

Spirituality in Jungian Psychology, Theory and Practice

By Murray Stein

What is spirituality?

Basically, spirituality is awareness of the **unseen and unseeable** (gods, angels, demons, the dead, ancestors, i.e., the unconscious). It is a core feature of “depth psychology.” Religion is an organized form of acknowledging and honoring the power of the unseen and unseeable in personal life and history. We do the same in the consulting room. It is at the center of our work as Jungian psychoanalysts and scholars.

Spirituality in the consulting room

Analysis serves “to provide spiritual nourishment for the unconscious elements or forces that have been projected as gods – in other words, to give these forces the attention they need in order to play their part in the life of the individual. Indeed, this is the original meaning of the word *religio* – a careful observation and taking account of the numinous.” (Jung, Intro. to *I Ching*, p. xxxiii). Attention to the unconscious is a core feature of Jungian psychotherapy. It makes space for the Self to emerge, the wholeness of the individual.

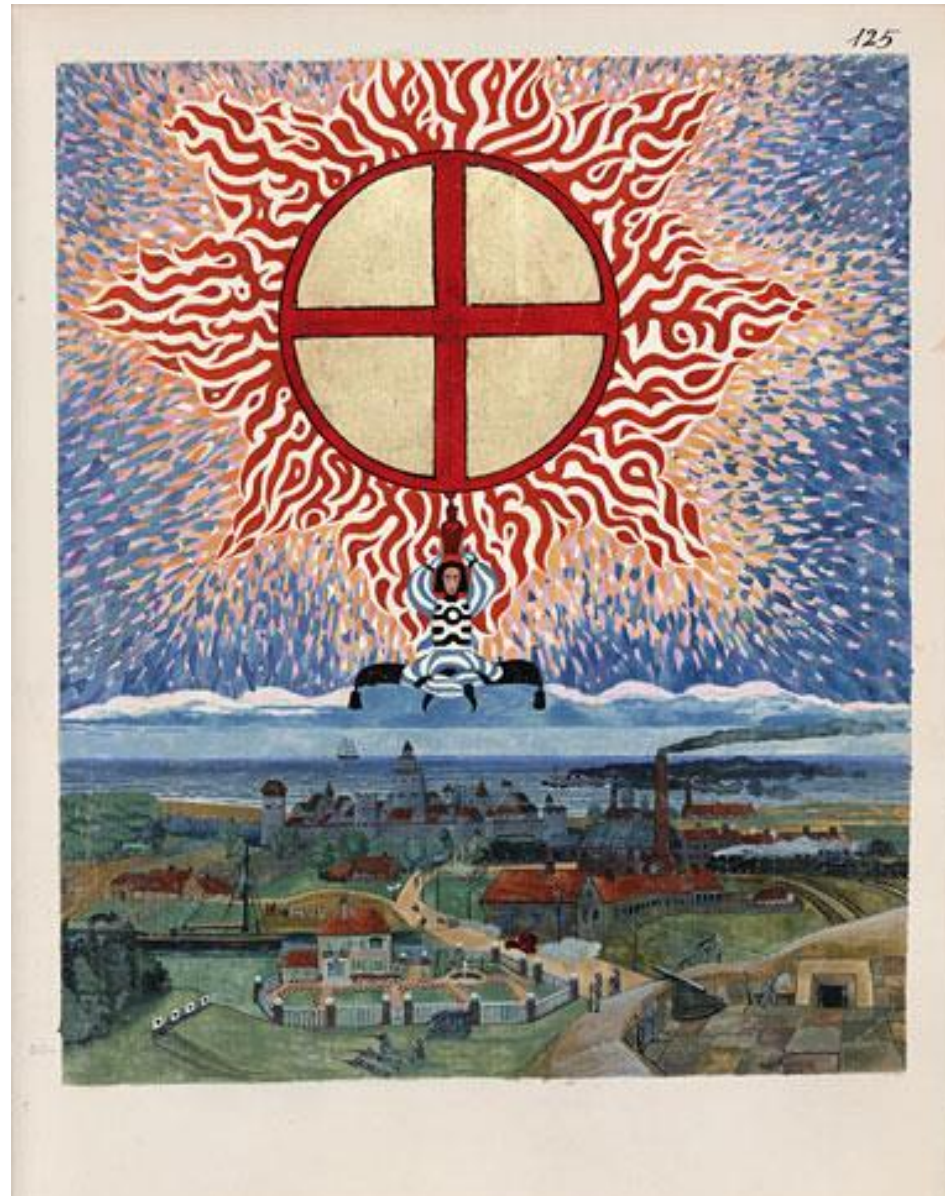
A Thesis and Some Perspectives

Jungian psychology is a depth psychology whose foundation is spiritual reality (i.e., archetypal images and processes).

Some comments:

- a. Spiritual reality consists of symbols and symbolic meaning
- b. The notion of a “religious instinct” – the human ego is a symbol receptor
- c. The Self as “spiritus rector” – individuation as attunement to spiritual guidance
- d. Individuation is the realization of archetypal patterns and processes in a human being’s life

From Jung's *Liber Novus*: A Spiritual World and a Profane World

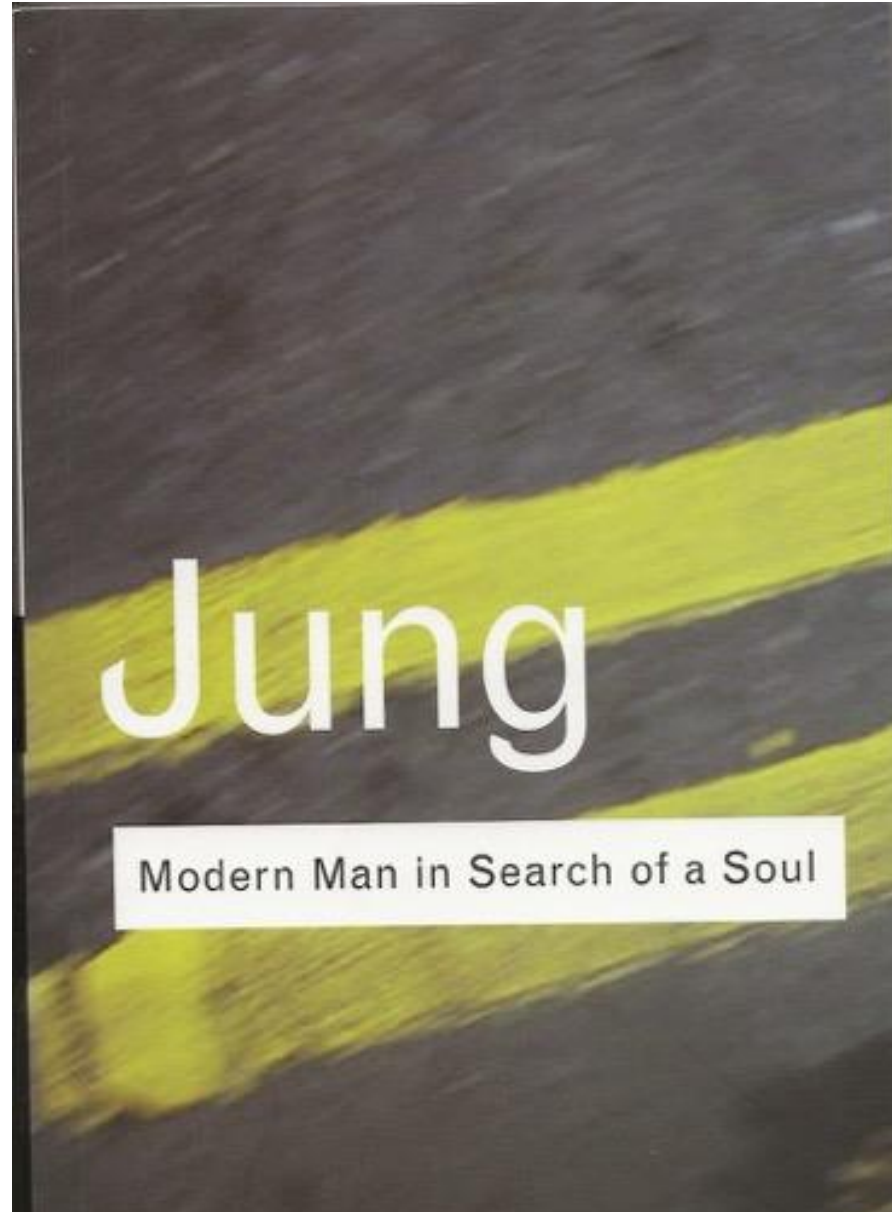


The soul and the spiritual world

Thus your soul
is your own self
in the spiritual
world. As the abode
of the spirits, however,
the spiritual world
is also an outer
world.

-Carl Jung, The Red Book, Page 288

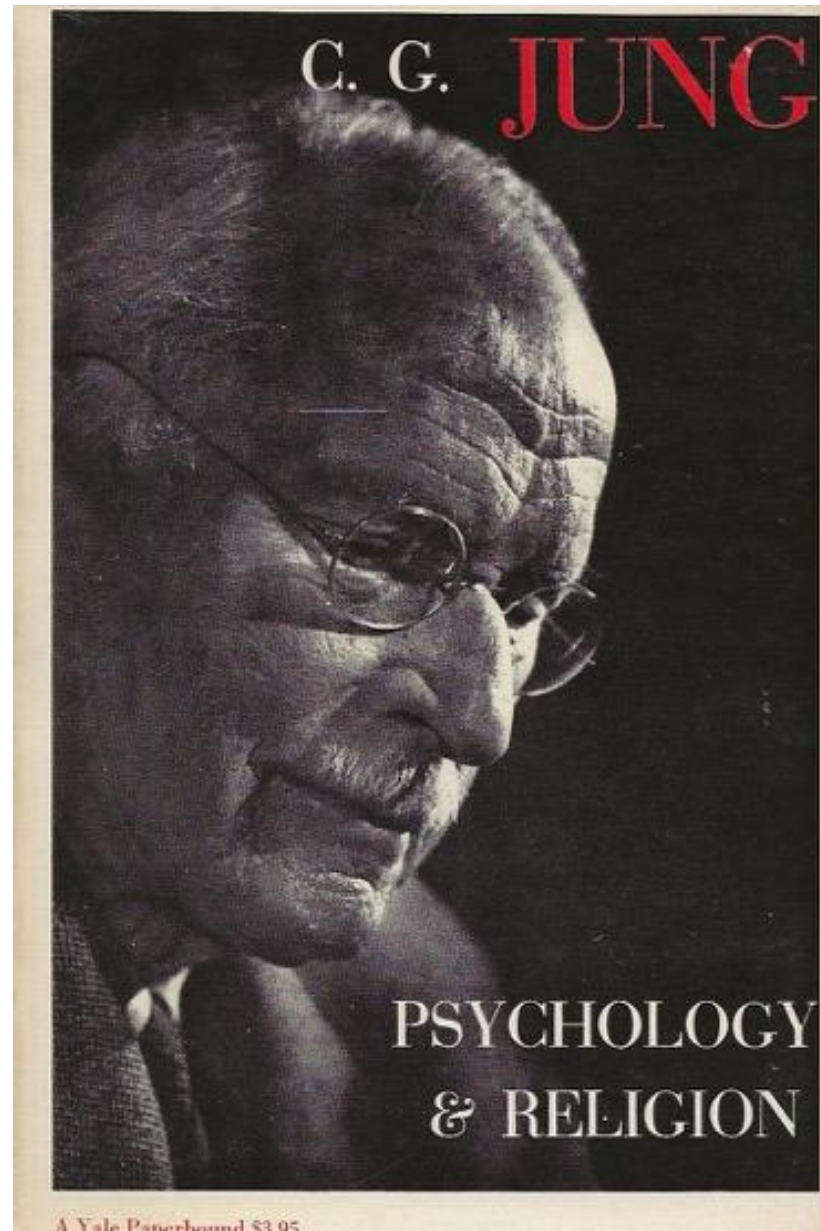
“Modern Man”: A Problem



Searching for the Soul in Analysis

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A dialogue between psychology and religion



The Setting of Analysis

The “spiritual attitude” of the analyst

- A) Temenos (sacred space)
- B) The confessional
- C) Confidentiality

The analyst's attitude

The attitude of the analyst is critical - does the analyst relate to the symbolic or only semiotics (signs)? Does the analyst have a “symbolic attitude”? Especially important for hermeneutics and dream interpretation. How do we listen to matters of the spiritual, of religion, of belief in transcendence?

Jung on Symbols vs. Signs

“Every view which interprets the symbolic expression as an analogue or an abbreviated designation for a *known* thing is *semiotic*. A view which interprets the symbolic expression as the best possible formulation of a relatively unknown thing, which for that reason cannot be more clearly or characteristically represented, is *symbolic*... An expression that stands for a known thing remains a mere sign and is never a symbol.”

C.G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, paras. 815-17.

The Symbolic Attitude

“Whether a thing is a symbol or not depends chiefly on the attitude of the observing consciousness; for instance, on whether it regards a given fact not merely as such but also as an expression for something unknown. Hence it is quite possible for a man to establish a fact which does not appear in the least symbolic to himself, but is profoundly so to another consciousness. The converse is also true... The attitude that takes a given phenomenon as symbolic can be called, for short, the *symbolic attitude*.”

C.G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, paras. 815-17

Methods for working with spirituality in analysis

1. Dialogue in a multidimensional Interactive Field
2. Subjective interpretation of dreams
3. Active Imagination and the transcendent function

Readings:

Gunilla Midboe, *The Elliptical Dialogue*

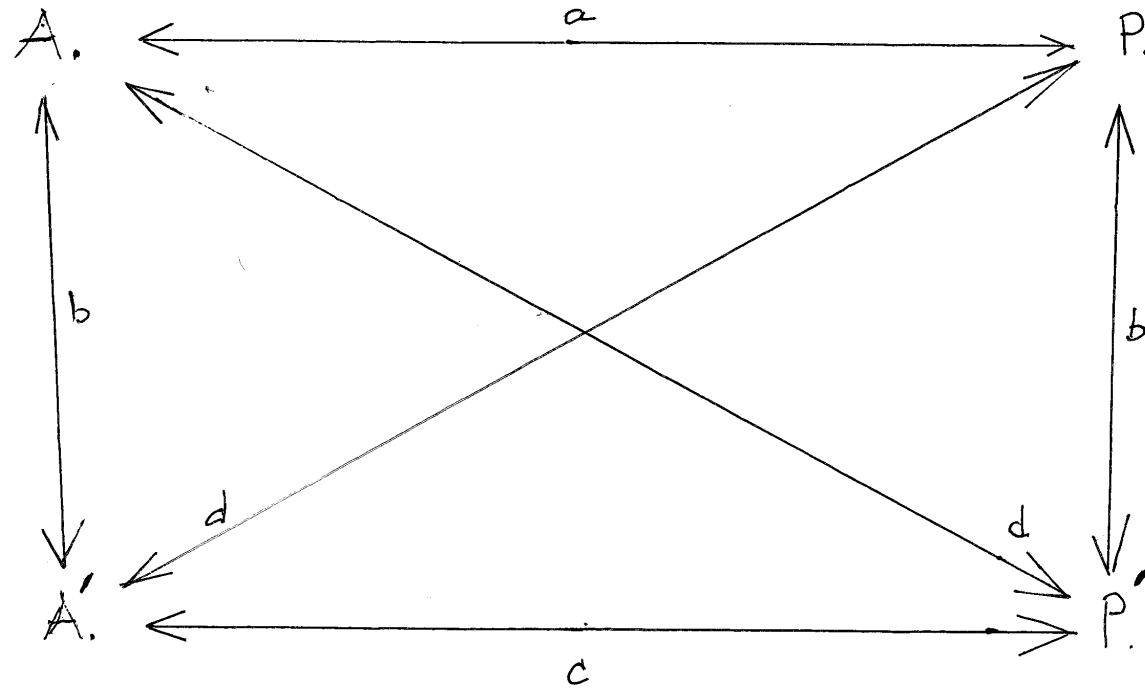
Claus Braun and Lilian Otscheret, "Dialogue," in *Jungian Psychoanalysis*, edited by Murray Stein

Warren Colman, "Dream Interpretation and the Creation of Symbolic Meaning," in *Jungian Psychoanalysis*, edited by Murray Stein

C.G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*

Sherry Salman, "Peregrinations of Active Imagination," In *Jungian Psychoanalysis*, edited by Murray Stein

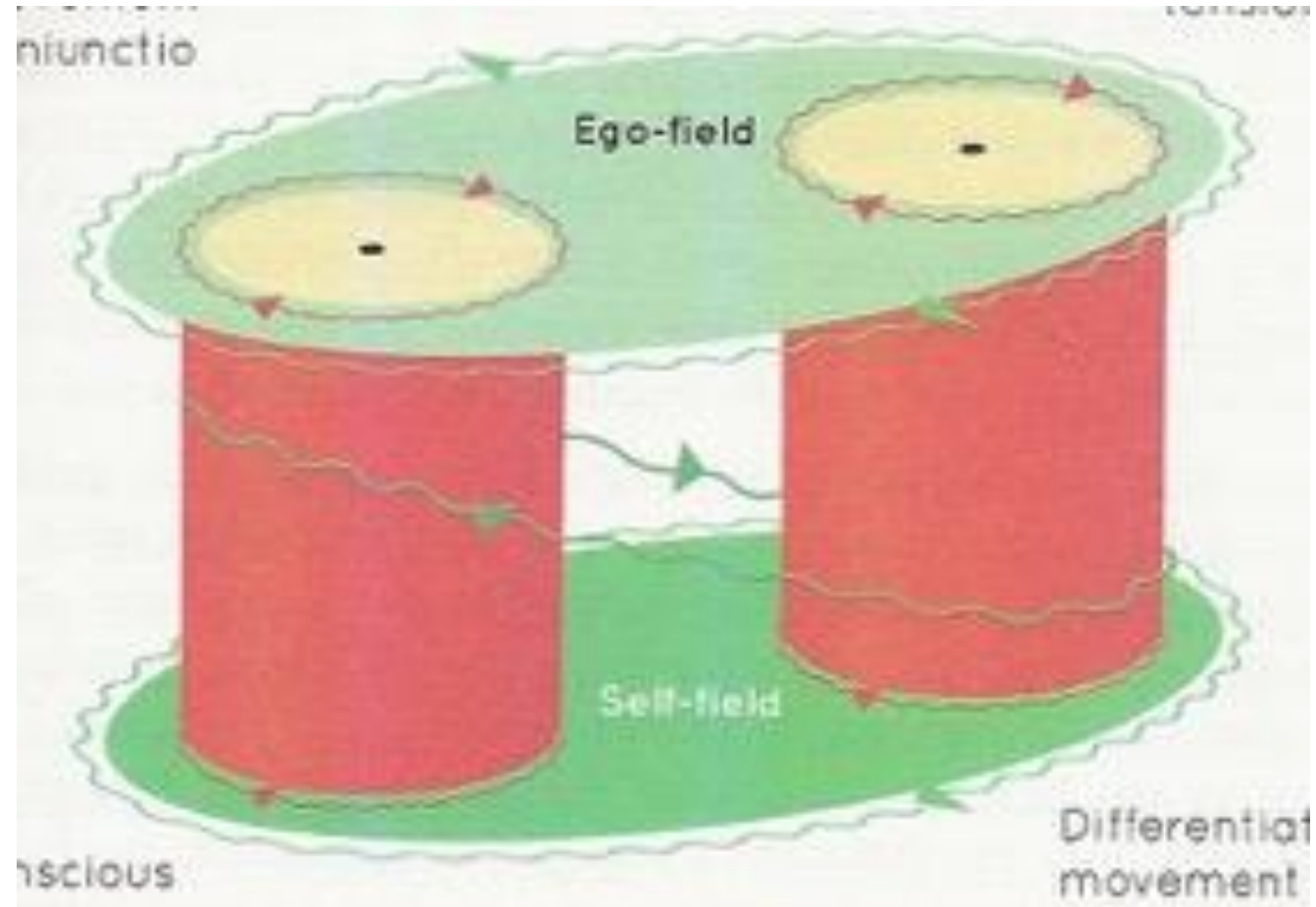
Analysis as a symbolic process



CW 16, p. 221

Ego-field and Self-field

Gunilla Midbøe, *The Elliptical Dialogue*, p. 27



Engagement: Mutuality

- A) Resonance: A therapeutic alliance based on trust and reliability.
- B) Entanglement: An exceptional relationship based on transference, personal and archetypal.
- C) Synchronicity : A further entanglement at unconscious levels.

Readings:

C.G. Jung, *The Psychology of the Transference* (CW 16)

Jan Wiener, "Working in and with Transference," in *Jungian Psychoanalysis*, edited by
Murray Stein

Linda Carter, "Countertransference and Intersubjectivity," in *Jungian Psychoanalysis*,
edited by Murray Stein

Joseph Cambray, *Synchronicity: Nature and Psyche in an Interconnected Universe*, Chapter
6 "On Empathy"

Levels of View

- A) The immediate level – horizontal (interpersonal, social)
- B) The deeper level (individuation issues) – vertical (soul)
- C) Diagnosis – Stages of individuation

Readings:

C.G. Jung, “A Study in the Process of Individuation” (CW 9i)

Murray Stein, Individuation, Collected Writings, vol. 1.

The role of numinous experience in psychotherapy

In a letter to P.W. Martin (20 August 1945), Jung wrote: “It always seemed to me as if the real milestones were certain symbolic events characterized by a strong emotional tone. You are quite right, the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology. Even the very disease takes on a numinous character” (Jung 1973, 1: 377).

Analysis, a Journey Inward

- A) The ritual of analysis – frequency, timing, formalities
- B) In and out of temporality - history within history
- C) *Apocatastasis* – restoration of original unity of the Self through taking back projections

Taking back projections - *apocatastasis*

From Dorn: “What madness deludes you? For in you, and not proceeding from you, he wills all this to be found, which you seek outside you and not within yourselves. Such is the vice of the common man, to despise everything his own, and always to lust after the strange. . . The life, the light of men, shineth in us, albeit dimly, and as though in darkness. It is not to be sought as proceeding from us... He hath inplanted that light in us that we may see in its light the light of Him who dwelleth in light inaccessible.” (CW 14, par. 48)

Three advanced phases of the individuation process

From Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW 14. A program according to Gerhard Dorn, alchemist and philosopher.

1. From *unio naturalis* to *unio mentalis* – union of soul and spirit (*apocastasis*)
2. Re-union with the “body” – living and acting consciously
3. Union with *unus mundus* – ego relativization, ego-self axis, “invisible community of all that is”

On silence in analysis

The Japanese Jungian analyst, Prof. Hayao Kawai, adopted the Zen Buddhist-like “*kamae* posture” in analysis, of being a stone in his sessions: valuing silence and non-directedness. In the *kamai* of being a stone, the opposites are contained and the analyst can hold to the “true middle.”

On silence in analysis – “mystery” and “mystic” derive from the Greek *myein*, “to close” – closing the lips, falling silent in front of the divine mystery: from Latin *mysterium* “secret rite, secret worship; a secret thing,” from Greek *mysterion* (usually in plural *mysteria*) “secret rite or doctrine,” from *mystes* “one who has been initiated,” from *myein* “to close, shut” (see **mute** (adj.)); perhaps referring to the lips (in secrecy) or to the eyes (only initiates were allowed to see the sacred rites).

Telos

1. Narrative: deconstructed as chronos dominated and revised in multi-dimensionality
2. Ego-self axis – the Self within
3. Individuation as Increasing Connectedness with Self and World

Readings:

C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

C.G. Jung, “The Symbolic Life” (CW 18)

Erich Neumann, “The Psyche and the Transformation of the Reality Planes,” in *The Place of Creation*

Murray Stein, *Minding the Self*

Murray Stein, *Outside, Inside and All Around*