archetype of the totality of consciousness, individuation is viewed within Jungian psychology as the essential and autonomous pathway leading to psychological evolution.

Described in terms of "coming to selfhood" and "self-realization," Jung characterizes individuation as "a process of psychological development that fulfills the individual qualities given; in other words, it is the process by which a man becomes the definite, unique being he in fact is" (CW 7: 173-4; para. 266-7). Commenting further on the teleological nature of the individuation process, Jung describes the self as "our life's goal" and "the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality" (240; para. 404). Also considering the emerging outcome of consciously engaging in the process of individuation, Hopcke writes of an evolving ability "to hold together a sense of one's unique individuality as well as one's connection to the larger experience of human existence, enabling one to live in a truly creative, symbolic, and individual way" (*Guided Tour of the Works of C. G. Jung* 63).

Just as with the darker aspect of Campbell's concept of bliss, however, it is equally important to remember that the path of individuation is often deeply painful and disturbing. Anyone doubting this need only read Jung's account of his own process of individuation contained in the chapter entitled "Confrontation with the Unconscious" in

*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*. Observing that he “felt helpless before an alien world,” Jung writes that everything in this frightening new psychic realm “seemed difficult and incomprehensible” to him (177). As Liliane Frey-Rohn warns, such an encounter “can just as well result in a dissolution of the personality as in guidance on the path of wisdom” (265). Moreover, much as in following one’s bliss, the process of individuation requires the willing abandonment of psychological and spiritual conformity and the resulting risk of alienation from family and community.

What is necessary for the successful navigation of this process is an awareness that individuation, like the attainment of bliss and the completion of the hero’s journey, requires a major reorientation of one’s way of life. That reorientation is predicated, in turn, on the recognition that one’s life is no longer one’s own, but instead must in some way serve the larger concerns of both the self and one’s community. In this sense, Jung cautions, it is not enough that one “gain some understanding” of the archetypal images that grip one, but also that such insight “be converted into an ethical obligation” to the larger world (*Memories, Dreams, and Reflections* 192).

With regard to the concept of personal mythology, it is particularly important to note that individuation, being the central archetypal process at work within the psyche, is intrinsically mythological in nature. In this context, Jung states that it is “impossible for anyone without knowledge of mythology and folklore [. . .] to grasp the essence of the individuation process” (*CW* 8: 290; para. 553). In a similar vein, Jolande Jabobi observes that from “the remotest times” human beings have tried to express the nature of the individuation process “in the imagery of myths and fairy tales” (60). Given the ultimate importance accorded the process of individuation in Jungian psychology, Walker is not

exaggerating when he declares that “Jungians value the study of mythology primarily as a means of furthering” this process (33).

In a very real sense, merely to begin consciously engaging in the process of one’s individuation requires posing Jung’s vital question about the nature of the myth one is living. Paying attention to the archetypal significance of one’s dreams and the synchronous events in one’s life and engaging the world with a greater awareness of the symbolic nature of one’s experience are all intrinsically connected with the evolution of one’s personal myth. These developments are, in turn, prompted and directed by the growing urge of the self for greater manifestation and the ego’s gradual submission to that imperative. In this manner, the evolution of a personal myth can be seen as an essential and inevitable consequence of the never-ending process of individuation. Commenting on the essential interweaving of one’s evolving personal mythology within the process of individuation, Bond observes that the progressive unfolding of one’s myth allows “our participation in the process of our own development.” In that sense, he continues, individuation “requires a myth to live by” (56).

Equally important with regard to the idea of personal mythology as pathway to the sacred is the recognition that individuation plays as essential a role in the process of personal religious or spiritual evolution as it does in engendering greater psychological integration and wholeness. One only need remember that individuation is the process through which the ego encounters the self in the form of those numinous god-images that autonomously manifest in dreams, waking visions, and other forms of psychic activity. As such, individuation must be seen as an inherently religious process.

What makes Jung's recognition of the religious nature of the individuation process particularly important from the point of view of a personal approach to the sacred is the degree to which it affords individuals a viable religious framework for spiritual development that is free of sectarian theological claims. "Rather than dictate the way in which the sacred *should* appear, rather than appealing to tradition, to biblical authority and to dogmatic assertions," Corbett writes, the Jungian approach to religious life urges one "to discover the ways in which the sacred *actually* appears in one's life" ("Depth Psychological Approach to the Sacred" 73). Further commenting on the profound religious significance of Jung's work, Curtis D. Smith observes, "What is ultimately important in the universe is not transcendent to human existence but is found in the depths of the human psyche; that is, with the realization of the Self" (117).