

**Individuation:  
The Promise in Jung's Legacy and  
Why Our Culture Has Trouble Accepting It**

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by Jungian Analyst, Dr. Bud Harris. ©*

Ladies and gentlemen: good evening and thank you very much for joining us here. The title of my lecture this evening is: *Individuation: The Promise in Jung's Legacy and Why Our Culture Has Trouble Accepting It*. As I proceed, I am going to divide the lecture into three parts with some time for questions and discussion between each part.

When I began my reflections in preparation for this lecture I remembered a very poignant letter that Dr. Jung wrote to an English friend late in his life. In this letter Dr. Jung said: "I have failed in my foremost task to open people's eyes to the fact that man has a soul, that there is a buried treasure in the field and that our religion and philosophy are in a lamentable state."

As I thought about this letter and my devotion to over four decades of the Jungian process, several very personal memories that had been long buried by the years and my intense inner work slowly came to the surface—brought up by this topic and the blank sheet of paper in front of me. I remembered a time when I was in my early forties and beginning one of my so-called crises. During this time I had the following dream.

As the dream opened, with the force of something coming from the distant past, I found myself sitting in the front of a Shoney's Big Boy restaurant. The booth I was in was next to the large front windows. While I sipped my morning coffee, I looked out onto the main street of the town I grew up in. Across the street and the railroad tracks was the white Presbyterian Church my mother had taken me to when I was small and where her funeral service had taken place. Further down the street was the high school, the bank, and the shopping district. And, the fact that Shoney's still included the words "Big Boy" in its name placed us back in history.

As I turned my head and looked across the table from me I saw a small boy with ruffled brown hair and intense blue-grey eyes. Shocked, I realized that he was a five-year-old version of myself before tragedy had struck our family. When I looked into his eyes he quietly said, "What have you done with my life?"

Before I could answer, I awakened from the dream. As I was musing over the dream, I knew that he hadn't been talking about the surface stuff like going to the office, shopping, dieting, or even making a living for my family. Those sensitive eyes were searching for a more serious answer. That small boy was posing the question to me that life asks of us all. And, that question is not "what is the meaning of my life?" It is "what meaning am I creating with my life?"

The search for the answer to that question has brought me here today. My answer to it is to try to be fully engaged in life, so that I can develop a greater awareness of my reality and the truth of my existence, so that my life will have an evolving purpose, values and a way of being fulfilled. And, I am seeking to be in touch with life's spiritual aspects and the spiritual depths within myself, so that I can be sure that love is the foundation of how I live.

Now, if I have aroused your curiosity enough to get you to ask me how I am pursuing this complicated-sounding task, I would answer by telling you that I am doing my dead-level best to live C.G. Jung's individuation process. Dr. Jung's individuation process is one of our greatest gifts from the twentieth century. Beyond being a brilliant healer of the body and soul, he brought us the use of the imagination and the experiences of creativity and love in a new way.

I can put my answer to you very simply by saying that it was the ideas in Dr. Jung's individuation process that challenged me to become more fully engaged in life. Dr. Jung was strongly convinced that only a full engagement in life can give us the necessary material for reflections that can transform our consciousness. In individuation, reflecting upon a life being lived is meant to teach us more about ourselves, to increase our daily self-awareness, to expand our consciousness, and to guide us in cultivating our capacities to love. Without mincing any words Dr. Jung told a convention of pastors before I was born that we must be willing to take risks and make mistakes. And, that if "we do the wrong thing with all of our hearts we will end up at the right place."

Then, to illustrate this amazing conclusion—that has given me so much comfort over the years—Jung used the example of Saint Paul's conversion from the man Saul—who was persecuting the Christians—to Paul who became one of the founders of the Christian religion. It was Saul's pursuit of his own worst mistake, according to Dr. Jung, that put him on the road to Damascus and the total transformation of his life. And then, Dr. Jung electrified me with his position that our

mistakes, neuroses, complexes, addictions, and dysfunctions are more than shameful, negative characteristics that we need to ferret out, overcome or get rid of. He considered these things—that we usually dislike or despise about ourselves—as containers of a divine spark. At first they appear as blocks to our full development, such as the achievement of our goals or hopes and dreams, including those of having relationships built on love and trust. But, within these very blocks are the seeds, even the roadmaps and the energy, that when opened and tapped lead us to wholeness, which means the ability to live as fully as possible.

Dr. Jung's thinking is so radical and challenges us to such a transformative way of life that conventional religious and psychological institutions have rarely dared to try to understand what he is trying to teach us. All too often there is nothing in our intellectual and emotional development that can give us the frame of reference we need to grasp what Jung is trying to teach. It took me years of re-education through study, analysis and new life experiences to be able to even come up with intelligent questions about individuation. However, Jung's teachings captured my imagination and the longings in my heart and soul over forty years ago, and I have devoted my life to this kind of work.

The path of individuation challenges us to grow and to be full of vitality for the rest of our lives. In a way that is demanding and difficult for us to understand, true growth usually begins with a serious problem, a block in our life, a breakdown or a serious illness, or a general feeling of restlessness that is calling for a change in the basic structure of how we perceive ourselves and life. The questioning eyes of my five-year-old self years ago looking at me in the landscape of my childhood was reminding me that I needed to differentiate myself, once again, not only from old attitudes, values and complexes from my childhood, but also those in my recent past and present, including the ones that have supported my success so far.

The final piece of the journey, my midlife journey, was learning to listen more to my unconscious and its expressions, to discover and integrate disowned parts of myself, and to pursue an ultimate wholeness and balance in my life.

The most exciting and frightening part of this journey is that it is one of continuous transformation. This reality means it is difficult at times and always requires devotion. In addition, it forces us to question our basic assumptions about who we are and what we value, again and again. And, we also have to keep in mind that deep down in our personalities our ego always prefers comfort and safety to transformation.

So, we have to face the unpleasant reality that the pursuit of self-knowledge means we question every aspect of conventional wisdom, of our religion, or lack of religion, our notions of what love is, our approaches to problem solving, our ideas of peace and the value of struggle, of the value of suffering, and the meaning of unhappiness in our lives.

So, in order to bring my discussion down to earth and help clarify what I am talking about I am going to focus on several aspects of Jung's thinking that have been especially important to me in my personal journey and my practice as a Jungian analyst. And, I want to explain and then discuss with you how developing more inner clarity showed me that my conventional view of reality was a fiction, how it challenged my customary sense of ethics, and led me into considering a new sense of ethics.

### Part I – The Spirit of Individuation

Now, I want to begin my discussion of the Spirit of Individuation by telling you a story. One day, a few years ago, a woman named Lisa came in to see me. She sat down and softly said, "I'm tired of struggling. I just want to be normal and happy." As she finished her statement she was quietly weeping. I had noticed that even in her sadness she was dressed in a way that showed she put care into things.

"Can you tell me more?" I asked.

She looked like she was wilting as she began to speak. Her shoulders slumped and I could see the weariness in her body and around her eyes. "I've been married for sixteen years," she said. "I think I love my husband, or at least I used to. But we argue a lot and he doesn't seem to desire me. I don't think he even really sees me anymore. We don't talk. But we have two children and he's not a bad father... I'm just exhausted. We've been to counseling. I've read a stack of books. I said it already. I'm worn out. I'm so depressed. I just want to be normal and happy."

Now, at this point three things are going on inside of me. First, I am deeply touched to hear how Lisa, like so many people in our culture, just wants to be normal and happy. This is such a deep human longing in a society that teaches us that is what we should want and that if we can find it our lives will work out well.

And, secondly, I am aware that I must remember fully who I am. I am a Jungian analyst. In the long run, it is not my purpose to simply alleviate suffering, solve problems or help someone make their life work so they can get on with it, or even to

be happy. What I do is more complex than that and I am given purpose and direction in my life and work by Jung's myth of individuation. All of our situations are unique and so is every encounter that we have in our consulting rooms.

And, thirdly, I have to remind myself to put all of my Jungian theory and clinical training aside and to follow Jung's advice, that he states so elegantly in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*—which is to listen to Lisa's story until I understand what it is like to be in her shoes. This point is fundamental in Jung's approach. Eventually, I am able to understand the true depth of her story because I have worked carefully and reflectively on understanding my own story and continue to do so.

By working with so many people I have learned to be clear on a few points every time I embark with a new person. To begin with, individuation is not a self-improvement program. It is much more than firming up, losing weight, having more positive thoughts, or solving problems and getting on with your life.

And, individuation is not self-actualization. The mythologist Joseph Campbell noted that self-actualization is for people with nothing better to do—people who don't know their personal myth or deeper purpose in life. The humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs for security, prestige, self-development and even personal relationships are not the primary values a person inspired by their deeper Self, or the thread of their individuation, lives for.

Simply put, individuation is about transformation. It means being willing to embrace a lifetime of full-fledged metamorphosis analogous to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly over and over again. It means letting go of the defining characteristics that make up our identity for the sake of becoming something further enhanced by the Self, with a capital 'S', the Divine spark within us. The pain in this process is the pain of breaking through our own limitations. The joy is our increased capacity for living and feeling at home within ourselves, and experiencing our wholeness.

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Now, you can very well imagine that when Lisa begins this path she will probably be accused of becoming self-absorbed by her husband or other friends and family who find that the way she is relating to them is changing. They may accuse her of becoming selfish and irresponsible. As Lisa develops self-awareness, she may also realize that like many of us, she carries her responsibilities as a burden or a weight.

When she does this, like many of us, she is using them in a selfish way, as a defense against looking more closely at herself. This kind of approach will diminish her capacities for growth and eventually make her feel resentful of the people she feels responsible for.

Now, this realization about how we often carry our responsibilities as a burden and a defense is a very important insight. It can be life changing for many of us, so let me repeat it. As Lisa develops self-awareness, she may also realize that, like most of us, she carries her responsibilities in a selfish way—as a burden, a weight, an obstacle against self-examination. Using her responsibilities as a defense mechanism and even as an avoidance of self-love diminishes her and makes her feel resentful of the people she feels responsible for.

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However, knowing what I know about the process of individuation gives me hope for Lisa. For example, Lisa tries hard. She has worked at her marriage, and gone to counseling. She argues with her husband and pays attention to how she looks. In addition, she pays attention to her suffering and frustration and tries to do something about it. In other words, Lisa is engaged in life. And, one of our primary goals in facilitating individuation is to get people more fully engaged in life.

Dr. Jung explains clearly that we cannot know how to live our lives in advance; that knowledge can only come as a result of being fully engaged in living. To explain this point he continues his discussion of Saul's conversion to Paul that I mentioned earlier. Jung says, "Saul owed his conversion neither to true love, not to true faith, not to any other truth. It was solely his hatred of the Christians that set him on the road to Damascus and to that decisive experience which was to alter the whole course of his life. He was brought to this experience by following out, with conviction, his own worst mistake." Now, this is no small conclusion to get your head around.

In Lisa's case, for years, whether she has been moved by love or desperation, she is still pursuing something—and this desire on her part gives me hope.

And, here's something else that gives me hope for Lisa. As wonderful as all of the benefits of individuation sound, neither I nor anyone I know chose this path because of its benefits. In fact, we are chosen for it by something deep within us. And, our awakening—the crack in the illusion of how we are living—our call, generally comes in the form of a personal crisis that lasts, repeats, or gets worse until we begin

to answer the call or repress it with such force that it becomes a serious set of emotional or physical symptoms and we end up in lives that are spiritually and emotionally congealed.

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Another aspect of individuation that can bring hope to Lisa is to realize that she hasn't been doing things wrong. We are all too familiar with how our culture hammers us with the idea that if we aren't happy we aren't getting things right. This insidious pressure made Lisa feel guilty and ashamed. In fact, she felt like a failure in many ways. And most of us have felt the same way at one time or another.

These feelings bring us face-to-face with the reality that being normal doesn't mean being happy or fulfilled. In fact, from the standpoint of individuation, we do not want to return to being normal—we want to grow beyond normal. Lisa's unhappiness, frustration or symptoms mean that she is facing a psychological and spiritual turning point. This challenge is to begin a process of transformation that, while difficult in its appearance, will offer great rewards. Lisa, like so many of us in these kinds of situations, also realized deep in her heart that following any other course would ultimately diminish or be destructive to her.

It took some work for Lisa to develop the strength to shift her perspective away from the idea that she must be doing something wrong or that something was wrong with her if she was suffering so much. It took even more strength and support from me—support grounded in my own personal experience of individuation—to begin to think of her problems as potential teachers, or in other words, guides to transformation and a larger capacity for life.

It is no small task to learn to see our depression, anxiety, weight, relationship problems, addictions and illnesses as efforts of our psyche to heal us, as symptoms that are trying to get us to change in ways that will help our lives become better on a more profound level. Jung calls learning to value our problems and how they can lead us into becoming transformed the “teleological aspects” of symptoms.

As Lisa became brave enough to accept this point of view, she could see that behind her problems and dissatisfactions were hidden the powerful psychological and spiritual influences that had shaped her attitudes toward life, and that had become her guiding principles.

Now, once again speaking as an analyst, let me be clear when I say that if we need to cure, fight, defeat or overcome a symptom or even an illness, we have made

our problem into an enemy and are losing the teleological value of it. Of course, it is easy to see that this point of view is counter-cultural. It negates our ideas of control, rationality, curing and to some extent the notion of alleviating human misery. But if, for example, Lisa makes an enemy of her current feelings of depression she gives them power. The 43<sup>rd</sup> hexagram in the *I Ching* helps explain how this process actually works. The hexagram says that, “If evil is branded, it thinks of weapons, and if we do it the favor of fighting against it blow for blow, we lose in the end because then we ourselves get entangled in the hatred and passion.” Or, in other words our traditional approach to dealing with symptoms and problems can easily cause us to develop a war within ourselves.

On the other hand, when Lisa takes the Jungian position she immediately gains a certain amount of distance and separation from her depression. It becomes what we call something that is “Not-I.” This opens a number of doors as to how she can relate to it, as to how to seek to understand it from the inside, and how it may want her to change her life in order to become more whole and complete as a person.

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We all know that there is a lot of emphasis on choices in our society. So at one point in our work together Lisa wondered if better parenting or counseling earlier in her life could have put her on a more satisfying path. During this discussion I shared some of my own experience of growth and how as a businessman my depression made me question my choice of career. Yet it was my experiences during this career that helped me develop the ego strength and maturity to risk further changes and pursue new dreams. It is important to remember that we never know the innermost truth about how our mistakes, failures and tragedies may be affecting our destinies. Lisa learned quickly and was relieved to discover that we rarely make the wrong choices. We make the ones necessary for our growth and that is what she had done.

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In summary, until this point I have been talking about the spirit of individuation. Theoretically, individuation is the conscious realization of our unique personality, including its strengths and weaknesses—and the living with this complexity, which makes us a unique and differentiated person. On the personal



level, however, it is encountering the difficulties that make us slow down and listen to life. It means beginning the inner journey, accepting the importance of self-knowledge and the unconscious as a partner in informing our lives. This journey shifts how we look at our inner selves, and the life around us as we realize that being fully human is a much more profound activity than self-improvement or self-actualization.

I have learned that Individuation brings healing as it initiates us into becoming artists of living—people struggling to hold their clarity of vision against the rat-race of busyness and obligations pressing on us today.

## Part II—Living the Questions

Now, let me return to my lecture material. About midway through our work Lisa commented, “As I look back I can see how restless I have been, how frustrated, and how hard I was trying to deny it because life seemed so good. Now I realize I was searching. During the first part of our work I thought I was searching for intimacy and a sense of being loved. Then I began to understand I was searching for much more than that. I needed to discover the path that is my life.”

Like myself, Lisa had been caught in the familiar paradox of seeming to have a good life, or a secure life and yet knowing it wasn't working for her. A dream in which she was confronted by a furious geisha had scared Lisa and made her think that something was wrong deep inside of her. As many of you know, dreams themselves are a creative response to our reality and often provide good advice. In Lisa's case it was this dream that led her in to see me.

Having a good life and realizing it wasn't working was Lisa's initiation into one of the first tests of awakening consciousness, that of living in a contradiction.

It took me an awfully long time to realize that life is made up of living in contradictions. The reality was they scared me, made me anxious and uncomfortable. So I did what most of us do. I denied and repressed the conflicts they caused me. Just like Lisa, if I had a good life that didn't seem to work for me, did I want to risk it to look for something else? Unfortunately, denial and repression led me to live in a make-believe world that was diminishing me as a person.

Living in contradictions is what Jung refers to as living in the tension of opposites. And, as I have said, we hate to live in contradictions, or in Jung's words, to hold the tension of opposites. Lisa was afraid her ambivalence about her “good life” would make her look weak and selfish to the people around her. At a deeper

level she was afraid that the tension might cause her to do something drastic, something that might hurt the people she loved, disgrace her or embarrass her family or eventually break her heart.

However, I have learned that the Jungian approach to these dilemmas can become a springboard into a whole new life. Jung's idea is that if we have the courage to develop the characteristics of, and the arguments for, each side of the contradiction—which means to bring each opposite pole into full conscious awareness—and then hold these two in full consciousness—then the tension between these opposing perspectives will become a source of new creative energy in the unconscious that will give us a solution that is beyond what we could have figured out rationally. Jung labeled this process “the transcendent function.” I know that the first generation Jungian analyst Erich Neumann is right when he says that it is the building up and holding the tensions that arouses the creative potential in our deepest being.

In my experience these contradictions or conflicts generally arise from two sources. First, the path of our individuation will bring us into conflict with one of our conventional values, a value we have used to help define ourselves or a responsibility or obligation we feel. The second conflict comes when we meet a part of ourselves that we have repressed into our shadow that once again, if accepted, will cause us to change who we think we are.

For example, Lisa, like most of us, started in early childhood to make choices about who she would be and how she would respond to life in ways that would make her feel safe and affirmed. In making these decisions, which were generally made unconsciously while she was growing up, she reduced a situation of conflict by deciding to adopt certain characteristics and cut off other ones. When she decided to win approval she cut off the prospect of confronting people. When she decided to be rational she cut away the possibility of becoming furious. When her early life was threatening and she decided to protect her self with a hard emotional shell she cut away and buried her vulnerability. She cut these things out of her ego-identity and repressed them into her shadow.

This is how we generally develop in the first half of life. The better I am at adapting the better I am at cutting away opposing thoughts, feelings and characteristics that might get me in trouble or into a conflict. At some level we want our lives to be problem and conflict-free in order to function smoothly and feel safe.

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The process of growing up and adapting leaves us with an ego that is made up of the things we identified with for one reason or another either through adaptation, rebellion or a refusal to grow up. We then believe we know what we want, what we believe, what we think we can do, what we believe we love, what we believe we value and what we regard as the aim of our lives.

Because of the way our environment affected us as we developed, because of the ways we experienced love and learned instinctively to expect the world to be safe and supportive or hostile and isolating, and because of other ways we were wounded or affirmed we found ourselves having to adapt. And, that adaptation shaped us in a one-sided way as we had to repress parts of ourselves in order to try and feel a sense of safety and security.

As Lisa and I slowly explored her story and the conflicts she was having, she quickly began to see how helpful what Jung called the compensatory perspective of the unconscious is in giving us balance and clarity. In other words, the characters and stories in her dreams, her conflicts, her longings, and yes, even her unhappiness and depression, were giving us clues to the parts of herself that needed to be recognized, reclaimed from her shadow and integrated into her personality in order for her to become a more authentic person.

It is important that we realize that if we refuse to recognize the help and assistance from our unconscious and rigidly live out of our ego alone, we will be living in a state of continuous error in how we understand ourselves and perceive our lives. We will be wrong about how we understand our relationships and the nature of the world—no matter how successful our lives appear to be.

But when our unconscious begins to urge us toward wholeness around mid-life, sometimes sooner, sometimes later, the characteristics and potentials we have repressed or denied seem to be coming back to haunt us. As these parts of ourselves are struggling to emerge they threaten our idea of how we have defined ourselves and thrust us into the need to change who we are, how we live and into the contradictions this necessity brings.

Now, it doesn't take much insight to see that if we don't open our consciousness—our egos—to this growth we will force our denied conflicts out into the world around us and project our shadow characteristics onto our partners, our children and others, or we will force them into our bodies as physical problems.

Repressed shadow conflicts easily become physical problems. This needed opening of our personality takes courage because we must lower the psychological defenses that give us our sense of security and safety in order to incarnate a greater sense of conscious wholeness. For example, it took great courage for Lisa to deconstruct the illusion of what she wanted her marriage to be, and yet she found this gave her a new freedom within it.

What this meant in terms of individuation was that she held the tension between her ideals of marriage and what she thought she needed, and the reality as she saw it without acting in ways to damage or abolish either perspective until she found that something new—a new perspective—a new vision of relationships or a new sense of who she was had evolved in her. She held the tension. She didn't seek to get her ideals or needs met in a new relationship or to sublimate them in an affair, a new house, vacation home or a great vacation. (Which isn't to say that any of these would be wrong if they were arrived at consciously.)

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Now, again, pay close attention to what I am saying because this is very important.

Here is the formula for activating the transcendent function:

1. Fully engage in life. In other words, quit seeing life as something we want to avoid. By this I mean accept that taking risks, loneliness, conflict, defeat and suffering are not only vital parts of life, they are necessary to transformation, wholeness and the experience of joy.
2. Reflect upon your life. This means to be aware of the contradictions that come up in your life, don't repress them. Amplify and explore them. Make the opposites fully conscious and hold them in your awareness. Use your journal, dreams and active imagination to help you in the way I explain in my book, *Sacred Selfishness*.
3. Bear the burden of the conflict. Remember that Jung points out that suffering isn't pathological, it is part of life. It is our refusal to bear legitimate suffering that causes neurotic pain. So, don't resort to fight or flight, taking an easy way out or trying to sublimate or repress the conflict.

4. **Live the Transformation.** Remember we must change the way we live into being an expression of our expanded consciousness, self-awareness and purpose. If we don't, all this work has simply been a mind-game.

So, remember these four steps: (1) Fully engage in life, (2) Reflect upon your life, (3) Bear the burden of your conflict, and (4) Live the transformation.

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Now let's see what this process meant for Lisa. As part of her journey, she had to go through the difficult process of figuring out that what she longed for and wanted in her marriage was an "ego ideal" based on her history, woundings, family and cultural values. This doesn't mean what she wanted was wrong. It simply meant that it wasn't complete, it wasn't whole and it wasn't based on her potentials for wholeness.

Then, by holding the tension, by using it to fuel her inner search, by reflecting on and amplifying her feelings around the situation, a new solution emerged that we could not have planned or foreseen.

So, it is important to note that Lisa did not simply try to adjust to the "so-called" reality of her situation. Nor did she assume she had to accept her husband for who he was and suppose that she had no right to ask him to change. What happened is she discovered a new freedom. By becoming free of her ideal of what a marriage should be, she no longer had to try to make her life work to fit it. She became more authentic and grounded in her own personhood.

From this foundation she could love and relate to her husband and herself in new and evolving ways. I might also mention that if she had decided to leave the relationship due to this new knowledge, she would not have ended up pursuing the same old ideal unconsciously in new relationships.

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These experiences of renewal are very satisfying and even bring a sense of wonder. But, they may also put us into a painful paradox. This paradox causes a huge conflict in people that begin the journey with the secret hope of living a beautiful self-actualized life that has seemed to be constantly eluding them. In my own case, I felt that life had been continually throwing roadblocks in my way. The result was that I wanted to live an "ego-ideal," a vision of life that was actually a

fantasy. It was a fantasy that had evolved in compensation for my earlier woundings and longings. My Self, which I was totally out of touch with when I was that age, had a different story altogether in mind for me. I still had more to learn from the failure of my so-called, at the time, dreams and ambitions. And so did Lisa.

After several years of work, Lisa had a particularly angry and bitter confrontation with her parents who were now in their seventies. She was deeply hurt as she was reminded that they had little interest in whom she really was or was becoming. She remarked that she had thought this kind of suffering was in her past.

The reality is that our suffering and its effects can never be fully locked away in the basement of the past. Individuation, however, teaches us how to integrate sorrow, disappointment, illness and tragedy into a life being fully engaged in. As we follow the path of individuation we find out that Dr. Jung is showing us how to discover a new blueprint for our lives designed by our deepest Self and not by everyone else. That is why individuation leads us to a more intense feeling of being alive and an awareness of transcendent movements taking place within our selves and in our lives. We will see what these experiences meant to Lisa.

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During her next visit Lisa said, “I’ve been thinking about our discussion of suffering. And, I remember that when I first came to see you I wanted to learn how to find some peace in my life. I thought peace was a lack of conflict or suffering. Now it seems that to be fully alive means being at peace with the idea that life is full of conflict and suffering. Maybe that’s what the ‘peace that passeth understanding’ really is.”

Lisa is right. Individuation, which is also the art of living or living creatively, means we must develop a new version of our ideas of peace and well-being. The creativity of life, of the Self or individuation, always grows out of conflicts, tension and suffering. This is another idea that our culture has trouble understanding and is very resistant to. The archetypal pattern we grow by is that of transformation which is symbolized by life, death and rebirth. Our personality experiences the death process of old aspects of ourselves through tension, conflict, betrayal, and destruction—tension between our deep values and conventional values or obligations, being betrayed by our most idealized people and institutions, having conflict within ourselves and with others over these tensions, and finally, the destruction of our fantasies and ideas of how things should be or what we want. Individuation is a

continuous flow of transformation. The peace that is brought on by the individuation process is the acceptance of tension and conflict as signs of the life force, the Self at work.

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### Part III—Finding the Home Within

Now, let me go on to talk about finding the sense of home within ourselves. About midway through her analysis Lisa came in with a dream that had moved and disturbed her. In the dream she was dressed well, in her professional persona, and she was holding the hand of a ten-year-old girl. She and the little girl entered a large house. In the house they walked up flight after flight of stairs. Finally at the top they entered a bedroom that was in extreme disarray. Walking carefully into the room they slowly opened the door to a closet where they found themselves face to face with an old woman who looked like a dreadful witch. But, she was sitting on the closet floor crying and crying.

Lisa slowly said to me, “All at once I realized that I don’t know what it means to be feminine. Here I am as a child before my whole psyche got overlaid with a masculine education and values that focused on achievement, competition, getting things done and being in control of my life. And, here shut away somewhere is my feminine soul that I have no contact with.

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This dream represented another turning point for Lisa and it illustrates one we must all face in individuation. Dr. Jung reported that he worked for several decades with disturbed and unhappy women. Often those years were frustrating for him until he realized that he was working on the wound to the archetypal feminine principle in our times that had been inflicted by the ages of rationalism, science and technology.

Jung knew very well as he developed this idea of the other within us, the unconscious, the shadow, the *anima*, the *animus*, that we have been taught to experience differences and otherness, as hostile to our identity and our need to control our lives, rather than seeing the other as enlivening and expanding.

As an archetypal principle, the feminine is beyond definition. In terms of Yin in the Chinese tradition, it is the yielding, dark, moist nature of earthiness, which is also solid and continuing. In terms of passion, we see it in the creative destructiveness of

the Hindu goddess Kali, the love affairs of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, and in another sense, the love of Mary and the wisdom of Sophia. This principle doesn't define either women or men. But as an archetypal energy, it is present in all of us.

In our time, every one of us has been shaped by the masculine principle as the dominant force in the world we live in.

Coming from a world of doing, competitiveness, achievement tests, self-discipline or willpower and being in control has turned what Jung thought of as the feminine principle into something negative—an emotional force that we repress and fear, one that we can't control, don't trust and have difficulty figuring out how to accept, love and relate to. Of course, a certain amount of the masculine principle of focused consciousness and activity is necessary to become self-responsible adults. But, if we are limited to only that our capacities for love, creativity and connectedness to life are also limited.

For example, in mythology, defeating the dragon and winning the maiden is a metaphor for being heroic enough to leave the passive, dependent world of the illusionary security of living unconsciously, and win our engagement with life. According to Erich Neumann's interpretation of Jung in his great book, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, this metaphor represents the development of ego consciousness which is seen as masculine, which means it is the seat of focused consciousness, in both men and women.

On the other hand both Jung and Neumann see the unconscious as being feminine in that it is the matrix or mother of human consciousness. While it would be over-simplistic to say the total unconscious is feminine it is certainly the home of the feminine principle and what Neumann calls "matriarchal consciousness" or diffuse consciousness, a diffuse awareness of the wholeness of things.

In Jung's perspective, receptivity to the creative principle of the Self is necessary for the transformative acts of self-development in individuation. In his great book, *Symbols of Transformation*, the book that caused his separation from Freud, Jung amplifies the importance of the mother archetype in each of us as the foundation for our creative receptivity and the ability to nurture new beginnings in our lives and new wholeness in our personalities. He also points out that this process leads to enormous tension with the world of the ego and the symbolic "father." In fact, he says we must "slay the father" which means symbolically that we must slay the inhibiting influences of practicality, safety, obligations and conventional wisdom.



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The feminine principle effects how we are being in life and how we are being a person rather than simply existing. Quite naturally many of us still associate coming into being, or failing to do so, with the woman who took care of us early in life—which means how we were loved, or not loved at the beginning. And that association determines how we relate to our life and in particular to our unconscious, our inner life.

The modern brain researchers, Lewis, Amini and Lannon say in their book on attachment theory and brain research, *A General Theory of Love*, that— and listen to this— “From birth to death, love is not just the focus of human experience, but also the life force of the mind, determining our moods, stabilizing our body rhythms, and changing the structures of our brains... Love makes us who we are, and who we can become.” Now, Jung, who as usual was ahead of his time, often equated the feminine principle with *eros*, the formative power of life that works through relatedness— through love in its many forms.

The archetypal feminine, as I have mentioned, covers a vast world of images such as the goddesses in every tradition. And, every positive image is matched with a negative one. The nurturing figure of the Madonna is matched by the witch in Hansel and Gretel who devours new life. Both are real, both have their place as opposites in our personalities. And, if we are going to become more whole we must be aware of these opposite centers of archetypal energy, how they live within us and affect our lives.

There are three aspects of the feminine element of being in the Jungian approach. The first one is being grounded within one’s own nature. The second one is the capacity to then be truly related to another person, and to other people. And, the third aspect, or another aspect of *eros*, is how personally related we are to life. Of course, Jung includes the aspects of inner and outer relatedness as being inter-dependent when he speaks of *eros* as the feminine principle.

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When we experience ourselves, our being, as rooted in the unconscious and our instinctual lives then we are rooted in what Jung considered the greater feminine principle or the ground within ourselves. Lisa described this place as knowing when she was standing in her own truth. From this being at home within ourselves, an unforced mode of doing evolves. One that is inspired.

All of us, no matter who we are, in the pressures of our busy complicated lives lose this fundamental relationship to ourselves again and again. We get caught in false doing that isn't rooted in the ground of our being, the Self. False-doing manufactures a false or hollow sense of identity and accomplishments. It assaults us with formulas for changing and bettering ourselves that ultimately leave us feeling diminished, frustrated, or empty, like imposters.

At this very point, when we are in enough distress to be open, Jung loved to tell "The Rainmaker Story" which he used to illustrate our journey of return to ourselves. This story is so popular in our circles that you may have heard it before.

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*In this story a remote village in China was experiencing a prolonged drought. The fields were parched, the crops were dying and the people were facing starvation. They had done everything they could. They prayed to their ancestors; their priests took the sacred images from their temples and marched them around the parched fields. But no prayers or rituals brought the rain that they so badly needed.*

*In despair the villagers pooled their last few resources and sent for a rainmaker from far away. When the little old man arrived, he found the cattle dying and the people in a miserable state. When they asked him what he wanted he said only a small hut, and a little food and water. He went into the hut, closed the door, and left the people wondering what he was doing. On the third day it began to rain. When he emerged they asked him what he did. "Oh," he replied, "that is very simple. I didn't do anything. I came from an area that was in Tao, in balance. Your area is disturbed, out of balance, and when I came into it I became disturbed. I retreated to the little hut to meditate, to bring myself back into balance. When I am able to get myself in order, everything around me is set right."*

The point is that when we are caught in false-doing we create a wasteland for ourselves. The rainmaker does not cause the rain. By returning to the feminine principle of being within he allows the rain to come. This receptive allowing that isn't trying to achieve and fix things allows the wasteland to receive nourishment, and as new growth begins a healthy form of doing will evolve.

As our journey of individuation progresses, we learn that being at home in the core of ourselves is the foundation that gives us the security to be with another and to be in full relationship to life. It removes the fear of being abandoned or overwhelmed by other people in life. The journey of individuation is in this sense a

continuous coming home to ourselves that gives us the ongoing courage to face the suffering involved in allowing our buried talents to emerge and to realize the innate wisdom within us—that can only be forged by the fires of feelings and passion that bring our soul to an inner glow.

If we can realize that, in general, the basic masculine or ego attitude toward life is one of focus, division, accomplishment and change; and the feminine (in either sex) is more nearly one of acceptance, gestation, transformation, the unity of life and a readiness for relationships then we can accept a rough division of the psyche into masculine and feminine. To discover what the feminine really means to us personally is to go inward and look for the images we find in dreams and our creative imagination. There is no formula. Lisa began this quest with active imagination by having continuous dialogs with the witch and herself as a young girl. She found that there is joy in finding what has been lost and in cultivating feelings and potentials that have lain fallow for a lifetime.

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As our final hour was coming to a close, Lisa leaned forward and said to me, “Looking inward has helped me feel the presence of love in my life. That something has been interested in me all along, guiding my life, supporting it in some strange way; trying to become known by me. It’s somewhere within myself. It seems funny I had to seek it while at the same time allow it to find me. It brings a sense of peace, or serenity, no matter what hardships I have to face.” This describes Lisa’s experience of what we call the “Self.”

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I would like to end tonight with a quotation from Jung’s closing paragraph in “The Technique of Differentiation” volume 7 of *The Collected Works*.

Jung says, “Here one may ask, perhaps, why it is so desirable that a man should be individuated. Not only is it desirable, it is absolutely indispensable because through his contamination with others he falls into situations and commits actions which bring him into disharmony with himself. From all states of unconscious contamination and non-differentiation there is begotten a compulsion to be and to act in a way contrary to one’s own nature...

“For these reasons individuation is indispensable for certain people, not only as a therapeutic necessity, but as a high ideal, an idea of the best we can do. Nor

should I omit to remark that it is at the same time the primitive Christian ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven which 'is within you.' The idea at the bottom of this ideal is that right action comes from right thinking, and there is no cure and no improving of the world that does not begin with the individual himself."

I like the ideas in this statement by Dr. Jung. And I feel strengthened by knowing that pursuing this inner path, a path of purpose and value, not only brings me personal fulfillment, it brings me into a world where I can make a unique contribution.

By being devoted to the individuation process, I have learned that no matter how desperate the moment in history is, I can change my life in the direction of a greater wholeness of being and of experiencing love in a greater awareness of the mystery of love.

After pursuing this path and carefully studying Dr. Jung's work, I am left wondering why it is so hard for our culture to understand that our symptoms and difficulties are trying to transform us. And yet, and yet, I also realize that to answer this question we must re-learn that the cultivation of wisdom is more important and of more benefit to our lives than the acquisition of knowledge alone.

Thank you.

*You may contact Dr. Bud Harris and Dr. Massimilla Harris through their website: [www.budharris.com](http://www.budharris.com). You may also read more about their books and activities; subscribe to Dr. Harris' newsletter; read current and past copies and three parts of his new series on "The Healing Power of Illness." You may also see Masssimilla's quilts and their stories there.*