

Psychological Healing as Religious Experience: In The Works of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)

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Abstract

This paper investigates how Carl G. Jung (1875-1961), the founder of analytical psychology, approached religion and the religious in pursuit of psychological healing. It begins with the idea of “religious experience,” and its radical new approach to the study of religion. An approach in which the feelings and emotions stirred by religion gained center stage over religion’s theoretical substance. First, it will place religion and Carl Jung’s theories in a historical perspective. It then dives deeper into the works of Carl Jung to explore the psychological and religious importance of the unconscious mind, the Self and its various aspects, for understanding mental illness and psychological healing. Through a discussion of dreams, archetypes and individuation, this paper demonstrates how man has worshipped the psychic force within him as something divine and shows how psychological healing can bring about a religious experience.

Keywords

religious experience, Carl G. Jung, analytical psychology, religion, psychological healing, numinosum, archetypes, dreams, individuation.

Introduction

Religion has been a fundamental feature of human existence and has found manifestation in a wild variety of ways. However, the idea of religious experience is relatively new.¹ The scholarly study of religious experience emerged during the late 18th century and turned it into an academic discipline.² Yet, what precisely defines religious experience remains a topic of debate. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), highly influenced by the German Romantic tradition and in response to Kantian critiques, introduced a radical new way of approaching the study of religion in his *Über die Religion* (On Religion, 1799). Whereas the dominant religious theories of the time identified the core of

¹ Proudfoot (1985), *Religious Experience*, xii.

² Stausberg (2010), ‘From 1799 to 2009: Religious Experience Reconsidered – Background, Argument, Responses’, 279.

religion by its theoretical substance (doctrines, religious acts, metaphysics and morals), Schleiermacher rejected these theories and alternatively saw the contemplation and *feeling* of the universal infinity *an sich* as the essence of religion.³ The introduction of this approach liberated religious doctrine and its practice from metaphysical underpinnings and ecclesiastical authorities, and instead focused on the human experience of religious phenomena.⁴ Schleiermacher's legacy got acknowledged in *The Idea of the Holy* by German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), who emphasized the importance of 'a moment of *deeply-felt* religious experience, as little as possible qualified by other forms of consciousness', for the understanding and discussion of questions of the psychology of religion.⁵ An important element in Otto's phenomenological account of religious experience is the 'numinous', which he describes as 'the holy', freed from its rational or moral implications.⁶ In line with the former, British scholar Ninian Smart (1927-2001) termed one of his dimensions of religion 'the experiential and emotional dimension' and saw phenomenology, with its empirical approach, as a prime way to study religion, because of its broad 'scientific' and 'objective' character.⁷ Another well-known representative of the study of religious experience was American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910). In *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James formulated religious experience as an object of study in a relatively technical sense and defined it as a nonspecific "something" which informed "religion in general" not tied to any tradition'.⁸ Similar to the former mentioned scholars, James identified *feeling* as the deeper source of religion and argued that philosophical and theological formulas are secondary products – or 'translations of a text into another tongue' – of that feeling.⁹

The works of Otto and James strongly influenced the work of Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, Carl Jung (1875-1961), who also saw "religion" in a very broad sense and described it as an 'attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinosum'.¹⁰ Jung also saw religion as able to stand independently from any organized form of religion, such as Christianity, and defined it as "a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the "numinosum," a dynamic existence or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will.'¹¹ Jung saw religion as a phenomenon that 'seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator.'¹² Jung's 'numinosum' is generally described in two ways, as a qualifier of a visible object or as 'the influence of an invisible presence which has the ability to cause

³ Schleiermacher (2002) [1899], *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, 49.

⁴ Proudfoot (1985), *Religious Experience*, xiii.

⁵ Otto (1923), *The Idea of the Holy*, 8 [emphasis added]; See also Louis (2001). 'Rudolf Otto and the Numinous', 105-109.

⁶ Allen (2010), 'Phenomenology of Religion', 211.

⁷ Smart (1996), *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*.

⁸ Taves, (1999), *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*, 271.

⁹ James (2002) [1902], *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a study in human nature*, 389; See also Louis (2001). 'William James and Religious Experience', 92-93.

¹⁰ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 6.

¹¹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4.

¹² Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4.

a peculiar alteration of consciousness.¹³ In other words, religion in general is described as holding a quality which can arouse an effect with ‘emotional value’ in its subject, which alters its state of consciousness in some way.¹⁴ Again, feelings and emotions are given particular importance. Moreover, Jung and James both agreed that religion could apply to devout Christians and hard atheistic scientists alike, since the scientist might have no faith, ‘his temper’ could still be ‘devout.’¹⁵ Jung, who admitted to be a Kantian, did not claim to give psychological “explanations” of religious phenomena, he rather sought to give psychological “translations.”¹⁶ He aimed to approach religion ‘from a scientific and not from a philosophical standpoint, disregarding all claims whether or not there was ‘a unique and eternal truth.’¹⁷ Jung argued that those claims exceeded his job as a psychologist and he therefore solely concerned himself with the religious experience as a thing in itself, not with the validity of the beliefs attached to it.

This paper attempts to show the reader how the Jungian approach to psychological healing can be seen or experienced as a religious experience. It explores the psychological and religious importance of the unconscious mind and the healing potential which lies hidden in the act of getting to know it. I will do this through the analyzation of the works of the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, with particular emphasis on his *Terry Lectures* and *Collected Works Vol. 9*, among others. To demonstrate how psychological healing can be experienced as a religious experience, I will first place religion and Jung’s theories in a historical perspective. Second, I will elaborate more on the importance of the unconscious in understanding mental illness and how it relates to the religious experience. Third, I will elaborate more on the Persona, Shadow, Anima and Animus for clarifying purposes. As a fourth point of inquiry, I will do deeper into the Self. Fifth, I will discuss the process of individuation and the Self-archetypes. Lastly, I will discuss the value of dreams in Jungian practical psychology and how individuation and psychological healing can constitute a religious experience.

Man as God/God as Man in Historical Perspective

Ever since the scientific revolution, man increased in importance over God – a development which has placed rationality above intuition and fact above belief. Jung identified this development as an actual threat to human consciousness, a threat he called ‘giantism’, or inflation of one’s ego.¹⁸ Underlying Jung’s theory of psychoanalysis rests the understanding that, as the society at large moved farther away from religious myth, so did the individual stray away further from himself. As *homo religiosus*, man ‘takes into account and carefully observes certain factors which influence him, and

¹³ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4.

¹⁴ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4, 7.

¹⁵ ‘But our esteem for facts has not neutralized in us all religiousness. It is itself almost religious. Our scientific temper is devout’ See James (1995), *Pragmatism*, 14; Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 7-6.

¹⁶ Jones (1993), ‘Concerning Carl Jung on Asian Religious Traditions’, 169-170; For Jung’s claim to be a Kantian see: Douglas, (2008) ‘The historical context of analytical psychology,’ 24.

¹⁷ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 2, 7.

¹⁸ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 328.

through him, his general condition.¹⁹ Jung regarded this ‘religious impulse’ as so intimately connected to human nature, that he saw the estrangement from religion as largely responsible for the onset of hysteria, delusions and other troubles of the psyche.²⁰

Jung stated that ‘the wrong we have done, thought, or intended will wreak its vengeance on our souls.’²¹ In other words, a troubled mind makes for a troubled soul and the confrontation with our own inherent shadow (our dark side) is a culprit for the emergence of psychological problems within an individual’s psyche. In religious terminology, it is the internal battle between the forces of good and evil which cause a troubled mind and a troubled soul. The contents of this battle are ultimately determined by what one believes to constitute as bad or evil, and it is precisely here where religion has played an important role in our collective psychological evolution. Religious dogma has functioned as a moral code, judging what is good, to which one must succumb, and judging what is bad, to which one must be against.²² As our society moved further away from religion during the twentieth century ‘the Christian myth was lost, and with it the view that wholeness is achieved in the other world,’ and as a result, we have been confronted with the other side of the Creator, its shadow.²³ Jung states World War II as an example of the manifestation of the principle of evil, a manifestation which ‘revealed to what extent Christianity has been undermined.’²⁴ In the absence of organized religion, a crucial human need was left unfulfilled, leaving the human psyche vulnerable to the terrors of the personal and collective shadow. Many of Jung’s works were very occupied with the crisis of Western/European consciousness – a struggle also reflected in his own personal experiences – and this was a major drive in finding a new kind of way or order that would improve the sanity of mankind.²⁵ Jung called for a “reorientation, a metanoia,” which refers to the need to find and form one’s own inner religion or moral code.²⁶ However, as Jung defined religion quite differently as compared to organized religion, which is based on merely faith, Jung called for was a spiritual and religious approach to meet ‘the modern man.’²⁷ An approach favoring (self)knowledge and experience over faith, one closer to that of the Gnostics and in line with their hermetic tradition.²⁸ Jung encouraged to question one’s own sanity and to reflect upon our own potential for madness.²⁹ He observed that organized religion and its strong dichotomy of good and evil has pushed humanity in the past to succumb to either one of them, simultaneously suppressing one’s unconscious mind.³⁰ As religion fell away, so did the burden of

¹⁹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 7.

²⁰ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 56-83, 327-359. See also: Olson and McBeath (2012), ‘Convergence and Divergence’, 401.

²¹ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329.

²² Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 279.

²³ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 328.

²⁴ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 328-329.

²⁵ Hanegraaff (2017), ‘The Great War of the Soul: Divine and Human Madness in Carl Gustav Jung’s *Liber Novus*’, 131.

²⁶ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329.

²⁷ Jung (1964) [1931], ‘The spiritual problem of modern man’, par 168-171.

²⁸ Jung (1964) [1931], ‘The spiritual problem of modern man’, par 169; See also: Douglas, Claire. (2008) ‘The historical context of analytical psychology,’ 33-34.

²⁹ Hanegraaff (2017), ‘The Great War of the Soul: Divine and Human Madness in Carl Gustav Jung’s *Liber Novus*’, 109-110.

³⁰ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329.

deciding upon good and evil arise again. Jung saw the relativity of good and evil and stated that ‘recognition of the reality of evil necessarily relativizes the good and the evil likewise, converting both into halves of a paradoxical whole.’³¹ Consequently, he argued that we must ‘no longer succumb to anything at all, not even to good ... [and must] beware of thinking of good and evil as absolute opposites.’³² Therefore, when it comes to morality, or making ethical decisions, Jung strongly believed that one must ultimately decide for oneself what is the right thing to do at any given moment. What he called for was that one must take back one’s own personal responsibility to decide on what is good or evil, thereby recognizing the fallibility of the human judgment and realizing that one will not always be able to make the perfect judgement.³³ The process of making ethical judgements was seen by Jung as some sort of “creative act,” judging its validity *Deo concedente*, meaning ‘there must be a spontaneous and decisive impulse on the part of the unconscious.’³⁴ According to Jung, it was this impulse that could make this act full of tormenting complexity, since the decision itself lies within our free will. Nonetheless, he acknowledged a participating force that could at times feel out of our control: the unconscious. In Jung’s own words:

[T]he individual is so unconscious that he altogether fails to see his own potentialities for decision. Instead he is constantly and anxiously looking around for external rules and regulations which can guide him in his perplexity. [...] Therefore the individual who wishes to have an answer to the problem of evil, as it is posed today, has need, first and foremost, of *self-knowledge*, that is, the utmost possible knowledge of his own wholeness. He must know relentlessly how much good he can do, and what crimes he is capable of, and must beware of regarding the one as real and the other as illusion. Both are elements within his nature, and both are bound to come to light in him, should he wish as he ought to live without self-deception or self-delusion.³⁵

The Jungian approach to psychology and mental illnesses³⁶ harbors a religious character that stresses the importance of spirituality and religion for mental health. It goes without surprise that this approach received criticism, since it emerged in a society that scorned religion for its arguable incompatibility with scientific inquiry.³⁷ However, as we are now living in an age where the concept of spirituality and mysticism is gaining newfound importance and science is becoming more concerned with the object of consciousness, Jung’s psychological theory is gaining new listeners. Within the fields of neuroscience and psychiatry, recent scientific research on the use of psychedelic drugs in treating a variety of mental illness has shown promising results.³⁸ Similar to the discussed numinous quality of religion, these

³¹ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329; Jung connected the reality of evil as a thing in itself to certain philosophers (such as Emmanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer) and to Gnosticism, for more information on this see Douglas, Claire (2008), ‘The historical context of analytical psychology,’ 25-26.

³² Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329.

³³ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329.

³⁴ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 329-330.

³⁵ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 330.

³⁶ When speaking of “mental illness” I use it as an umbrella term referring to all troubles of the mind which can classify as such within the works of Carl Jung, such as hysteria, neuroses, delusions, etc.

³⁷ Corbett (2013), ‘Jung’s Approach to Spirituality and Religion’, 147–167.

³⁸ Nichols, Johnson, and Nichols (2017), ‘Psychedelics as Medicines: An Emerging New Paradigm’, 209–219.

substances are presented as being capable of inducing an alteration of consciousness that can inflict healing.³⁹ This is not a paper about psychedelic substances, yet these scientific experiments give strong notice of a depth to the human mind that is vast, profound and largely uncharted. Similarly to Jung's theories, stipulating that the religious experience largely stems from the unknown depths of the individual's psyche, science suggests that particular substances allow an individual to tap into this depth and experience something that is often described as mystical or religious.⁴⁰ Here we see a field of scientific research in which science and spirituality intertwine; known and unknown working together in a way healing for the patient. As Jung's theories show similar coexistence of scientific observation and spirituality, I believe these developments to be of significance for the credibility of Jungian psychology – with special reference to Jung's concept of individuation on which I will elaborate in the course of the paper.

The Unconscious and the Varieties of Mental Illness

According to Jung, the neurotic person is fearful to the extent that he 'has lost confidence in himself.'⁴¹ He described neurosis as a 'humiliating defeat,' felt by those who 'are not entirely conscious of their own psychology.'⁴² The original approach of doctors to such feelings of defeat was to assure the patient he was physically fine and write his symptoms off as imaginary. However, instead of alleviating the fear of the patient, matters are made worse, as he now believes he is defeated by something "unreal", a "malade imaginaire," and left with a confusing sense of inferiority engulfing his whole personality.⁴³ Jung recognized that this rather materialistic conception of the psyche proved 'not particularly helpful in neurotic cases' and believed that 'the real causes of neuroses are psychological.'⁴⁴ This does not mean that mental maladies such as neuroses and hysteria cannot manifest on a physical level. On the contrary, Jung regarded the mind-body connection as pivotal, and even found that in some cases of hysteria physical symptoms of fever could be cured in 'minutes by a simple confession of the psychological cause.'⁴⁵ Jung saw mental illness not as something ultimately seeking to kill the body, much rather, he saw mental illness as threatening the existence of the soul.⁴⁶ Accordingly, what the mental patient needed is a curing of the soul; an approach similar to many religious practices who seek to redeem the soul from evil. Jung observed a prejudice towards the ills of the mind coming from the medical world, as the mentally ill person was generally perceived as the maker of his troubling imagination, while the person suffering from cancer was never seen as the one

³⁹ Hendricks, Thorne, Clark, Coombs and Johnson (2015), 'Classic psychedelic use is associated with reduced psychological distress and suicidality in the United States adult population', 280–288.

⁴⁰ For info on the connection between psychedelics and mystical experiences, see: Barrett and Griffiths (2017), 'Classic Hallucinogens and Mystical Experiences: Phenomenology and Neural Correlates'.

⁴¹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 8.

⁴² Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 8-9.

⁴³ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 9.

⁴⁴ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 9-10.

⁴⁵ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 10.

⁴⁶ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 12.

responsible for his physical ailment.⁴⁷ The idea that psychic agencies, such as demons, wizards, witches, angels and gods, could influence the human body and mind is found throughout all of human history, and Jung therefore deemed the prejudice as relatively new.⁴⁸ Although Jung did not believe that mental illness was actually caused by demons, witches or other psychic agents, he psychologized the idea and assumed that, particularly in the case of mental illness, the cause originated in a part of the mind which is not consciousness.⁴⁹ This part of the mind Jung called the unconscious, to which he added two layers: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The contents of the personal unconscious were described by Jung as:

everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness . . .⁵⁰

The images that appear in the personal unconscious are seen by Jung as *signs*, and represent things that are known to the individual.⁵¹ In comparison, the collective unconscious exists independently from the personal unconscious, is inherited from one's ancestors, and has a nature that is 'collective, universal and impersonal,' 'identical in all individuals' and made up of *the archetypes*.⁵² These archetypes are described as primordial images, energetic forms, or *symbols* representing 'definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere.'⁵³

Jung found that the unconscious had the ability to interfere with the conscious mind, sometimes manifesting as mental troubles or "complexes."⁵⁴ Since this process is experienced by the troubled individual as completely besides his control, Jung saw these complexes as behaving almost like demons, as 'secondary or partial personalities in possession of a mental life of their own.'⁵⁵ In this line of reasoning, the idea of demonic possession seems not so strange at all. Within Jung's understanding, the religious experience of *demonic possession* served as a metaphor for *psychological complexes*. These complexes could arise because of two reasons: (1) they split from consciousness due to continuous repression by the conscious mind; or (2) they grow out of the unconscious mind and

⁴⁷ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 12.

⁴⁸ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 12-13. For more on the historical belief that psychic agencies can influence humans see for instance: Roper, Jonathan (ed.) (2009), *Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴⁹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 12.

⁵⁰ Jung (1960) [1947], *On the nature of psyche*, par. 382; see also Lawson (2008), 'Individuation', 121.

⁵¹ N.B. *signs* differentiate from *symbols*, as 'an expression that stands for a known thing remains a sign and is never a symbol' See Jung (1971) [1921], *Psychological Types*, par. 817; See also: Lawson (2008), 'Individuation', 122.

⁵² Jung (1959) [1936/37], 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious', par. 88.

⁵³ Jung (1959) [1936/37], 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious', par. 89; See also Donahue (2003), 'Theoretical Foundations: Complex Theory and its relationship to Modern Theorists', 4.

⁵⁴ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 13-14.

⁵⁵ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 14.

invade consciousness manifesting as ‘weird and unassailable convictions and impulses.’⁵⁶

Accordingly, instead of disregarding the delusional experience of his patients as imaginary and unreal, he advised his patients to see the – often irrational and nonsensical – delusion as ‘the manifestation of a power and a meaning not yet understood.’⁵⁷ He found that his approach worked much better than trying to convince the patient that he was ‘secretly inventing and supporting’ his mental illness.⁵⁸ Jung found that complexes could be benign or malignant and saw them as devices of a person’s unconscious to keep his ego consciousness in check.⁵⁹ To give an example, Jung explained a case of how a male individual, a “thinker” who had always sought to force everything under his intellect and reason, got struck by the unescapable belief that he was being terrorized by a cancerous formation in his body. Although physically in perfect shape, this obsession was now forcing him to let go of ‘his habitual misuse of reason and intellect’ – which was giving him an egotistical and false sense of power – and to submit to a force that had proven out of his control.⁶⁰ On top of that, Jung found that many cases of mental illness could be explained through mythology, and in this particular case he referred to the myth of Gilgamesh:

When in the Babylonian Epos Gilgamesh's arrogance and ὕβρις defy the gods, they invent and create a man equal in strength to Gilgamesh in order to check the hero's unlawful ambition. [...] Gilgamesh, however, escaped the revenge of the gods. He had warning dreams to which he paid attention. They showed him how he could overcome his foe. Our patient, living in an age where the gods have become extinct and are even in bad repute, also had such dreams, but he did not listen to them. How could an intelligent man be so superstitious as to take dreams seriously! The very common prejudice against dreams is but one of the symptoms of a far more serious undervaluation of the human soul in general.⁶¹

Jung observed, that the entire body of mythology, art, poetry, history and religion could provide archetypal metaphors for mental illness, as well as, the keys for the needed healing.⁶² What is demonstrated above is an example of how mythical religion can aid the process of psychological healing of an individual, which renders it not only an psychological experience but one that could also be experienced as a religious.

As the myth of Gilgamesh foretold, dreams, being ‘the voice of the Unknown’, could hold signs of warning.⁶³ Yet, before we continue our discussion on dreams in Jungian psychology, let us first focus on the parts of the psyche according to Jung.

⁵⁶ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 14.

⁵⁷ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 17.

⁵⁸ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 17.

⁵⁹ Donahue (2003), ‘Theoretical Foundations: Complex Theory and its relationship to Modern Theorists’, 6.

⁶⁰ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 18.

⁶¹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 17-18.

⁶² Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 18-19; Donahue (2003), ‘Theoretical Foundations: Complex Theory and its relationship to Modern Theorists’, 4.

⁶³ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 21.

The Persona, Ego, Shadow, Anima and Animus

The Persona is the image of oneself that one presents to the world. The persona is different from the real individual, because not all of our psychic life is presented out in the open.⁶⁴ It can thus be seen as the mask we wear out in the world, often constructed in order to fit in. The ego lays directly behind and forms the center of one's consciousness. It is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness and encompasses the entire empirical personality.⁶⁵ In case of inner mental disturbance, Jung believed that the ego was being disturbed by the contents of the unconscious; that being the Self, containing the shadow, the anima and the animus.⁶⁶

The shadow is described by Jung as the easiest to experience and the most accessible, since its contents are largely found in the personal unconscious.⁶⁷ This dark side of the psyche stands in opposition to the Persona, which is exposed to the light of day, and contains all parts of ourselves we find unacceptable and incompatible with the Persona.⁶⁸ In religious terminology, the shadow could be seen as the dark realm where our demons roam. Since humans are inherently afraid of these darker parts of themselves, the contents of the shadow are repressed in effort to get rid of them, yet in actuality they are pushed into the unconscious.⁶⁹ The shadow translates to our own inner lack of awareness and is made up of all the things and traits that one refuses to accept about oneself.⁷⁰ As a result, the Shadow seeks expression either by projection on other persons suitable for this purpose (often enemies) or by personification in one's dreams.⁷¹ To give a literary example, Jung referred to the Faust-Mephistopheles relationship in Goethe's *Faust*.⁷² The shadow will keep plaguing the ego-personality and keep hurting others until one becomes conscious of it.⁷³ According to Jung, integration of the Shadow comes with resistance and requires moral effort, since it means fully recognizing one's dark side as present and real.⁷⁴ Therefore, Jung described the process of recognition and integration of the shadow or "shadow work" as a painful and lengthy undertaking, but one that will facilitate the health of our mind and soul.⁷⁵ One's soul image is described by Jung as two-fold; the Animus in women and the Anima in men.⁷⁶ The Animus and Anima act as bridges between the conscious and the unconscious.⁷⁷ Within women, the soul is personified by a masculine character and within men it is personified by a feminine one. Both are counterparts and often find expression in the imagination or

⁶⁴ Lawson (2008), 'Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious', 114.

⁶⁵ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 1.

⁶⁶ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 13.

⁶⁷ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 13.

⁶⁸ Lawson (2008), 'Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious', 114.

⁶⁹ Lawson (2008), 'Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious', 114.

⁷⁰ Donahue (2003), 'Patterned Forms of Attachment and Pathological Complexes', 151.

⁷¹ Jung (1959) [1954], 'Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation', par. 513.

⁷² Jung (1959) [1954], 'Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation', par. 513.

⁷³ Donahue (2003), 'Patterned Forms of Attachment and Pathological Complexes', 151.

⁷⁴ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 13.

⁷⁵ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 14.

⁷⁶ Lawson (2008), 'Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious', 115.

⁷⁷ Donahue (2003), 'Patterned Forms of Attachment and Pathological Complexes', 153.

through projection, typically upon a member of the opposite sex, for instance in case of a strong romantic attraction.⁷⁸

The Self

At present we have arrived at the part especially valuable for our discussion: the Self. According to Jungian thought, the Self is related to the ego as the whole is related to its parts.⁷⁹ The transpersonal Self archetype can take a variety of images in the psyche and is uniquely tailored to the psyche of the individual.⁸⁰ As the Self is neither conscious nor unconscious and unknowable, it is experienced as something apart from ego consciousness.⁸¹ In addition, as it has been ascribed an infinite quality of “wholeness,” it is can be expressed by both human figures and objective, abstract symbols.⁸² Some examples of the human figures observed by Jung are: the relationships of father and son, mother and daughter, and god and goddess; examples of animate figures include powerful animals such as the dragon, snake or elephant; and the abstract and objective symbols are stated as the circle, the sphere, the square, and so on.⁸³ Self-symbolism dwells in the unconscious and takes shape in the imagination and dreams of the individual, and Jung often used myth and religious traditions to describe these archetypes of the unconscious. To give a mythological example of the Self as the relationship between mother and daughter, Jung metaphorically used the personas of Demeter and Kore (Persephone) in feminine consciousness.⁸⁴ The mother-daughter relationship adds the ‘older and younger’ and ‘stronger and weaker’ dimensions to the Self; thus widening out the limited conscious mind bound to space and time, so that it can experience a greater and more comprehensive personality.⁸⁵ Jung reasoned that would the feminine consciousness realize that every mother contains her daughter and every daughter her mother, a conscious experience is facilitated in which she feels that her life is stretched out over generations, transcending space and time, and thus unlocking a sense of immortality.⁸⁶ According to Jung, the experience of these ties in dreams or visions allows the individual to situate herself in the life of generations, thereby transforming a partial conscious attitude and adding a sense of meaning to her life, in a way that religion does as well.⁸⁷ Jung observed that religion and myth could reveal the meaning of many unconscious archetypal images appearing in his patient’s dreams and imagination and that this approach could rescue the patient from isolation and restore her wholeness.⁸⁸ An experience Jung regarded as religious by its virtue of having a numinous

⁷⁸ Lawson (2008), ‘Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious’, 115.

⁷⁹ Jung (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par. 315.

⁸⁰ Corbett (2000), ‘Jung’s Approach to the Phenomenology of Religious Experience’, 113.

⁸¹ Donahue (2003), ‘Theoretical Foundations: Complex Theory and its relationship to Modern Theorists’, 15.

⁸² Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 315; Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 59.

⁸³ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 315.

⁸⁴ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 316.

⁸⁵ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 316.

⁸⁶ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 316.

⁸⁷ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 316.; Donahue (2003), ‘Theoretical Foundations: Complex Theory and its relationship to Modern Theorists’, 15.

⁸⁸ Jung, (1959) [1941], ‘The Psychological Aspects of the Kore’, par 316.

quality, as the unconscious is experienced as an invisible presence causing an alteration of consciousness dominated by feeling and emotion.⁸⁹

In continuation, a Jungian example of a more abstract Self-archetype is the mandala. The word mandala is Sanskrit for “circle” and is found in many religious and spiritual practices, such as Tibetan Buddhism.⁹⁰ In Tibetan Buddhism the figure of the mandala is used as a ritual instrument to aid concentration and meditation.⁹¹ As symbols of unity, totality and wholeness, the mandala can also be seen as an *imago Dei*, or God-image, and they manifest within the psyche as a symbol of order and totality.⁹² As observed by Jung, the mandala image functions as a center of the unconscious personality, a focal point to which everything is related.⁹³ Jung saw that mandalas often occurred in the dreams and visions of his patients during times of psychological disorientation or re-orientation, and described it as a figure of compensation for the confusion and disorder of the patient’s psychic state.⁹⁴ The mandala, as a depiction of a force which creates order out of chaos, can therefore be seen as an archetypal Self-image with an almost God-like quality, and, in a way, could be called the ‘God within us.’⁹⁵ Jung stated in his discussion of the symbol:

This is evidently an *attempt at self-healing* on the part of Nature, which does not spring from conscious reflection but from an instinctive impulse. Here, as comparative research has shown, a fundamental schema is made use of, an archetype which, so to speak, occurs everywhere and by no means owes its individual existence to tradition, any more than the instincts would need to be transmitted in that way. Instincts are given in the case of every newborn individual and belong to the in alien able stock of those qualities which characterize a species. What psychology designates as archetype is really a particular, frequently occurring, formal aspect of instinct, and is just as much an *a priori* factor as the latter. Therefore, despite external differences, we find a fundamental conformity in mandalas regardless of their origin in time and space.⁹⁶

Here Jung reiterates his observation that the human being inherits a religious impulse of an seemingly universal character. He saw the religious instinct as so ingrained within the human psyche that it is present within everyone and not bound by culture or religious traditions. The unconscious as “the divine” contains both light and dark, our madness as well as our sanity, and Jung saw prove of this in the images of ancient religious history.⁹⁷ With respect to the God-like force of the archetypes, Jung stated:

⁸⁹ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4.

⁹⁰ Jung (1959) [1954], ‘Appendix: Mandalas’, par. 713; See also: Harms, D. (2011) ‘Geometry of the Mandala’, 87.

⁹¹ Jung (1959) [1954], ‘Appendix Mandalas’, par. 714; See also: Hwang (2011) ‘The Mandala Model of Self’, 329–334.

⁹² Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 60.

⁹³ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 318; Jung (1959) [1954], ‘Appendix: Mandalas’, par. 714.

⁹⁴ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 60, 117; Jung (1959) [1954], ‘Appendix: Mandalas’, par. 714.

⁹⁵ Jung (1953) [1928], ‘The relations between the ego and the unconscious’, par. 366.

⁹⁶ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 60, 117.

⁹⁷ “To the extent that the Christianity of this time lacks madness, it lacks divine life. Take note of what the Ancients taught us in images: madness is divine. [...] It is unquestionable: if you enter into the world of the soul, you are like a madman, and a doctor would consider you sick. What I am saying here can be considered sick [...]” as quoted in Hanegraaff (2017), ‘The

I am therefore of the opinion that, in general, psychic energy or libido creates the God-image by making use of archetypal patterns, and that man in consequence worships the psychic force active within him as something divine. [...] We thus arrive at the objectionable conclusion that, from the psychological point of view, the God-image is a real but subjective phenomenon.⁹⁸

The products of the unconscious or the universal ‘archaic mind’ and its archetypes were seen by Jung as the religions, myths and universal symbols we find everywhere, amongst all peoples and at all times.⁹⁹ The precise content of the archetypal symbols within the individual psyche Jung saw as depending on the individual’s psychical environment.

Individuation and the Self-Archetype

Individuation can be described as the conscious process whereby the patient’s ego – the part of the mind seeking to misuse reason and intellect for power purposes as illustrated in the first case mentioned – is required to relinquish his frantically held position of power in favor of something far greater than itself, the unconscious.¹⁰⁰ This process, at times described as a spiritual ‘alchemical quest,’ has also been described by Jung as becoming “whole.”¹⁰¹ In other words, Jung believed that in cases of mental disturbance the unconscious would push and guide the individual in a two-step process. First, the individual is pushed towards a discrepancy of consciousness and thereafter, towards individuation.¹⁰² According to Jung, this process often takes place naturally in the second half of life, yet when in case of continuous repression, pathological symptoms can arise that will force this process upon the individual.¹⁰³ In other words, the mental disturbance of a patient is the unconscious mind that calls out for psychological help, in the same way that demonic possession calls for exorcism. Psychological suffering creates a situation of necessity, able to force the patient to face his own darkness that has arisen from the unconscious. Facing their own darkness or shadow is a necessary component for the repressed aspects of the psyche to become integrated into the conscious mind, thereby expanding consciousness.¹⁰⁴ To Jung, this process is not the ego coming into consciousness and becoming identified with the self, it is the unconscious becoming conscious within the self.¹⁰⁵ The Self, as Jung has described, is an archetype of wholeness, and encompasses ‘infinitely more’ than the

Great War of the Soul: Divine and Human Madness in Carl Gustav Jung’s *Liber Novus*’, 109; for original see: Jung (2013) [1971], *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*. 200.

⁹⁸ Jung (1956) [1952], *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 129.

⁹⁹ Gras (1981), ‘Myth and the Reconciliation of Opposites: Jung and Levi-strauss’, 472.

¹⁰⁰ Lawson (2008), ‘Individuation’, 141.

¹⁰¹ Jung (1959) [1954], ‘Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation’, par. 490; See also Casement (2001). ‘Jung’s Major Practical Contributions’, 86.

¹⁰² Lawson (2008), ‘Individuation’, 128.

¹⁰³ Lawson (2008), ‘Individuation’, 129.

¹⁰⁴ Lawson (2008), ‘Individuation’, 130.

¹⁰⁵ Jung (1960) [1947], *On the nature of psyche*, par 432.

ego, being as much one's self as it is all other selves.¹⁰⁶ In a sense, individuation is a slow process of gaining knowledge of self, of becoming one with everything that is the infinite unconscious – which ascribes to this process an almost teleological nature.¹⁰⁷ Acquiring knowledge of self is a dominant feature within many religious and spiritual traditions. I have found Jung's archetypes to bear similarities to what Henry Corbin described as the 'divine Names' within Sufism, on which Corbin stated that '[i]n terms of actual experience, we can know these divine Names only through our knowledge of ourselves: God describes himself to us through us.'¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, great Sufi master Ibn al-'Arabi recognized the path of acquiring inner knowledge pivotal on the journey of coming closer to God.¹⁰⁹ In a sense, the process of individuation sounds similar to that of attaining spiritual enlightenment, or at least it will leave an individual better equipped to make sound judgements and live a psychologically and spiritually healthier and happier life. To give an example, Richard Jones states in *Mysticism Examined*, that 'with enlightenment, all problems dealt with in psychotherapy have evaporated, even if this is not the intended goal of the religious traditions. [...] And conversely with the attainment of psychological health by means of therapy, we are enlightened.'¹¹⁰ Self-knowledge, to Jung, is the "utmost possible knowledge of his own wholeness."¹¹¹ Getting to know oneself and integrating all parts of oneself are stated by Jung as 'essential [...] for any kind of self-knowledge.'¹¹² Everything laying within the unconscious are thus *parts of the self* which have yet to become conscious. Given the fact that Jung ascribed an infinite quality to the unconscious, he saw the process of individuation as equally never-ending.¹¹³ Jung placed the journey above the destination and emphasized the infinite quality of the unconscious as well as the importance of setting boundaries between the ego and the figures of the unconscious in order to avoid ego-inflation and to keep his patients humble.¹¹⁴

Dreams, Healing and Religion

Dreams formed a central aspect within the works of Carl Jung.¹¹⁵ Especially, because dream reports proved very valuable in the process of individuation. According to Jung, the dreams of a patient held all the necessary information needed to uncover the root of his mental disturbances.¹¹⁶ These nightly adventures are also a much featured subject in many religious traditions and cultures. Within Islam, the Prophet Muhammad declared dreams to be 'forty-sixth part of prophecy' and when

¹⁰⁶ Jung (1960) [1947], *On the nature of psyche*, par 432.

¹⁰⁷ Lawson (2008), 'Individuation', 128.

¹⁰⁸ Corbin (2001), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 293.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn 'Arabi (1981), *The Journey To the Lord of Power*, 25-49.

¹¹⁰ Jones (1993), 'Concerning Carl Jung on Asian Religious Traditions', 178.

¹¹¹ Jung, Jaffé and Winston (1989), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections by C. G. Jung*, 330.

¹¹² Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 14.

¹¹³ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 44.

¹¹⁴ Jung (1959) [1951], *Aion*, par. 44.

¹¹⁵ Schön (2016), 'Dream Interpretation in Theory: Drawing on the Contributions of Freud, Jung and the Kleinians', 79.

¹¹⁶ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 24.

Jung traveled the southern slopes of Mount Elgon, he learned that certain tribes regarded dreams as ‘the supreme political guide, the voice of “mungu.”’¹¹⁷ His travels taught Jung that dreams functioned as ‘the divine voice and messenger,’ as well as a perpetual ‘source of trouble.’¹¹⁸ In Jungian language, dreams are voices of the unconscious and could thus prove practically useful in the process of individuation, since they could symbolically sketch out what the patient needed to integrate into consciousness to facilitate healing.¹¹⁹ Jung saw the nature of psychic events, such as dreams, as unknowable, because ‘cognition cannot cognize itself – the psyche cannot know its own psychic substance.’¹²⁰ Nevertheless, dreams as altered states in juxtaposition to ordinary consciousness, offered Jung a medium to investigate and become acquainted with one’s personal and collective unconscious archetypes. Instead of the regarding dreams as akin to prophecy, Jung saw dreams rather as sources of personal revelation. Jung translated the divine or God as a force found in the unconscious and saw the dream therefore as an intra-psychic dialogue with the divine, which one could call God, spirit, the Unconscious or the Self.¹²¹ His approach to dreams differed greatly from contemporary psychologist, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who denied the existence of a collective unconscious realm and saw dreams as repressed infantile wishes, often stemming from the individuals childhood.¹²² Jung did acknowledge the collective unconscious and while he, similar to Freud, suggested that dreams could express repressed childhood wishes he also thought they could express future possibilities or answers to problems of the mind.¹²³ For example, we can recall the earlier discussed scenario with the dream of Gilgamesh and the patient who believed he had cancer.¹²⁴ Jung assumed that dream symbols could stem from both the personal and collective unconscious, yet suggested that no dream symbol could be separated from the dreamer.¹²⁵ Therefore, symbols in dreams could never be fully defined or explained, since they could have many interpretations depending on one’s personal, cultural or religious background.¹²⁶ Similar to William James, the different forms of religion in existence were seen by Jung as a product of time and space and Jung assumed the source of religion as something universal lying within the collective unconscious of mankind.¹²⁷ John Dourley (b. 1936), in his discussion of Jung and mysticism, stated that organized religions can be seen as a phenomenon which arises from the unconscious ‘to compensate for the collective disorder and imbalance in much the same sense that dreams address similar problems at the personal level.’¹²⁸ In other words, organized religions and dreams share the same “author” and both serve to stabilize and expand the consciousness

¹¹⁷ For the reference to dreams within Islam, see Green (2003), ‘The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam’, 290; see also, Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 20-21.

¹¹⁸ Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 21.

¹¹⁹ Lawson (2008), ‘Individuation’, 141.

¹²⁰ Jung (1976) [1964], ‘Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams’, 419.

¹²¹ Dourley (2001), ‘Jung, Mysticism and a Myth in the Making’, 68.

¹²² Schön (2016), ‘Dream Interpretation in Theory: Drawing on the Contributions of Freud, Jung and the Kleinians’, 79.

¹²³ Schön (2016), ‘Dream Interpretation in Theory: Drawing on the Contributions of Freud, Jung and the Kleinians’, 81.

¹²⁴ See fn. 61.

¹²⁵ Schön (2016), ‘Dream Interpretation in Theory: Drawing on the Contributions of Freud, Jung and the Kleinians’, 81.

¹²⁶ Jung (1976) [1964], ‘Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams’, par. 416-417

¹²⁷ See fn. 9.

¹²⁸ Dourley (1998), ‘Jung and the Mystical Imperative’, 124.

of the collective as well as the individual.¹²⁹ The process of dream interpretation can therefore be experienced as a sacred process, through which one observes how the archetypes of Self, in the form of Gods, Goddesses and other sacred or mythical symbols, influence one's life through dreams.¹³⁰ The experiences of the archetypes within dreams can bring about an experience of the numinosum. This happens regardless of whether they are interpreted in strictly religious terms, since their numinous quality is partly present in the fact that the surfacing images might be unknown to the observer.¹³¹ Nevertheless, what is often triggered is a sense of awe and mystery, a religious feeling of the numinosum, which triggers an emotional value in the patient that can alter one's state of consciousness.¹³²

Concluding Remarks

As demonstrated, what is to be understood by the term religion in the current day and age, is not as rigidly decided as it was a few centuries ago. This development has opened up the doors to an even wider understanding of religious experience. The numinous quality or *numinosum* is assumed by Jung as a timeless phenomenon, present in every culture, country, religion and even within the scientific discipline of psychology. Jung saw this quality as independent from religious doctrine, rather referring to a felt influence of an invisible presence or force which is experienced as having the ability to arouse an alteration of consciousness with emotional value – be it experienced as evil or good. Some psychologists have called this phenomenon a nonsensical result of an unintelligent imagination, Carl Jung called it the result of religion. The purpose of Jung's psychological theories was not to know whether religious claims were true or false, instead he simply looked at the phenomenon and discovered religion's functional value for the psyche of man as an experienced reality. Jung described the world's stunning religious diversity in both the individual and the collective as a product of the infinitely complex human psyche; a psychic realm that is largely uncharted and unknowable. This paper demonstrated how Jungian psychology has used religion in bringing order to the chaos of the human psyche through archetypes and individuation. It demonstrated how man has worshipped the psychic force within him as something divine, whether he is a scientist, Tibetan Buddhist or devout Christian.

Ever since the scientific revolution, science and psychology have been used to get rid of religious beliefs by putting their faith in hard facts and tangible things, thereby ignoring a phenomenon that has walked alongside man as long as he has walked the Earth. In contrast, Jung acknowledged religion and its legacy for what it has done for mankind, regardless of the fact that science has evolved enough to give us answers to questions only religion previously had the answer to. However, despite

¹²⁹ Dourley (1998), 'Jung and the Mystical Imperative', 124.

¹³⁰ Dourley (1998), 'Jung and the Mystical Imperative', 124.

¹³¹ Jung (1959) [1939], 'Concerning Mandala Symbolism', par. 645.

¹³² Jung (1993) [1938], *Psychology and Religion (The Terry Lectures)*, 4, 7.

scientific perseverance, the force of religion that triggers man's religious impulse harbors the ability to morph according to the circumstances of space and time. In response of this assumption, Jung chose a fitting approach to this force: if one cannot beat it, one must integrate it. Jungian psychology exists for the purpose of getting to know and understand who we are as individuals as well as parts of a collective in a nonjudgmental way. It is the pursuit of self-knowledge including good and evil – a pursuit not uncanny to many religious traditions. Carl Jung's major legacy is that he has shaped a psychology that is in symbiosis with the belief systems of our past, using the idea of God as a peculiar semantic tool in order to better understand the human condition. The result is an approach that facilitates not only psychological healing, but also a deeply felt emotional experience with a numinous quality, which could be called a religious experience as a thing in itself.

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